

# Views & Voices

WEEKEND  
May 31-June 1, 2014

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**Q.** Should new schools pay the millions of extra dollars to construct storm shelters for hundreds or even thousands of students?

**35.9%** • Yes, complete safety is a must at all costs.

**27.5%** • No, we can never be completely safe and we have to weigh the odds with the reality and cost.

**30.3%** • No, far too expensive with little likelihood of use.

**6.3%** • Undecided.

### Up Next ...

If the Illinois gubernatorial election were today, who would receive your vote?

- Bruce Rauner.
- Pat Quinn.
- I won't be voting.

Vote at [mywebtimes.com](http://mywebtimes.com)

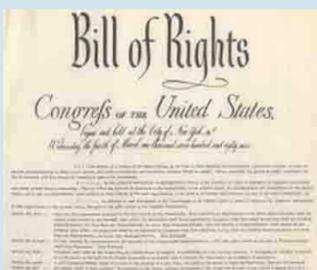
## VOICES

### Today's Issues ...

**COKIE AND STEVEN B. ROBERTS:** "The VA's problems are hardly new. Horror stories about wait times have been around for years. Yet, when Democrats proposed legislation earlier this year providing funds to improve VA services, all but two Senate Republicans joined a filibuster to bury the bill. Republicans feel free to take these positions because veterans play a steadily declining role in public life. In the current Congress, only one in five members has served in the military; in the early 1970s, almost three out of four lawmakers were veterans." **C2**

**FLO HERTZNER, Bridges Senior Center Walking Club:** "Everybody looks out for one another. That's what I appreciate the most." **C3**

**MILENA STRALKA, Leland High School:** "As everything is moving ahead in my life, I can tell my mother is upset her baby girl is moving away and my father is worrying every day because I will be away from home and not in a distance for him to come to me if I need help. I love my family, and I love the fact they worry because they care. I am glad I get to prove their worries wrong and show them I'm going to be just fine on my own. And I am thankful they have done everything in their power to put me where I am today. I wouldn't have anything I do if not for them, and the only way I will be able to repay them is to do the same thing for their grandchildren and show them their teachings truly rubbed off on me even if it doesn't seem like it." **C4**



### Write To Us!

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT** is for everybody. Exercise that right by expressing your thoughts, comments and opinions in letters to the editor.

Submitted letters must include the writer's name, city of residence and telephone number.

**MAIL LETTERS TO:** Voice of the People, The Times, 110 W. Jefferson St., Ottawa, IL 61350.

**FAX LETTERS TO:** 815-433-1639.

**EMAIL LETTERS TO:** [newsroom@mywebtimes.com](mailto:newsroom@mywebtimes.com) or visit [TheTimes.com](http://TheTimes.com)

All letters and guest columns become property of The Times.

### TO THE TOP ▲

**Dora Blickensderfer and Flo Hertzner walk around Ottawa's Walsh Park as part of the Bridges Senior Center's walking club. Additional coverage is on page C3.**

The Times | Tom Siskak



## OUR MISSION

The Times rigorously endorses the Constitution, free speech, increased government accountability, protecting taxpayers and individual property rights. We encourage debate, respect, involvement, innovation, fair and reliable reporting and recognition of achievement.

# Relax Inn: Template for Streator success?

### THE ISSUE

New owners renovating, cleaning up Streator motel

### OUR VIEW

Shah family showing great initiative and investment

Kevin and Reshma Shah have done more than just aligned their money and their mouths.

The couple, formerly of Glendale Heights, moved their family to one of the Streator area's most notorious locations last July — Pine Towers. But not as tenants, as owners. Then they got to work.

They shed the Pine Towers name, and hopefully, its deserved reputation for crime and grime. The facility, at 1551 N. Route 23, just north of Streator, now is the Relax Inn. The name is far from the only change.

The Shahs cleaned, exterminated, remodeled and refurbished the 23 guest rooms, built an addition with larger rooms and an expanded kitchen for guests seeking longer stays,

installed outdoor lighting and added 16 security cameras. New flooring, furniture, air conditioning and flat-screen televisions were placed in each room. Private bathrooms have been renovated with new showers and sinks. A picnic area was added. There is wireless Internet, a laundry room and a Starbucks coffee machine. Contractors are working on the exterior in advance of a formal grand opening.

"This is not your father's Pine Towers. In fact, it's not even your big brother's Pine Towers. Everything you knew about Pine Towers should be put to rest. The Relax Inn is open for business, and that's a very good thing for Streator."

"We want people to stay here and spread the word," Kevin Shah told The Times. "Word of mouth is the best business. When people tell others in the community that we have a good place, it will spread and bring more business."

"We don't want any more garbage people," Reshma Shah added. "We stopped renting rooms to bad people."

So far, so good. Criminal activity has dwindled. Security cameras monitor the exterior around the clock from within the Shahs' room. The La Salle County Sheriff's Office has received only two police reports since the Shahs took over, noting the decline from hundreds of calls since 2000 under previous ownership.

"Pizza places wouldn't come out here (under previous ownership) because they weren't getting their money," Reshma said. "They are now coming back out here, and I told them if they have someone who doesn't pay, to let us know because we don't want those people here."

Less crime is always desirable. More hotel rooms is a benefit to city, even outside the city itself, as a recent feasibility study showed the city could accommodate another 60 rooms. That study also revealed Streator businesses were directing visiting partners to Ottawa hotels — because there weren't enough good places to send them in Streator. The Relax Inn should help reverse that

trend and keep those patrons in town.

