

FREE – TAKE ONE – START 2006 RIGHT!

4 Corners News & Views for Ohio's Cradle of Education

Common Sense Where Main Meets Wooster

Bowling Green, Ohio

Vol. 1, No.9 Jan. 1, 2006

Get Privately 'Fit' In '06

Bowling Green, a village turned city built around a public university, sometimes forgets that it was private industry and private businesses that made this country great. Not the government.

And we sometimes forget that public education is an arm the government that should be every bit as accountable as local, city, county, state and federal government operations are supposed to be.

Bowling Green State University is such an icon, such a source of notoriety and wealth for the community, that it receives exalted status in the minds of many. It is untouchable. Beyond criticism. Take BGSU to task and you can hear the hissing all over town.

If BGSU wants to start a business or operation that competes with private business, it does so with little or no opposition.

The Recreation Center of three decades ago dried up the market for physical fitness facilities for many years. The university's food service keeps the number of restaurants down in the city, though we have 70 or so. Yet most of us accept the fact that the 20,000 students need recreation and food services on the scene.

So we tolerate government competing with private businesses on campus.

Off campus is another story.

Maybe the Bowling Green City Government is a secret BGSU wannabe, desiring to expand its tentacles throughout the city regardless of how it might impact private businesses.

Why else would the BGBT (Beware Government Brain Trust) decide to pump \$4 million into a Community Center without a viable marketing plan and without a vote of the people?

As the Community Center begins to drain cash, the beleaguered City Parks and Recreation Dept. has been handed the impossible mess and asked to turn around the losses.

Big Public Ad Dollars Go To Private Newspaper

So the city is now spending thousands of public dollars advertising in the privately owned *Sentinel-Tribune* to promote the white elephant by luring away customers from the other fitness centers in town. Full page ad here. Half page ad there. Free publicity in the news columns and on page one (as an unstated reward to a big public advertiser).

None of the privately owned fitness centers in Bowling Green can afford this level of advertising and promotion, yet I understand they are holding their own during the onslaught.

If the private fitness businesses go under – done in by the government – Bowling Green will be the poorer as business and employment taxes will not longer be collected.

My hero in all this is Tom St. Julian, whose fitness center on North Main Street bears his name. He has had the courage to speak out against the city's incursion into private enterprise way back when the Beware Government City Council was discussing it. He continues to speak out now. Being the competitor that he is, St. Julian has dug into his own pocket to invest in new equipment TO COMPETE WITH A GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISE.

January is a big month for fitness memberships because folks wake up Jan. 2 overweight and vow to do something about it. **My advice: save gas money and strike a blow for private enterprise by joining St. Julian's Fitness, Inc., this month.**

-- John K. Hartman, publisher, *4 Corners News & Views*, John.Hartman@dacor.net

Randy Gardner: Always A Bridesmaid

Poor Randy Gardner. Always a bridesmaid.

Bowling Green's state senator keeps getting passed over to be majority leader of the Ohio Senate. He was the No. 2, the No. 3, the No. 4-ranked leader in the chamber, but never able to move up.

It seems unfair to a guy who had such a good jump shot at Eastwood High School, whose dad was county school superintendent, who learned politics at the feet of former Ohio House Speaker Charles Kurfess, and who engineered a "switch," an old high school basketball term, with fellow Republican Bob Latta to stay in the Legislature.

That's right. Gardner and Latta circumvented the will of the Ohio voters to limit folks to eight consecutive years in the Legislature by switching jobs six years ago. Gardner went from the House to the Senate and Latta vice versa.

(Note to calendar watchers and political junkies: Gardner and Latta will hit the term limit barrier again in 2008. Can you once more say "switch?" You would think that the Wood County Democratic Party would take Gardner and Latta to task for this chicanery and come up with candidates to toss them out of office. But we Democrats haven't elected a non-incumbent to county or legislative office in two decades. We didn't make a stink the first time they switched in 2000. When they say "switch," we duck.)

The *Sentinel-Tribune* recently did a stroke-ola piece on Gardner to celebrate his 20th anniversary in the Legislature. It blamed Gardner's failure to ascend to the top rung on his devotion to his family. I have no quarrel with depicting Gardner as a devoted husband and father. I respect him in that area of life.

In my opinion the real reason for Gardner's failure to be top dog in the Senate is because he is not right-wing enough to satisfy the Neanderthal elements that run the Republican Party in Ohio.

To his credit, Gardner is too friendly with public K-12 education and public higher education to satisfy the conservative crazies. Representing a town built around a public university, Gardner would be a fool to thumb his nose at public education. Charles Kurfess, once a state representative and minority leader of the Ohio House, also was not conservative enough to satisfy the hard right and paid when they defeated him in the primary for governor way back when.

Gardner's athletic proclivities may still get him into trouble. He was part of a golf foursome in Toledo -- including Coingate architect, now indicted BG native Tom Noe -- that is being scrutinized by authorities. Whether or not Gardner received more than a \$75 gift in greens fees and whether or not that should have been reported to the Ohio Ethics Commission remains to be seen.

Would You Like To Buy An Empty Theater For \$500,000?

Downtown Bowling Green's latest eyesore is the empty Cla-Zel Theatre.

Apparently to keep a religious group from purchasing it and turning it into a church ministering to college students, some local investors bought the venerable theater for \$240,000 a few years back and reportedly put that amount again into fixing it up.

The investors had no way of knowing that college students and young adults would soon prefer buying DVDs and watching them in the privacy of their residences than going to the movies.

My suggestion: turn the Cla-Zel into a six theater complex and maybe the kids will turn out for a choice of movies. Otherwise, knock it down along with some adjacent unused or underused buildings for, gag, I can hardly mutter the words, PARKING. Gag. FOR THE LIBRARY.

4 Corners News & Views You Read It Here First Tip Of The Month: No BG school bond issues in 2006.

Reminder from 4 Corners: The deadline for filing candidate petitions is 4 p.m. Feb. 16.

4 Corners News & Views of Bowling Green was founded June 1, 2005 by John K. Hartman, its publisher. Its purpose is to provide additional news and points-of-view to citizens of Bowling Green in the belief that thorough awareness of and discussion of issues makes for a better community. It will be available free at various drop-off points in Bowling Green and by email by sending your email address and request to John.Hartman@dacor.net. Patrons may support *4 Corners News & Views* for \$10 per issue. Ads may be purchased for \$20 per issue. Comments and submissions are welcome. Contact information: John.Hartman@dacor.net ; 419-352-8180; 1400 Wren Road, BG, OH 43402. Back issues at www.wcnet.org/~randers/liberalbg/. Copyright 2005, John K. Hartman, All Rights Reserved.