



O-Town News Issue #6

December 1, 2020

Greetings! Oxford is enjoying the beauty of our first snowfall this year creating a winter wonderland with #OxfordNightLights. While the COVID-19 virus keeps us apart, masked, and in too many cases isolated, the seasons of nature are helping us mark time and march forward through this pandemic. Perhaps, we can embrace the winter weather as a welcome sign that we are home safe and warm during this global health crises.

Speaking of winter, this issue offers residents tips for easy and inexpensive ways to protect your home and belongings from winter’s freezing temperatures. We’re also sharing and more outdoor holiday events and activities along with City news. Snuggle up and enjoy!

COVID UPDATE from Butler County Health District 11/30/2020

The Public Health Advisory System for COVID-19 for Butler County is:

RED/LEVEL 3 - High Incidence. This means exposure and spread are very high and residents are advised to limit activities as much as possible.

BUTLER COUNTY COVID-19 CASES		
16,731	192	16,923
Confirmed Cases	Probable Cases	Total Cases

MIAMI UNIVERSITY TOTAL CASES
2,452

Health Recommendation: Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of Infectious Diseases for the National Institute of Health advised Thanksgiving travelers to assume they have been exposed to COVID-19. He recommends they self-isolate and wear a mask around housemates for a minimum of five days. These actions buy time to determine if you are positive and contagious to others.

(Reported by multiple major national news networks on 11/30/2020).

COMMUNITY NEWS...MORE LOCAL, SAFE, HOLIDAY THINGS TO DO!

Drive-Thru Holiday Festival At Oxford Community Park

Saturday, Dec. 5 from 5 PM - 9 PM

Oxford Aquatic Center Parking Lot, 701 Kay Rench Dr.

Oxford's Park & Recreation Department will host a very special and safe Holiday Festival this year! The event will feature drive-thru Santa Visits, a movie on the outdoor projector, a make-and-take craft for the kids, a gift list template to fill out and drop in Santa's special mailbox, and a fun photo op with a 20-foot inflatable Santa. ***And it's all free!*** *All traffic must enter/exit the Fairfield Rd. entrance.*

“Journey Borealis” at Holiday Lights on the Hill Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park, Hamilton

Each year *Pyramid Hill* rings in the Holiday Season with a *light* show exhibit that's fun for family and friend of all ages. With so many events being canceled due to COVID, this is an ideal activity this year for a household or friend bubble. This year's light show, ***Journey Borealis***, runs from Nov. 20, 2020 - Jan. 3, 2021. The 2.5-mile drive-thru experience features over 1 million LED lights and was designed by Brave Berlin, the team behind Blink, Cincinnati's art and light extravaganza. The partnership between Pyramid Hill and Brave Berlin is in its third year. Partnership spokesperson Steve McGowan says “Journey Borealis is dotted with adventure, marked by surprises and surrounded by wonder...you can think of it as a game board or a storybook that magically comes to life.” This year Pyramid Hill is partnering with local arts organizations and musicians to create an immersive experience that tells a story through the journey, ending at the North Pole. The show is supported by a gift from the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile Jr./US Bank Foundation. Open Daily Including Holidays: Monday – Thursday 6–9 p.m. | \$20 Per Carload; Friday–Sunday, 6 – 10 p.m. | \$25 Per Carload. Call **513-868-8336** to pre-pay for a certain night or if you have questions.

Shademakers Garden Center Ready for Christmas at New Location

After 29 years on the Drake Family farm on Fairfield Road, brothers Rob and Doug Drake, owner/operators of Shademakers Nursery & Landscape Inc., expanded and opened Shademakers Garden Center. The new location is the former Whistle Stop Drive-Thru at the corner of South Elm and Spring Street. It offers outdoor shopping, a gift store with social distancing, and a drive-thru with touch-free purchases and pickups. The current holiday inventory includes cut premium North Carolina Fraser Fir Christmas trees and a live tree inventory of Norway Spruce, White Pines and Colorado Spruce.

