



Student health center
offers free flu shots
» PAGE 3



Painful memories of
a dark time
» PAGE 4



Former AU start con-
tinues career in Spain
» PAGE 6

the Collegian

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“Oil and water do not mix”

Oil and gas companies explore Northeast Ohio for fracking opportunities



Left: Monroe Twp. resident Melanie Switzer discusses the repercussions of using water from the Mohican area with Theresa Clark at the Walk for the Mohican River event on July 29. Right: Monroe Twp. residents gathered for a peaceful protest in front of the frack pad that was in the process of being built in Green Twp. on County Rd. 2375 Ashland County.

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Several southeastern Ohio counties are in the process of being fracked for oil and gas by two different companies that are now exploring north central Ohio as a viable option for new sites.

Near Ashland, two companies, TransCanada and Cabot Oil & Gas, have begun the process of drilling exploratory wells to find signs of oil and gas.

The hydraulic fracturing process has been widely debated for many years, by both conservationists and economists. Various communities and neighborhoods have created coalitions to rally together to end the process.

Several local landowner groups, like the Mohican Basin Landowners’ Association have met to discuss what the exploratory wells mean for the landowners near the site.

Lisa Kvochick, member of the Clear Fork Landowners’ group, said she received a letter from Cabot in December of 2017 and that sparked her interest in researching what was coming to the area, as she lives across the road from one of the drilling sites.

Kvochick said she does not feel that the companies are dealing fairly with landowners in the area.

“I feel like there is not enough transparency about what they’re exactly doing,” she said. “It seems

like it’s a little bit underhanded the way they’re going about getting these permits. Where they’re drilling horizontally in the property adjacent to ours, that was our farm that was split into a smaller piece, and they never signed any agreement with Columbia Gas, yet Columbia can still go under that because of the agreement signed in 1943.”

The process means pulling millions of gallons of water from the Black Fork and Mohican Rivers, as well as village water from Loudonville, which was discussed during a recent city council meeting.

“It’s concerning how much water they’re using to do these drills,” said Lisa, “Why are we wasting water to do this when there are other ways we can get energy? I’m not one-hundred percent against it if it can be proven safe, but you don’t know where those chemicals are going to go in that fracking process.”

Mike Kvochick commented on the beauty of the area and the natural resources, saying it was one of the reasons he and his wife, Lisa, love the area.

“This site is within a mile of Pleasant Hill and now they’re starting another one that’s right across the street from Malabar Farm,” he said.

The drilling is taking place near Pleasant Hill Lake between Barron road and Cole road in southern Richland county, where the

nearby residents were told that they were adding in storage.

Many of the members of these groups have spoken to politicians like member of the House of Representatives Mark Romanchuk, member of the Ohio Senate Larry Obhof and the Ashland and Richland County Commissioners in order to share their concerns. The landowners have also been a part of peaceful protests near the sites, a walk for the Mohican River and a health fair to inform other local residents of health concerns.

Steve Johnson, the Democratic candidate from the 70th district running for Ohio House of Representatives, made an appearance at the health fair to learn more about the concerns that citizens have for the health of themselves and those around them.

“As much as I hate to admit it to these folks, fracking is not going to go away, so we need to do it in a much more responsible way,” Johnson said. “The only way that’s going to happen is if we have people in state government that are focused on the environment and focused on the people—not so focused on the oil and gas industry.”

The health fair brought many different ideas for a more sustainable community to one place. Scott Hackney’s booth was focused on renewable energy, he explained how people cannot rely on sources that are limited when there are renewable sources like solar and

wind energy.

Hackney works for BrightSpot Energy Solutions and moved to Ohio after working in the wind industry in California for 11 years.

“I don’t believe we should be dependant on anybody. As far as supply and demand goes, I think supply is going to go down and demand will go up, but I don’t think we have enough resources to accommodate that,” Hackney said. “What they’re doing in the process of getting oil is destroying water tables and the environment, plus they’re having more and more earthquakes in places they’ve been, like Oklahoma.”

