



A feature publication of The Courier and Review Times

### Ohio's Mythical Beasts Come To Life-size Display

#### By BRET NYE Discover 419

FREMONT — Calling all paranormal pundits, creature creeps and beastie buffs: A new museum exhibit devoted to cryptids, myths and all things odd in Ohio's history has opened its freakishly large jaws to the public in Fremont.

The Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library and Museums at Spiegel

Grove are hosting an exhibit on the weirdest parts of Ohio's folkloric past called "Ohio: An Unnatural History" through Nov. 1. The exhibit focuses on myths and legends local to the state, as dreamed up by Dan Chudzinski, curator of the Mazza Museum at the University of Findlay and an artist who has consulted on films and other art projects.

"In this exhibit, we are going to look at what folklore is and why it's important," said Kevin Moore, curator of artifacts at the museums.

"And paranormal ideas are really popular right now, in pop culture, podcasts and TV shows," he said. "We wanted to talk about which of these ideas pertain specifically to Ohio, find out what our legends are and where they came from and try to parse out which kernels of history we can." Chudzinski gave life to Ohio's monsters and myths after being approached by the Hayes Library and Museums. He and facility managers got together and began to plan how to exhibit Ohio's folkloric history, considering there is no hard evidence of these mythical beings to put on display.

"I design a lot of creatures and have consulted on projects for films and books," Chudzinski said, "and that was the role they wanted me to fill. It worked out especially well, because I also had done a lot of personal research into cryptids from the special effects I've done."

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Chudzinski said he wanted to make the creatures appear as real as possible, even if they aren't necessarily real creatures.

"I ... pay a lot of attention to animal behavior in my creations," he said. "I also used my experience in taxidermy and the research I've done to make these sculptures and illustrations." Chudzinski said his youth was full of dissections and unusual pets, since his mother was head of a college biology department. He said his family was also "full of great storytellers."

"When I asked my parents whether the Lake Erie monster existed, rather than telling me it didn't, they would tell me to go and find out for myself," he said.

This upbringing led him to work with the Toledo Zoo, where he first helped catalog the Biofact room in the basement, full of skulls and hides and unidentified things.

"At the time, they'd just skin a zoo animal when it died and do a necropsy, which is like an autopsy for animals," he said. "Once, I sat in on a necropsy for a snow leopard, and I interrupted them and asked if I could step in, because they weren't really preserving the animal. They let me, and I removed the skin, and they asked me then to become their guy for taxidermy."

Chudzinski would go on to skin a hippo at the zoo, and is even affiliated with the work today, albeit in a different capacity.

"I always wanted to be close to those animals, so it was a way they could live on for me," he said. "I also used that era for education about animals." In creating his depictions for "Ohio: An Unnatural History," Chudzinski researched witness and police reports taken from those who claimed to have seen the creatures over the years and used the information and imagery as references for his own creations. He treated the process like a police sketch artist would, in terms of level of detail. But he also wanted his drawings to remain unique and fresh.

"Take the Loveland Frog, for example: Can we mix human and frog anatomy and not make it hokey, and can we also make it look different than everyone else's depictions of the mythical creature?" he asked. "That's what I was



going for."

"His take on Mothman is a great example of his unique depictions, completely different from any other sketches I've seen," Moore said of Chudzinski's work.

"There are a lot of similarities in the descriptions of these cryptids that exist out there, but you don't always get full details," Moore said. "Dan's work is really realistic, but it also imagines those missing parts."

The exhibit features Chudzinski's lifelike illustrations printed onto cardboard cutouts, at the size the creatures have been reported to be. The artist also loaned the museums four creature sculptures he'd made previously.

"Dan's contributions are realistic," Moore said. "And they'll be life-sized, so there will be an 8-foot-tall Bigfoot, or Grassman as he's called in Ohio, in the exhibit, among all the others." Visitors can expect to see depictions of myriad creatures from Native American folklore and Ohio's more recent past, including the pukwudgie, the Lake Erie Monster, the Loveland Frogman and a dogman (not to be confused with the werewolf), among others.

The exhibit also features a collection of information panels examining the study of folklore and why these tales might matter to society.

"We interviewed professor of folklore at Bowling Green State University Dr. Esther A. Clinton about the nature of paranormal beliefs, about the percentage of Americans who believe in the supernatural, and we profiled Ohio's local legends," Moore said. Access to the exhibit is included with regular admission to the museums. Hayes Presidential members are admitted for free. Call 419-332-2081 or visit rbhayes.org. Brey Nye is a reporter for Tiffin's Advertiser-Tribune. He can be reached at bnye@advertiser-tribune.com.

