

# West Seneca Bee

Founded 1980

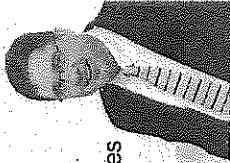
DEATH, A GUIDE FOR THE LIVING

What your family should know; find the right people and places for funeral plans.

COMMUNITY GUIDE

Information for businesses & government offices in your town.

BUSINESS ■ Page 23 Bryan Young celebrates the grand opening of Katie's Place on Transit Road.



## Land donation protects wetland, provides research opportunities

by KIMBERLY MCDOWELL  
Editor

As the amount of undeveloped land in town continues to dwindle, an important parcel of wetlands will be spared thanks to one family's generous gift.

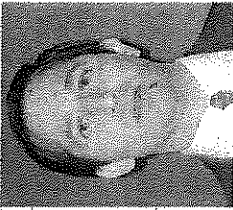
Roughly 14 acres of wetland and wildlife habitat — known as the Earsing Sills Oxbow Wetland, adjacent to Buffalo Creek off Clinton Street — was donated to the town by the family of Robert and Bernadette Jacobs of West Seneca, and many of those family members were present Tuesday night at the Burchfield Nature & Art Center on Union Road.

The Commission for the Conservation of the Environment in West Seneca hosted the event to not only celebrate the family's generosity but also to explore restoration and preservation options for the future of the area.

Several other researchers, environmentalists and some town officials also gathered for the event.

Margaret Wooster of Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper said there was a great loss of wildlife, specifically fish, in the area from the 1920s to

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■ Page 2

Assemblyman Jack Quinn will run for a seat in Senate.

PEOPLE



■ Page 3

Patrick J. Sgroi is one of 12 Alumni of Distinction honorees.

LIFESTYLES

## Town looks to Elma for assessor

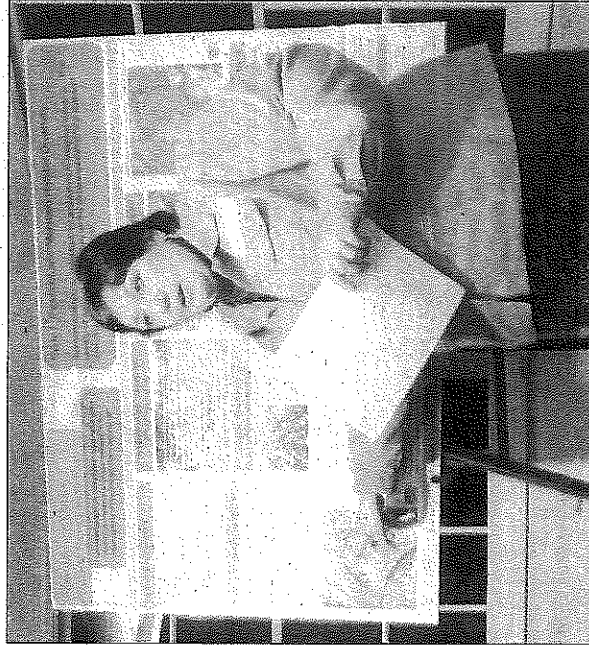
by KIMBERLY MCDOWELL  
AND TIMOTHY CHIPP  
Editor and East Aurora Editor

If an agreement can be reached, the towns of West Seneca and Elma could soon share assessor services, which would save money for both municipalities.

West Seneca has been without an assessor for roughly four years due to Edward Hummel's resignation from the position. Real property appraiser Ed Toy then served as acting assessor but retired in June. Two full-time employees and one part-time employee continue to work in the Assessor's Office.

"Cost savings is always the key factor," said Wallace Piotrowski, West Seneca supervisor. "My analysis is that, because of computerization and better record-keeping methods in that particular department, I feel we don't need to have four full-time employees and one part-time employee."

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Evelyn Hicks, board member of the Commission for the Conservation of the Environment in West Seneca, points to a chart that discusses the goals for the Earsing Sills Oxbow Wetland that is adjacent to Buffalo Creek off Clinton Street. The family of Robert and Bernadette Jacobs of West Seneca donated the 14-acre property to the town, which was celebrated Tuesday at the Burchfield Nature & Art Center.

Photo by John Ruseac  
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# Commitment to safety yields recognition

## Officers awarded for going above call of duty

# Land

(Continued from page one)

1960s, as well as toxic "hot spots" that have developed in many natural habitats throughout Western New York. Several conservation groups have since then worked together to maintain wildlife, as well as such habitats as the Oxbow nature preserve — areas she said are becoming more rare throughout the region.