The Garden Center also has a large selection of poinsettias, wreaths, greens, roping and fresh arrangements for holiday décor. The gift shop includes unique gifts and decorations, ornaments, artificial wreaths/greens, LED light strands and more. Shademakers Garden Center is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m.- 7 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. Stop by and catch the spirit or call for shopping assistance at 513-523-2427 or 513-523-0199. In addition to the new garden and gift center holiday shopping, the landscaping and garden maintenance part business is still open and continues to help area residents with late fall and early winter grounds and landscaping maintenance.

Oxford Lane Library Open, Up, and Running Safely

Thank you to the staff at Oxford Lane Library for caring so much about their Oxford patrons and for all they do to keep Lane library open for the community. The following information from the Lane Library provides Lane's current hours, restrictions, safety guidelines and services.

Hours - Hamilton, Fairfield and Oxford Lane Libraries are open:

Monday–Thursday: 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday & Saturday: 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The first two hours of each day are reserved elders and members of vulnerable populations. All Lane Libraries are closed on Sundays.

Occupancy - There is an occupancy limit of 50 people at a time in each building. If the occupancy limit has been reached patrons will be asked to wait outside

Masks – Masks are required due to the increase in cases of COVID-19 in Butler County. Masks are available if you do not have one. If you are unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition, library employees are happy to serve you through the library drive-thru windows, curbside service, or even via home delivery. Only children under the age of 2 will be permitted in the library buildings without masks.

Distancing – All patrons and all staff are expected to maintain the physical distancing guideline of at least six feet.

Length of Visits – Patrons are asked not to stay in the building longer than necessary. Visits of one hour or less are recommended for most situations.

Returns – Returns will be handled only through the drop boxes. Returned items are quarantined for several days and will still show on your account during this time. Fines are not incurred during quarantine.

Hand Sanitizing - Patrons are asked to sanitize their hands at the hand sanitizing station at the entrance before proceeding into the building. Hand sanitizing stations are also be available throughout the building.

Food and Drinks – any open containers are currently prohibited.

Smith History Library in Oxford is open by appointment only until further notice. Appointments can be made by calling the Smith History Library at (513) 523-3035 or emailing sml@lanepl.org.

The Lane Bookmobile is making stops throughout the community. Visit the Lane calendar for a list of current Bookmobile stops or call 513-523-7531.

* There is no programming or use of meeting spaces in the buildings at this time.

* Lane *will* continue to offer take-home crafts, virtual programs and story times.

Visit Oxford's wonderful Lane Library this Winter. Questions? Call 513-523-7531.

Tips for Winterizing Your Home and Belongings (AARP)

Home maintenance is a primary concern of older adults choosing to age in place in their homes. Helping home maintenance to be easier is part of the Age-Friendly Oxford Housing Action Plan. This article from AARP provides some tips for winter readiness for your home, car and outdoor appliances and machinery.

Driveways, sidewalks and patios: Little cracks in concrete surfaces can quickly grow into big ones with the freezing and thawing of trapped moisture. Sealing cracks with ready-to-use concrete sealant is quick and easy by applying caulking with a squeeze gun or directly from the tube.

Gas grills: If you're through grilling for the season, ***turn off and disconnect*** the ***propane tank*** and store it separately. Cold temperatures are hard on the flexible tubing and causes cracking. ***Open burner valves*** to bleed off any trapped gas. ***Clean*** grates, flavor bars and grease trap using a wire brush and soapy water. Clean out ashes on the bottom of the grill and store in a dry outdoor location. If stored outdoors, wrap the burners in plastic and cover the entire grill in a vinyl grill cover or tarp.

Lawnmowers/gas-powered garden equipment: Clean all gas-powered garden equipment to remove all caked-on grass, dirt and loose rust. Change ***air and fuel filters*** along with the ***oil***. Experts agree that the ***gas tank should be kept filled*** with gasoline treated with a ***gas stabilizer***. Run the engine for about 10 minutes after adding the stabilized gasoline.