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April 2020



Humans of Findlay is a documentary project based on the blog "Humans of New York." The project was created to introduce many of the unique people of Findlay, Ohio. The man behind the lens and the project is Dave Morrow. Morrow has interviewed over 700 people of Findlay, ranging from age 5 to 102 years old, with a wide range of diversity and backgrounds. Jenna Wilkins has joined Dave in continuing the Humans of Findlay project.

On April 4, 2018, a proclamation was signed by Mayor Lydia Mihalik designating the day as "Humans of Findlay Day." Each of the stories have been read up to 30,000 times, and can be located on humansoffindlay.com, Humans of Findlay Facebook page, as well as in this monthly magazine. Know someone that you feel should be featured? Send a nomination on the Facebook page.

A tribute to an Amazing Human of Findlay Alumni: David Rayford, founder of "Back to Humanity" died in a car accident on March 11th, 2020. He will be dearly missed.

#### **DAVID RAYFORD**



I first met David in December of 2014. He had been nominated for his small grassroots project, Back to Humanity, where he was trying to make life, especially around the holidays better for others. This was the original post:

David Rayford is planting seeds as he starts a new movement here in Findlay called Back to Humanity. Having seen division in people from race, income, education he is trying to break down barriers, reach down and help those in need and establish a community effort to assist each other. It starts small and this past Thanksgiving the budding group fed 5 families. This Christmas they are helping a number of families have a meal and presents.

He has a Facebook account "Bringing Back Humanity" and has had over 500 likes as he reaches out to other like-minded people. He states, "Findlay is full of beautiful people" and that positivity can change us all." He learned his giving and compassion from his single mom who raised three children of her own and three others who needed a home. She struggled, was independent and still put herself through college. David's next extension of his project is "To make a stranger smile Saturday", where you do an act of kindness to a total stranger and leave them smiling. Good Luck David!

Over the last six years I came to care for, love, and admire the pure innocent kindness and compassion that was in this man's heart. He became my "brother from and another mother!" The old balding white guy and the handsome young black man with dreadlocks, truly an odd couple! We worked many projects together to serve others. We also loved to cause a stir as we walked into restaurants together and the heads turned. We hugged each other goodbye out of brotherly love and affection, BUT also to get the reaction of those nearby. And we laughed and laughed.

David was not perfect, he freely admitted that. But he was humble and always trying to better himself. He loved his finance, his family and his children dearly. Each day he posted an uplifting quote, or a story that inspired you to do better, to be a better human being.

His quote for himself was this: "I'm nothing close to "Perfect" ... But learning to appreciate the sunlight throughout every cloud in the sky!"

God bless you and rest in peace, David.





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# Mark Your Calendars!

#### APRIL 3, 4 & 5 - FINDLAY ICE CLASSICS 2020 - ICONIC THE CUBE

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#### APRIL 4 – FINDLAY EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA TEDDY'S RESCUE

Don't miss the special Easter egg hunt for four-legged and two-legged kids. Bring your dogs, kids or the whole family for pictures with the Easter Bunny. Teddy's Rescue will also have tours of the rescue, a silent auction, raffle items, dog nail trims, microchipping, food, drinks and more. \*All dogs must be on a leash. 11:30AM- 3PM at Teddy's Rescue 12409 County Road 99, Findlay.

#### APRIL 4 – TIFFIN CHOCOLATE WALK DOWNTOWN TIFFIN

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Enjoy a sweet stroll through Downtown Tiffin! Walk from business to business gathering unique chocolate treats. Enjoy the walk 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 for the walk or \$35 for VIP, which includes a lunch buffet at The Empire 138 at 11 a.m. or 12:30 p.m. VIP tickets are limited to just 140! Tickets are available at www.eventbrite.com/e/downtown-tiffin-chocolate-walk or at the Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership office.





#### APRIL 18 - BOWLING GREEN CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Cherry Blossom Festival, or O-Hanami, is held annually in April, presented by the Asian Studies Program and the Japanese Club. It started as a gesture of gratitude to the Tokyo Alumni who donated 50 Japanese cherry trees to BGSU in 2001. The festival held in the Grand Ballroom of the Bowen Thompson Student Union features workshops, including: origami, brush writing called shodo; kimono try-ons, tea-ceremony tea tasting, the flower arrangement "ikebana" and traditional Japanese games, raffles, martial art demonstrations and other fun activities.