"It should be protected," Wooster said of the natural areas.

Evelyn Hicks, a board member of the CCE, said there is only about 1,000 acres of undeveloped floodplain and associated wetlands along Buffalo and Cazenovia creeks that provide ecological services to West Seneca.

When BNR obtained a grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to protect the area, the group connected with other experts in the field, specifically the interdisciplinary doctoral program at the University at Buffalo known as "ERIE," or Ecosystem Restoration through Interdisciplinary Exchange.

Three graduate students who are part of ERIE — student participants hail from such departments as biology, geography, chemistry and philosophy —

were also in attendance Tuesday night for their research efforts and contributions for devising a restoration plan for the area.

"This is a rare site for Western New York in the heavily industrialized Buffalo River watershed," said David Blersch, a UB research scientist and coordinator of the ERIE program.

According to Blersch, areas such as the Oxbow wetland are natural features created when part of an old river channel is cut off from a main channel by high flow events.

"What remains is a new, curved body of water situated next to, but separate from, the main river, and which over time becomes a wetland," he said.

"Think of the wetlands as nature's kidneys," he added. "Because their water moves slowly, wetlands filter out a lot of pollutants from runoff that otherwise could pollute larger bodies of water. By absorbing pollutants, wetlands can be thought of as buffering surrounding areas from pollution runoff from excessive rainfall. They are doing, for free, what storm sewers and treatment facilities would cost a couple of

million dollars to do, all while providing natural habitat, too."

According to Blersch, there is a need for ecosystem restoration in WNY. The Oxbow site is an ideal atmosphere for breeding a "good mix of species," including amphibians, birds and various plants. He expressed his excitement about the long-term potential of the site.

After collaborating to conduct extensive biological and engineering assessments, the BNR and ERIE program have worked with the town to develop a stewardship and restoration plan. This includes removing blockages to improve water quality and retaining dead wood for habitat value.

The groups have developed ways to enhance the existing habitat, such as how to manage invasive species and encourage native ones. They also explored ways to involve the community and owners of nearby properties as stewards of the site, such as Cazenius High School, which owns adjacent land.

"The bottom line is that the land donation goes a long way," Hicks said. "There are many genera-

tions [of the Jacobs family] tied to the land here in Gardenville ... and we all share the same vision [for the land]."

In a letter to the CCE, Jeff Jacobs said, "This property is being kept as a nature preserve, and ... we [the entire Jacobs family] are happy that we can help keep this land as a nature preserve, and hope others can help like this," he said.

[maintain and protect] the land around our rivers and creeks in their natural site."

Al Kermer, chair of the CCE, said the group — which is comprised of volunteers — as well as the town as a whole are extremely grateful to the Jacobs family for their charitable contribution.

"The paybacks are moments like this," he said.

# Assessor

(Continued from page one)

Last year, when the town was made aware of Toy's retirement, it was advised by the state to share services with the Town of Lancaster. In September, both towns explored the possibility but did not ultimately reach an agreement due to Lancaster needing to keep its assessor full time within its own town, said Piotrowski.

At the suggestion of a private consultant hired by the Town Board, Piotrowski looked to share assessor services with the Town of Elma, which has already expressed interest in the merge.

So far, discussion has only taken place between Piotrowski and Michael Nolan, Elma's supervisor. Once an agreement is reached, it would need to be approved by both town boards to take effect.

For Elma, the consolidation — if approved — would reduce the town's compensation to Assessor Candace Whittmeyer by half. It could ultimately save the town

the west."

Both supervisors said they are constantly looking to reduce town spending, even in personnel. For West Seneca, the town will soon see the effects and financial benefits of merging the Tax Receiver's Office with that of the Town Clerk's, as that consolidation is set to take place next year.

For Elma, this would be the second reduction in staffing costs following the elimination of the tax receiver position four years ago, said Nolan. He added that with the way the economy has been the last few years, saving

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**Bee Editorial**

# Protecting West Seneca's heritage — BNAC included

The Commission for the Conservation of the Environment in West Seneca hosted a reception Tuesday night to honor the family of Robert and Bernadette Jacobs of West Seneca, who donated 14 acres of land to the town.

