

Daily Gazette article

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Letters to the Editor for Jan. 24

Nearly complete Erie Canalway bike trail worth finishing

Your Jan. 18 editorial, "Build it and they will bike," is right on the money. Bike paths and facilities must be part of a 21st century transportation system so everyone can more easily engage in biking and walking.

Bike paths also will foster bicycle tourism, a growing phenomenon that can revitalize upstate communities. While progress is being made on both fronts, strong leadership is needed to realize the full promise before us.

Five projects that will construct or refurbish sections of the Erie Canalway Trail made the list submitted by Gov. Paterson to the Obama team for inclusion in a stimulus package. And three other "shovel-ready" Canalway Trail projects await funding — including upgrades to three miles in Schenectady.

Completion of these projects would leave just 64 miles (out of 366 between Buffalo and Albany) to be built.

The Erie Canalway Trail, already bringing new economic vitality to canal towns across the state, along with public health and quality-of-life benefits to more than 1 million New Yorkers, is well on its way to becoming a world class international bike tourism destination. Parks and Trails New York's annual Erie Canal cycle tour fills to capacity with 500 riders, with two-thirds coming from outside the state. User counts in western New York indicate that in some locations, use approaches 200,000 people annually.

Surveys have found that bicycle tourists from outside the immediate area spend up to \$250 per person per day. Thus just one party of six, spending 10 days on the trail, would bring an infusion of up to \$15,000 into upstate communities.

But to achieve its full appeal and potential, the trail must be completed! In these challenging economic times, it is especially important to invest in a brighter future for upstate communities. We can and should close the gaps by finding the relatively modest resources needed to finish the job.

Robin Dropkin

Albany

The writer is executive director of Parks and Trails New York.

Keep planet green by giving out less Yellow

Regarding the Yellowbook Page phone book that was delivered to my porch Jan. 19: I am a renter and only have a cellphone. There are three different complexes within this split home. Each phone book must weigh around three pounds, give or take.

Yellowbook has on file what family or people are registered with a land-line phone, but not a cellphone — which only makes sense or the book would be thicker. What Yellowbook should do for the drivers, or people who are delivering their phone books, is make a list before they start delivering, so that they do not drop off the books to people who really do not need one. (I know even cellphone users want one).

You know how many trees and how much paper and time they would save, if they would just make this list for people who really do not need this book? Saving the planet is everybody's concern now, and recycling is a very big concern! It takes roughly over two years for these books to decompose in town landfills, to break down on their own if the book stays closed and none of the earth's elements work their magic.

Yellowbook, please do your part and save the earth and landfills.

Edward B. Wagner

Scotia

Scale back war on drugs, starting with marijuana

Re Jan. 4 letter, "Don't legalize drugs, just get cops to do their jobs better," by Lou Cook: I didn't have the liberty to read the article that Mr. Cook is talking about, but for him to take shots at The Schenectady Police Department is ridiculous.

First of all, he lives in Ballston Spa, so on what basis does he speak singling out Schenectady? Second, we all make choices for ourselves daily. We all have self-control, some stronger than others; that's what makes us human. It doesn't surprise me that someone from some self-help group has an off-the-wall opinion.

Maybe elected officials should rethink their war on drugs. The questions that needs to be asked is "should marijuana be legalized?" In this day and age, we should we be prosecuting people and wasting tax dollars for petty things such as marijuana possession and any marijuana-related crimes? Think how much money could be saved all the way down the line.

Another thing: Think what it would do for a struggling economy with a nationwide tax; it's a win-win situation. Keep the narcotics like cocaine, crack, heroine and whatever other hard stuff you can think of, illegal. Wage the war on drugs where it belongs to be fought.

This goes way beyond the Schenectady Police Department. Read their blotter in the paper — they're doing their jobs just fine, with more arrests than anyone around the aread I always see them out there doing their jobs, serving our community 24/7. Mr. Cook should maybe keep his Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous opinions to himself and redirect his energy to a higher level. For starters try Ballston Spa elected officials.

Keep up the good work, Schenectady Police Department, cleaning up the streets of Schenectady.

Mark Ference

Schenectady

Frugal approach better off starting at the top

Re Jan. 18 article, "A simple start to sustainable living," by Sara Foss: An interesting, well researched and well written article.

The idea may be a bit extreme, but it is basically the answer to our present economic crisis. However, I believe that the "movement" has to climb up to the government level to have any real effect.

Corporation officers and elected officials who are not held responsible for their actions tend to act irresponsibly.

E. P. Whitney

Niskayuna

Letters Policy

The Gazette wants your opinions on public issues.

There is no strict word limit, though letters under 200 words are preferred.

All letters are subject to editing for length, style and fairness, and we will run no more than one letter per month from the same writer.

Please include your signature, address and day phone for verification.

For information on how to send, see bottom of this page.

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