Motor vehicles: your car requires a little TLC this time of year to make it safer and more efficient. **Oil** thickens in cold temperatures, making it less effective, so make sure you're using the right oil for winter conditions (see owner's manual). Check/replace **rubber parts** as needed, including hoses, belts and windshield wiper blades. **Air pressure in tires** typically drops as temperatures decrease, so check tire pressure more often during colder periods. Make sure you have the right mix of **antifreeze** in your radiator (get an inexpensive tester from an auto supply shop). If your **car battery** is more than three years old, have it tested to make sure it holds a charge.

Furnaces and ductwork: Inspect and change your **furnace filters** once a month during heating season. If your home is heated by forced-air, it's worth the cost to have your **ductwork** both cleaned out and properly sealed and repaired by a professional every few years. The U.S. Department of Energy says, about 20 percent of the warm air is wasted because of leaks and poorly sealed connections in the ductwork. A full, professional furnace cleaning and tune-up costs about \$150 and will likely more than pay for itself in winter fuel savings.

Fireplaces and chimneys: Devote a little time to your fireplace and chimney before you light it for the first time this fall. **Having your chimney professionally cleaned and inspected every two or three years is highly recommended if you use your fireplace regularly.** To prevent water damage and possible fire hazards, fill cracks in the masonry work and around the chimney with a fireplace mortar product available at home improvement centers. Make sure the damper closes tightly when the fireplace isn't in use, so as to reduce the amount of heat escaping up the chimney.

DIY weatherproofing: Caulking, weather stripping around windows and doors, "shrink and seal" plastic window kits and spray foam insulation for filling larger gaps and cracks are all easy and inexpensive fixes.

Outdoor water supplies/pipes: Unless outdoor **water faucets** are insulated or specifically designed for year-round use, the water supply to them needs to be shut off and the fixtures opened and properly drained before temperatures freeze. **In-ground irrigation systems** for lawns/landscaping need to be fully drained to avoid freezing. Check and properly **insulate any exposed pipes** in crawl spaces and along exterior walls of the home. A burst water pipe is expensive to repair, as are the costs of repairs from the resulting water damage.

Need Help Winterizing Your Home, Yard and Car?

Oxford Seniors, Inc. maintains a list of local workers who provide home repair and home maintenance services such as electrical work, plumbing, painting, yard work, gutters cleaning, odd jobs and snow removal. Service providers must register and provide references but Oxford Seniors does not vet the workers so it is up to you to interview them and call their references before deciding to hire. Call (513) 523-8100 to have the list of service providers sent to you.

Home Repair and Home Maintenance Workers In Demand

Oxford area residents age 50+ reported in a 2018 survey that finding help with home repairs and maintenance is very important to them yet they do not think adequate services in this area are easily found. If you have home repair and maintenance skills and are seeking work, call Oxford Seniors, Inc. to register as a service provider. Registration and references are required. (513) 523-8100

CITY OF OXFORD NEWS

(City E-Newsletter 11/30/2020)

Explanation of the Electric Aggregation Program

You may have received a letter from **Duke Energy explaining a change to the Electric Aggregation Program**. All Oxford residents are automatically enrolled in the City's electric aggregation program that purchases green energy credits. The City of Oxford has changed the provider from AEP to Energy Harbor, but this will not have any impact on your service. You do not have to do anything unless you want to opt out of the Electric Aggregation Clean Energy Program. Here is a summary of the main questions about this service:

What is the Oxford Electric Aggregation Program? The City's electric aggregation program provides residents and small business in Oxford with the opportunity to purchase renewable energy at a competitive price. The City's electric provider is Energy Harbor and the City's contract with Energy Harbor stipulates 100% renewable energy. Energy Harbor certifies that our supply is 100% wind energy sourced from Texas. The current rate is 4.71 cents per kWh.