The wetland area is officially known as the Earsing Sills Oxbow Wetland, which is adjacent to the "historical remnant" of the original Buffalo Creek off Clinton Street. Speakers at the reception praised the wetland for its ability to preserve the natural wildlife that inhabits the area.

Several brief presentations discussed the studies completed on the land, as well as the immediate and long-term goals for the property. But the bottom line of the entire presentation, which also is the cover title of a pamphlet prepared by Margaret Wooster of Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, was this: "Protecting West

Seneca's natural heritage."

Coincidental or not, the event took place at the Burchfield Nature & Art Center—a facility named after world-renowned artist Charles E. Burchfield. The scenic Gardenville area is seen in several of Burchfield's famous artworks—it was the focus of many of his paintings—which rightfully gives West Seneca a claim to national and possibly world fame.

While the BNAC remains the center of much dispute regarding who or what should move into the vacant space recently created at the facility, Tuesday night's event inadvertently shed light on the importance of protecting and honoring West Seneca's heritage, which includes Burchfield and the legacy left by the artist.

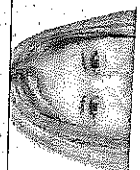
The BNAC should in fact be used as it was intended—as an arts and nature center. The facility and surrounding area certainly have the

potential to inspire creative minds, just as the environs once did for Burchfield. Imagine how many more "Burchfields" could prosper from using the center and taking advantage of the artistic opportunities that will again be offered by the new group Gardenville Campus at Burchfield, which will officially move into the facility come April 1 under a one-year leasing agreement.

Some town officials are entertaining the idea of moving a few town offices into the facility, which could very well be a cost-efficient move, as well as free more space in Town Hall for a possible expansion of the town's Police Department.

However, the proposal would be like trying to mix oil and water. Politics and the arts would likely not complement one another, and we think they should remain separated, if it can be avoided.

## Spindle items



- **WELL-SERVED RECOGNITION** — A few weeks ago, I had the op-

ture of sitting shotgun in a police car for the first time — no, I've never sat in the back seat either — French decided it was about time we pulled someone over.

Though I can't exactly recall why he chose the car he did, the young man in the driver's seat ended up being a well-known troublemaker in town.

ment for doing what they do on a day-to-day basis, without hesitation or second thought.

Several officers who were in fact faced with various extreme scenarios last year were honored for their services at an annual police awards luncheon Tuesday at Christie's restaurant in Southgate. I was invited to attend the ceremo-

towns or maybe want to try a new place to eat for a good cause, Texas Roadhouse restaurant, 900 Young St., Tonawanda, is hosting "Buy Tunes for the Troops" between 4 and 10 p.m. Monday, March 29. Ten percent of all food sales will be donated toward the purchase of iTunes cards, which will be given to military troops. The gift cards will be part of a

