

letters

to the Editor



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Be a volunteer; change the world

April 27 through May 3 is National Volunteer Week — a time to recognize volunteers and celebrate the spirit of volunteerism.

We all know a volunteer. Many of us are ourselves volunteers. We know firsthand the selfless nature of people who give with no expectation of being paid for their time.

Volunteers do work for free, but volunteers will tell you that they are well-paid. They contend that the reward for their work is not money, but is, instead, the satisfaction of helping others, active involvement in the community and the friendships that form through volunteer work.

The theme of National Volunteer Week is Volunteer to Change the World, and that is just what Red Cross volunteers do. Without volunteers, the

(Please turn to page six)

Correction

In the Ideas for the Home special section of April 16 and 17, a mention of Gaye Ruff gave the wrong first name.

EXCLUSIVE
ONLINE Bee Poll
www.AmherstBee.com

Click to vote on this Bee Poll TODAY!

Will toll increases stop you from using the Thruway?

ONLINE POLL RESULTS
VOTE

Log onto **www.AmherstBee.com** today, to cast your vote for next week's online poll!

Last week's question:
Have the school districts created balanced budgets?

You said:
25% YES 75% NO

How to reach The Bee

The Amherst Bee publishes community news free of charge. Mail items to The Amherst Bee, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY, 14231-0150. Our telephone number is 632-4700. Our fax number is 633-8601. Our Web sites are www.BeeNews.com and www.AmherstBee.com. Amherst Managing Editor David Sherman's e-mail address is ds Sherman@BeeNews.com. Amherst Associate Editor Jessica Finch's e-mail address is jfinch@BeeNews.com. Senders should state on their contributions whether their e-mail address can be published.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced and are limited to a maximum of 300 words. Names will not be withheld unless the author demonstrates a clear reason for anonymity. No unsigned letters will be printed. You must supply your name, address and telephone number for verification. Authors are limited to one letter every four weeks. Letters are subject to editing.

Our deadline is 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. For engagement and wedding announcements, The Bee offers a form to list names and details. Call for a copy. There is no charge to publish engagements, weddings or anniversaries.

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A common man's guide to Six Sigma

Much has been said about Six Sigma, a set of practices endorsed by Erie County Executive Chris Collins.

In an effort to help better understand the philosophy of Six Sigma, here is a sort of "Idiot's Guide to Six Sigma" that I've compiled, thanks in large part to the efforts of Patrick Heraty, a business professor at Hilbert College, and some online research conducted by yours truly.

I will use the form of a question-and-answer streamlined approach to answering some of the most common questions about this set of practices that is rapidly spreading in use in both the public and private sectors.

• What is Six Sigma?

Six Sigma is a set of practices that systematically improves processes by eliminating defects, errors and mistakes. It's a comprehensive way to achieve maximum success.

• Who started Six Sigma?

Six Sigma was originally developed in 1986 by Bill Smith at Motorola. It was heavily inspired by more than 60 years of a handful of quality improvement methodologies, including quality control.

• What makes Six Sigma so unique, and why is it being embraced by companies and elected officials?

When you crunch the numbers, the statistics translate into about three mistakes for every one million opportunities.

• How does a company, organization or local government embrace the concept of Six Sigma?

A thorough study of an entire operation, whether it be a factory, a pizzeria or a municipal highway department, has to be conducted in order to find areas that are not operating in an optimal way and could be improved and made more efficient.

• Who introduces Six Sigma to an organization?

The chief executive officer or owner or top elected official must be fully committed to introduce change. This "top dog" must have a complete understanding of the costs involved of running the operation and realize what the challenges are when it comes to asking employees and colleagues to be prepared to change the way they do their work on a day-to-day basis.



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

• What's the most important thing the leadership of an organization has to do to make Six Sigma work?

Listen to your clients/customers/taxpayers. Find out what they want and what they are willing to pay for. Known as "the voice of the customer," there must be a clear understanding of what they want from your organization.

• Then what?

Once you have a firm grasp of what "the voice of the customer" is, you switch the focus to "the voice of the process" by honing in on what steps are taken to deliver a product or service to a customer/client/taxpayer.

• What are the keys to making sure that following Six Sigma produces cost-efficient results?

You need four things: strong leadership, commitment to training, persistence and patience.

• Besides Motorola, what other companies have successfully adopted the Six Sigma methodologies?

General Electric, Merrill Lynch, Dell, DuPont, Ingram Micro, Boeing and the

Ford Motor Co., to name a few. Locally, Praxair Corp. in Tonawanda is among the private sector companies that have jumped on board.

• What about the public sector? Chris Collins keeps raving about the need for Six Sigma "black belts" to help run our county government more efficiently. What examples are out there for us to get a better understanding if this is the correct approach for Erie County?

Mayor Graham Richard introduced the philosophy to the city government of Fort Wayne, Ind., and reported success when it comes to culture and attitude. He said Six Sigma helped him get away from the city's previously old-fashioned and hierarchical structure and approach things like fixing potholes more quickly and efficiently. The U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps have implemented some of the practices to reduce annual costs and improve internal communications.

• Can Six Sigma work in Erie County?

As long as we have strong leaders to listen to taxpayers to help create a culture that consistently looks for ways to be more efficient and effective.

(Opinions are those of the author.)

Hunter's legacy lives in new legislation

One of the most frightening moments a parent can experience is to have a sick child and not know a diagnosis. This is exactly what parents Jim and Jill Kelly experienced with their son, Hunter.

Hunter was diagnosed with Krabbe's disease when he was 4 months old. Had he been diagnosed at birth, his life might have been saved. That is why it is imperative that every child have access to more screening tests at birth to afford parents the opportunity to seek treatments as early as possible.

Each year in our nation, at least four million newborns are screened. Out of these screenings severe disorders are detected in 5,000 of them. These disorders are often life threatening and can cause serious mental and physical disabilities if left untreated. Early detection by newborn screening can completely prevent progression of some disorders if medical intervention can be started early.

In fact, New York State has long been a national leader in newborn screening, starting in 1960 when Dr. Robert Guthrie developed the first newborn screening test in Buffalo. Now, New York tests each child for 44 different conditions, putting our state at the forefront.

However, there is no universal standard for newborn screening. In 2004, the American College of Medical Genetics completed a report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which recommended that, at a minimum, every baby born in the United States be screened for a core set of 29 treatable disorders. Currently, only 19 states and the District of Columbia require infants to be screened for all 29 of the recommended disorders. A child's

life in one state should never mean more or less than a child's life in another. Every child born with a disease, whether it is common or rare, should receive early diagnosis and treatment.

In Congress, I along with Sens. Clinton and

Dodd, and other congressional leaders, have passed legislation that will give parents more screening services and more information so their child has every chance available to lead a long and healthy life. The Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act was recently signed into law by the president. The law will allow for the expansion of newborn screening programs at the state level. It also will create a clearinghouse of newborn screening information to increase understanding of newborn diseases and offer research funding to develop new tools for additional life-threatening disorders.

It is my sincere hope that through the grants and research funding provided for in the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act, every state will be able to coordinate their newborn screening tests in order to bring consistency across the country.

Despite being told their son would have just months to live, Jim and Jill shared eight fulfilling years with Hunter. Along with Hunter's grandmother, Jacque Waggoner, they have been tireless advocates on behalf of enhanced newborn screening and should be commended for their tremendous efforts to raise public awareness about this vital issue. Hunter's life was the inspiration for this legislation and is a tribute to children and their parents who have had to face the pain of experiencing a disease that wasn't caught by newborn screening.



TOM REYNOLDS

Congressman
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