What if I want to Opt-Out? Around October of each year you will receive a letter asking whether you want to opt-out of this program. This is required by law. You do not need to respond if you wish to continue in the electric aggregation program. You will automatically be enrolled. If you do not want to enroll and choose to opt-out, you will need to respond as outlined in the letter.

Why am I getting solicitations from other providers? The electric energy market in Ohio is deregulated. You will receive offers from other companies wanting your business. You can ignore these offers if you choose to remain in the Oxford Electric Aggregation program.

What is renewable energy? Renewable energy comes from sources such as wind, solar or hydro. Energy Harbor's renewable energy plan is produced from 100% wind power and is Green-e® Energy certified. Purchasing RECs supports the development of renewable energy generation resources and has lower greenhouse gas emissions than traditional energy resources.

What is traditional energy? Traditional energy comes from burning fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, crude oil, and petroleum. If you prefer a traditional energy plan (4.62 cents per kWh for a period of 36 months) instead of the 100% renewable energy plan, call 1-866-636-3749 to enroll.

Who is Energy Harbor Energy? Energy Harbor is a certified Competitive Retail Electric Service (CRES) provider. Located in Akron, Ohio, Energy Harbor sells electricity supply to customers at market-based prices rather than regulated rates offered by your local utility (Duke Energy).

How do I enroll? All eligible customers will be automatically included in the program unless you choose to "opt-out" after receiving a letter from the City about the program. If you "opt-out," you will continue to be served by your local electric utility's standard service or until you choose an alternative electricity provider. If you do not respond to the letter, the utility will complete the enrollment process.

Once the utility completes your enrollment, you will be mailed an enrollment confirmation notice that your electric service will be provided by Energy Harbor. The PUCO rules require Energy Harbor to send a letter to all eligible customers in the City of Oxford. Customers already in the program will receive a letter from Energy Harbor providing them an opportunity to opt-out of our program. This is required anytime the rates are changed even if they are reduced. Customers not enrolled in the program will also receive an opt-out letter.

If you are in the program and wish to remain, you do not need to do anything. Participants who wish to not continue must return the opt-out form **or** call Energy Harbor. Every eligible customer in Oxford will receive a letter from Energy Harbor whether or not they are in the program. The letters were mailed in November.

City of Oxford Administrative and Departmental Updates

(as of City E-mail newsletter: 11/30/2020)

Oxford's Service and Engineering Department is working with Ohio EPA to monitor our wastewater for COVID-19 genetic material to assist in gauging community spread of the virus.

Oxford Police Department is currently reviewing procedure for data collection on field stops.

Webinar Highlights Efforts to Mitigate Carbon Emission

(from the Oxford Press, 11/29, Bob Ratterman)

Panelists from the City of Oxford's Climate Action Steering Committee and Miami University's Climate Action Task Force reported on actions being taken to address climate change and reduce carbon emissions in the Oxford/Miami environment. The panel occurred on Nov. 18 during the One Climate One Community Webinar hosted by Oxford League of Women Voters. The City and the University have both signed commitments to reduce the community's carbon emissions.

City Council member Jason Bracken reported that the City has already started electric aggregation, commercial food scrap composting and development of a bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. Funding has been allocated to retrofit city streetlights with LED and to purchase an electric vehicle for City use. There is a need to study gas emissions from the City's closed landfill and interest in exploring that site for a potential solar panel field.

According to Miami's Director of Sustainability, Adam Sizemore, a geothermal plant opened on campus in 2014 and a geothermal well field is in place on the Western Campus. The goal is to eliminate steam heating by 2026. So far the University's net use of fossil fuel is down by 35%. Dr. Zazycki, Director of Miami's Institute of Environmental Science talked about the dual role preparing students for future careers and current service related to Climate Change. IES students are currently preparing a greenhouse gas inventory tool for the City of Oxford.

Hard copies of the League of Women Voters One Climate One Community presentation are available. Contact Joan Potter-Sommer through Oxford Seniors (513) 523-8100 to request a copy. A recording is available through YouTube-One Climate One Community 11-18-20 LWV.

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