THE CITY OF MISSISSAUGA

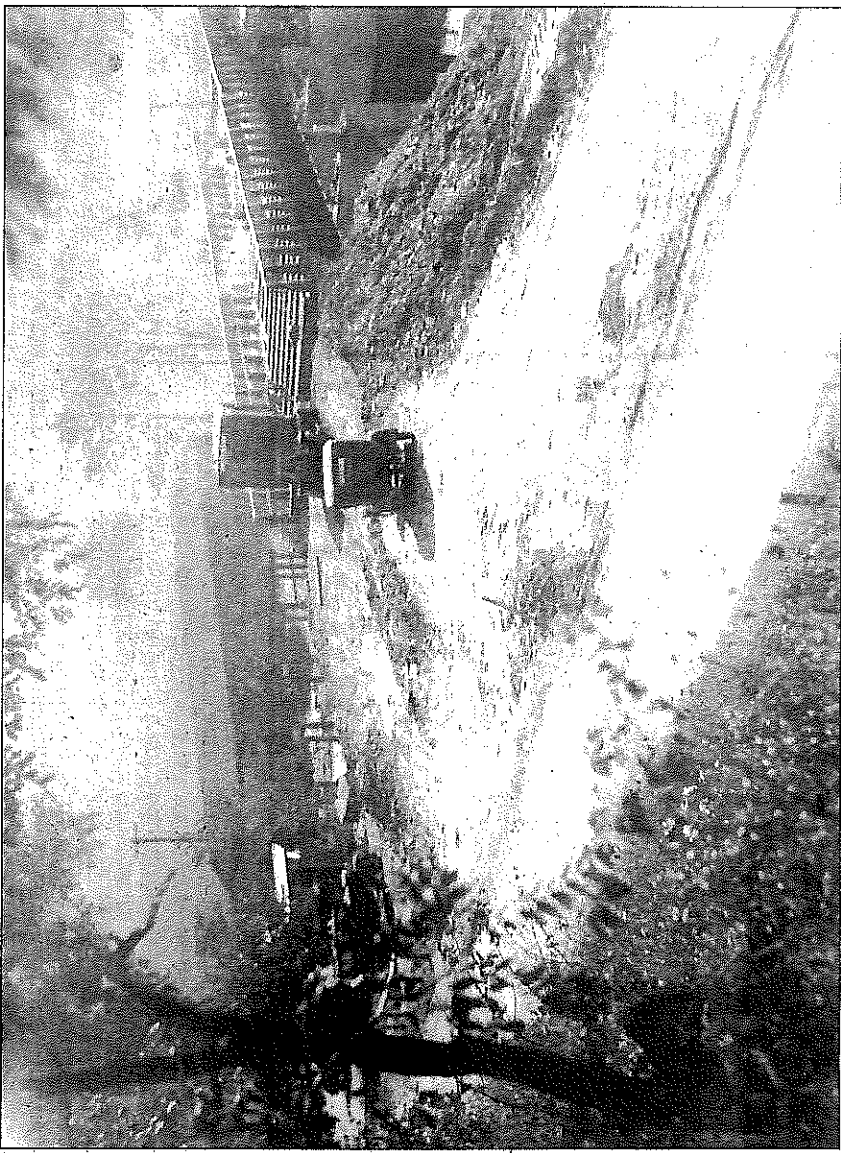
The night was rather uneventful, which in the grand scheme of things meant it was a good night for the Police Department as well as good news for the community. But to help spice up the adven-

since I apparently don't have the courage to stop someone for even a minor violation, I cannot imagine how I would react in more serious situations. For that, I commend every single member of the West Seneca Police Depart-

• **'BUY TUNES FOR IKOOPS'** — Call me biased, but it's important that we continue to keep in mind all of our men and women currently serving overseas with the U.S. military. Should you find yourself in the North-

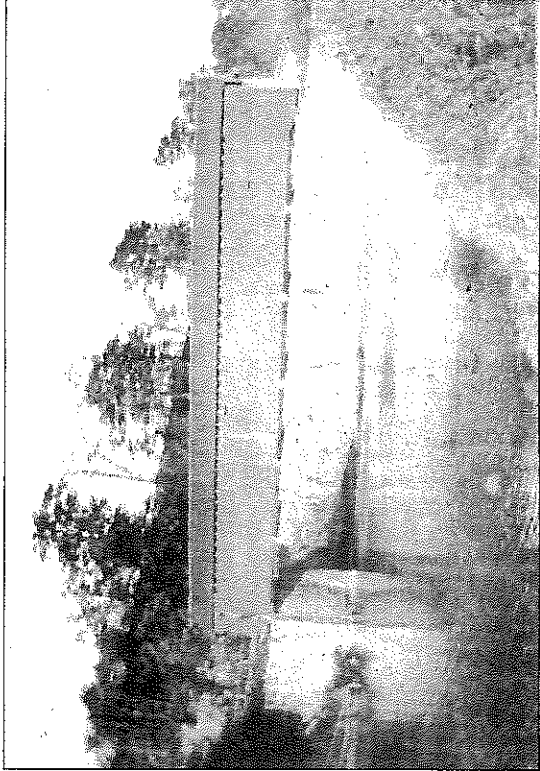
itunes card worth \$10 or more receive a certificate for a free I Blossom, Cheese Fries or Legendary flesnake Bites appetizer. For more information, call the restaurant at 692-0457.

# Out of the Past



**The Leydecker Road Bridge** was one of the last wooden covered bridges in Western New York. In 1865, the bridge was washed downstream by the flood waters of Cazenovia Creek from its original location at Winspear Road, settling at its current location. For 70 years, it handled one-lane traffic until it was replaced by the current steel and concrete bridge in 1935. There was a \$10 fine for crossing over the old bridge faster than a walk. Pictured to the left is the construction of the current bridge (to the right of the old bridge), and below is the old bridge from looking upstream.

Photo and information courtesy of Jim Pace, town historian



*(Do you have a memory of the West Seneca area you would like to share with Bee readers? Send it to "Out of the Past," West Seneca Bee, 5564 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14221-5410).*