Along with the dangers of earthquakes and air pollution, Laura Burns, with Moms Clean Air Force believes there is a reason for the concerns about health.

Moms Clean Air Force is a bipartisan organization that was started in 2011 by a grandmother concerned about mercury pollution. The organization is primarily in Washington D.C., but has workers on the ground in 16 states working on issues primarily concerning children’s health and air quality.

“The primary issue with oil and gas is that at every single stage of the [fracking] process, from the moment they drill down to the pipelines and compressor stations—there is leakage of gas. Sometimes it’s accidental and sometimes it’s intentional because they have to release the pressure,” Burns said.

“You will see the flames coming out of those stations and that’s an intentional flare, but when they do that they’re dumping methane and benzene and toluene – all these chemicals into the air that are not good for your health. They’re neurotoxins, they are documented as being contributing factors to cancer. If you’re breathing it in, they’re impacting your body, whether you realized it right away or not.”

Burns said she believes the people in the community were preyed upon because they needed the money that the companies gave them for signing a lease.

“Theoretically this is an improvement [from using coal] in our energy needs, but it doesn’t mean it’s the best option, and it doesn’t mean we should just say “our homes are warm, so we’re going to stay here” if you’re going to be working in an industry you should always be moving forward and increasing the safety, increasing the ways that people are held accountable for it,” Burns said.

“I think that our residents deserve more safety and protection. You can’t live your life in fear, but at the same time, to not have fear you have to know what’s going on around you.”

Cabot Oil & Gas and current House Representative Darrell Kick did not return a request for comment by the time of print.

Mental Health and Recovery Board held annual suicide prevention walk

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Many individuals gathered for the second annual Suicide Awareness Prevention walk hosted by the Mental Health and Recovery Board on Sept. 30.

The walk strives to bring awareness to the serious nature of suicide, as well as support the fighters, admire the survivors and honor the taken, according to the event flyer.

“Participants can honor or remember someone who has committed suicide,” Dr. Deborah Sullivan, director of Campus Wellness at Ashland University, said.

The walk started at the Ashland Professional Building at 34 W. Second St. and 221 Church St. at 2 p.m. Participants traveled toward Center Street, took a left on College Avenue before making a stop at the archway in front of Hugo Young Theater.

Electrical equipment and music were provided by Ashland University’s tech crew, known as the “sacred part” of the walk. Participants heard speakers and readings pertaining to emotional wellness and suicide before reading the names of those who have become victims of suicide.

By the arches, participants were able to write the names of their

lost loved ones on butterflies or birds and place them in a designated tree, further honoring their memory.

Following that, participants then walked to Claremont, before returning to the Ashland professional building.

Around 250 participants signed up for the walk. Among those was AU student Aashawnti West.

West feels very strongly about bringing awareness to suicide, and takes it upon herself to educate her peers about the issue. West’s young cousin committed suicide, and in her hometown of Canton, OH, this is something students struggle with West said.

“Ever since then, I’ve never stopped passing up the opportunity to educate others on suicide awareness because it is a major leading cause of death in my generation,” she said.

West also has a very small tip for people if they wonder what they can do to make sure their friends and loved ones are not at risk – reach out.

“I make an effort to say at least ‘hello’ to the people I know because you never know what students are facing behind closed doors,” West said. She also feels that not just her generation, but previous and future generations need to make more of an effort to bring aware-

ness to suicide.

While she has not personally been affected by this issue, Sullivan knows that this is an issue that affects many people. She said when she teaches her class, she asks students by a show of hands how many of them know someone that has committed suicide and “unfortunately every year, the hands increased.”

David Ross of the Mental Health and Recovery Board said suicide is the second leading cause of death ages 15-34, and is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S.

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INDEX

- Opinion 2
- News 3
- Features 4
- Sports 6