As first-time business owners, the Shahs say they understand the challenge ahead, but they are committed to succeeding. They want to buy other hotels and grow their business once the Streator motel is established.

Streator is a great place for that type of initiative. What other areas of the community might be underserved? Where else could an entrepreneurial family move in, challenge the status quo and start building a successful career? The Shahs are not the only folks to take on such a challenge in Streator, and hopefully they won't be the last.

Restoring and operating the Relax Inn has been and will continue to be a tremendous amount of work, but the Shahs appear up to the task. We wish them luck and thank them for investing in the community. Here's hoping they are not an outlier but an inspiring example to others. Streator just might be a city of success stories waiting to happen.

## Why childhood memories grow dim

Why is it so hard to recall memories from early childhood? The creation of new nerve cells erases older memories, causing "infantile amnesia."

1

**AGE 1 TO 2**  
Parts of brain involved in memory still developing

### PREVERBAL MEMORY

Children can recall events they have no words for

3

**ABOUT AGE 10**  
Many memories from child's early life, especially preverbal memories, have been lost

2

**YOUNG CHILDREN** can remember experiences from before about age 3

### CHILDHOOD AMNESIA

About age 3 1/2: Brain development causes adults to lose almost all memories older than this age

4

**ADOLESCENT** Major changes in brain complete childhood, or "infantile amnesia"

5

**ADULT** Some early memories are actually based on other people's stories about the past

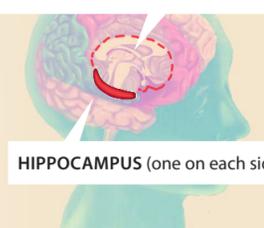
GRAPHIC of the week

## Hippocampus: A key to memory loss

New studies of mice and guinea pigs found memory loss coincides with growth of new cells into hippocampus.

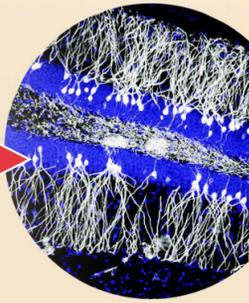
SOURCE: McClatchy-Tribune News Service

**LIMBIC SYSTEM:** Structures deep in brain; formation, storage and recall of memories based here



**HIPPOCAMPUS** (one on each side)

Microscopic image shows neurons (nerve cells) growing into center of hippocampus



# Thank you Maya Angelou ... for your songs

*The horizon leans forward, Offering you space ...*

These words seem powerful to me, an invitation hard to resist.

They nudge and push and encourage ... and reassure — do not be afraid.

These words are nestled within the poem "On The Pulse of Morning," written by Maya Angelou for the 1993 inauguration of President Bill Clinton.

In so many ways, she was the perfect person to speak to the importance of embracing each day as the start of something better ... for the world and thus for yourself.

Her life was devoted to writing, singing, dancing, teaching ... shouting this message.

Maya Angelou died on May 28 at the age of 86. Her messages will remain, of course, as part of her legacy.

What an amazing woman, a "global renaissance woman" as noted on her website ([mayaangelou.com](http://mayaangelou.com)), where her biography details include poet, memoirist, novelist, educator, dramatist, producer, actress, historian, filmmaker and civil rights activist.

The statement posted by her family online reads in part: "Her family is extremely grateful that her ascension was not belated by a loss of acuity or comprehension. She lived a life



### PaperWork

LONNY CAIN

as a teacher, activist, artist and human being. She was a warrior for equality, tolerance and peace. The family is extremely appreciative of the time we had with her, and we know that she is looking down upon us with love."

We all hack out our own path through life, making choices — some good, some bad. Most of us won't be famous or walk into a national spotlight, but do not think you have no impact, that you are not important.

That was an important part of her message. Turn to her words for inspiration and encouragement. Listen to some of what she has said, as compiled online this week at [USAtoday.com](http://USAtoday.com):

▶ "Nothing can dim the light which shines from within."

▶ "Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its

destination full of hope."

▶ "I believe that each of us comes from the creator trailing wisps of glory"

▶ "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

▶ "You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."

▶ "The need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind."

▶ "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."

▶ "I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back."

▶ "We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated."

▶ "You are the sum total of everything you've ever seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot — it's all there. Everything influences each of us, and because of that, I try to make sure that my experiences are positive."

▶ "One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous or honest."

▶ "A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."

Her song was precious. So is yours.

As I have said many times, words are seeds that grow and live on. Write them down. Plant them. Share them.

From words come more words ... your words. And actions ... your actions.

*The horizon leans forward, Offering you space*

*To place new steps of change Here, on the pulse of this fine day*

*You may have the courage To look up and out and upon me,*

*The Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.*

*No less to Midas than the mendicant.*

*No less to you now than the mast-odon then.*

*Here on the pulse of this new day*

*You may have the grace to look up and out*

*And into your sister's eyes,*

*And into your brother's face,*

*Your country,*

*And say simply*

*Very simply*

*With hope —*

*Good morning.*

**LONNY CAIN** is managing editor of The Times. To share thoughts, comments or ideas, please call 815-431-4041 or email [lonnyc@mywebtimes.com](mailto:lonnyc@mywebtimes.com) or attach a comment to this column on our website. You are also welcome to stop by or mail to The Times, 110 W. Jefferson St., Ottawa, IL 61350.