




**Self Sufficiency, Education & Employment**


 [Study Finds Public Discontent With Colleges](#)  
Most Americans believe that colleges today operate like businesses, concerned more with their bottom line than with the educational experience of students, according to a [new study](#). And the proportion of people who hold that view has increased to 60%, from 52% in 2007. At the same time, nearly 2/3 of those surveyed said that colleges should use federal stimulus money to hold down tuition, even if it means less money for operations and programs.


 [Oishei program focuses on basics](#)  
The region's largest private foundation has launched an initiative aimed at addressing basic human needs. The John R. Oishei Foundation has invested \$1 million in the initiative, designed to help residents find the help they need right in their own backyards. The program will include 3 traveling teams comprised of nonprofit professionals with expertise in human and social services. The teams will move throughout Erie and Niagara counties over the next 2 years, spending up to a month in each community.

More coverage on Oishei program...


 [Oishei Foundation targets holes in poverty net](#)

 [Plan Pushed on Lending to Students](#)  
The Obama administration sought to bolster support for its plan to overhaul [student lending](#), attacking banks that oppose it for enjoying "a free ride from taxpayers for too long." Secretary of Education [Arne Duncan](#) repeated the administration's assertion that the direct offering of student loans by the federal government, and an end to subsidies to private lenders, would save taxpayers \$87 billion over 10 years. The savings would be used to aid early-childhood education, [community colleges](#) and needy college students.


 [High Schools to Offer Plan to Graduate 2 Years Early](#)  
Dozens of public high schools in 8 states will introduce a program next year allowing 10th graders who pass a battery of tests to get a diploma two years early and immediately enroll in [community college](#). Students who pass but aspire to attend a selective college may continue with college preparatory courses in their junior and senior years. Students who fail the 10th-grade tests, known as board exams, can try again at the end of their 11th and 12th grades.


 [Buffalo Researchers and Advocates Join to Tackle Poverty](#)  
Numbers and data can tell us a lot about the effect of Buffalo's economy on its people. Sadly, it tells us that Buffalo is the 3<sup>rd</sup> poorest city in the country. A full third of people who live here struggle just to get by. But what can numbers do to feed people or put a roof over their heads? Academics and activists believe quite a lot.

**Community Health**


 [Area counties get low rankings in health study](#)  
Four WNY counties, including Erie and Niagara, rank among the least healthy in the state in a new national report. "Where we live matters to our health," begins the County Health Rankings, a study by U. of Wisconsin Population Health Institute funded through Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

**Regional Assets**


 [Albright Knox Art Gallery Shows Everything Kuitca](#)  
AKAG opens a major exhibition tracing the work of Argentine artist Guillermo Kuitca. The 48-year old artist is known around the world and his work is collected by major galleries. Kuitca uses a larger context that explores physical and social systems, as well as public and private space. His map paintings zero-in with minute detail showing the real and sometimes fictitious connections between highways, cities and countries.

 [Plan to close 41 state parks attacked from all quarters](#)  
The response to Gov. David A. Paterson's plan to close dozens of state parks, including six in Western New York, went something like this: What is he thinking? Paterson proposes closing 41 parks and 14 historic sites come April 1, and reducing services at 23 other parks, including the cash cow Niagara Falls State Park. His plans would save \$6.5 million. The state's budget deficit for the coming fiscal year amounts to \$8.2 billion.

**Strengthening Neighborhoods**

 [Mayor unveils new development agency](#)  
Some business leaders and neighborhood activists are praising a plan unveiled by Mayor Brown to abolish a widely criticized city development agency and set up a "one-stop shop" for businesses and homeowners in an another agency. Eliminating the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corp. and shifting all functions to the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency was one initiative Brown announced in his fourth State of the City address.

**Philanthropy/Grantmaking**

 [Social Innovation Fund Issues Call for Grant Proposals](#)  
The Corp. for National and Community Service issued its [final notice](#) on how it plans to spend the Social Innovation Fund, paving the way for organizations to prepare their grant applications. The notice includes several changes to an outline that the agency issued last month on how it would award the \$50-million in grants designed to help nonprofit groups expand promising approaches to social problems.