FREE event and open to the public, begins at 3PM

Bowen-Thompson Student Union, BGSU 1001 E. Wooster St., Bowling Green



#### APRIL 19 - FINDLAY 2020 COURIER WEDDING EXPO THE CUBE

Calling all engaged couples!!! Plan your entire wedding all in one day, in one place. Learn what the latest wedding trends are at the area's largest Wedding Expo! Talk with local vendors one on one, taste delicious food samples, take part in The Cake War contest sponsored by The Baker's Café for a chance to win a FREE wedding cake, enter to win a door prize, and so much more. Couples can register to win the Grand prize package brought to you by Michael Eller Diamonds, Hancock Hotel, My Wood Flowers and The Courier.

Event held at The Cube 3430 N. Main St., Findlay. \$5.00 admission for ages 12 & older. Cash only. 12Noon – 3PM

#### APRIL 19 - FOSTORIA RUN THE RES 5K/10K FOSTORIA RESERVOIR

Run the Res features a 5K and 10K course and the annual "Kids Fun Run" for children ages 3 to 9. This year marks a decade of fundraising for the fight against cancer. The course is on flat, paved roads around the scenic Fostoria reservoirs #2 and #3. Provided with registration is a race shirt as well as a goody bag compliments of the sponsors. Awards will be given to the Top Overall Male/ Female runners 5K and 10K, Top 3 each age group Male/Female 5K and 10K and all Kids Fun Run participants will receive a ribbon. Chip timing and online registration will again be offered this year. Visit www.runtheres.org for additional race details. Event begins at Gray Park.





#### APRIL 19 – FINDLAY ORCHESTRA CONCERT MARATHON CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The University of Findlay Orchestra is a string ensemble composed of more than fifty students, staff and community players. Enjoy a delightful mix of light classics and more up-to-date favorites, sure to please any listener. The orchestra will be under the direction of Soojin Lee of the University of Findlay. For more information visit www.findlay.edu/ arts-humanities-social-sciences/art/orchestra. Doors open at 2PM, event starts at 3PM. This is a FREE event, but a ticket is required for entry. No reserved seating available for this event.



\*At press time, the information was pulled from community websites and was considered current. We apologize for any information that may have been changed/updated after the Discover 419 edition was printed.



#### Watch for your invitation by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

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#### **MICHAEL LAFFERTY**

Dave Morrow is a 60 year old peacetime veteran of the USAF and Utah Army National Guard. He was an educator and an EMT. Dave is currently a documentary photographer and writer. He created the website https://dogtagsandcombatboots.org/ to share the stories of our Veterans. The site is dedicated to the stories of Vietnam Veterans and to the veteran Women Warriors of Ohio. It is hoped to be a place for healing.

Michael was an excellent swimmer and had been a lifeguard with the YMCA in Fostoria prior to enlisting in the Navy. He was sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. He chose to train as an Aviation Ordnance specialist with goals to travel and see other places.

His first assignment was with the VA 44 Squadron. This squadron was attached to the USS Shangri-la, a small carrier. He remembers his first six months were spent in the mess cooking and washing dishes, an assignment designed to instill in new sailors a deep respect for all jobs onboard a ship.

Michael would be transferred to a squadron based on North Island, near San Diego. Here he would train on the Martin P5M Marlin, a "flying boat" that did long range reconnaissance patrols looking for submarines. He would earn his wings there as an aircrew member. His assignments included the VA-144 squadron at Miramar Naval Air Station. Here Michael became skilled loading 20mm cannons, 2.7 rocket pods, guided missiles on the aircraft for training new pilots. In 1961 he was assigned to the "Blue Ghost" the name of the USS Lexington, the namesake for the carrier lost at sea during WWII. He was officially a "red shirt", the color worn on aircraft carrier decks by Aviation Ordnance crew members.

The next ship Michael would be on was the "Connie", the USS Constellation, the flagship of the fleet, where he served two tours in the China Sea from 1962-64. The Constellation was home to a A-4 Skyhawk attack squadron as well as a F4 Phantom II fighter squadro

Michael recalls, "One of my pilots, Lt. JG Everett Alvarez Jr. flying an A-4 Skyhawk on a mission over Vietnam, was the first pilot shot down and captured during the Vietnam war. Alvarez spent the next 8 years in captivity, the second longest time of any POW."

Growing up both his parents were expert marksmen sharpshooters with rifles. At the age of 11 Michael began shooting using a 22-caliber rifle on a police range. During his service aboard ship Michael would often compete with the Marines using an M1 rifle shooting at empty canisters tossed off the ship as the canisters bobbed away in the waves. "I always outshot the Marines! They were not happy!"

Michael left the Navy in 1964 returning to live in Findlay and taking a job with Findlay Industries as a press operator. He would meet and fall in love with Karin, a divorcee with a twoyear-old son. They would marry on June 25th, 1965 and just celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary. Michael adopted Karin's son the following year.

Michael was hired Findlay Fire Department in 1967, was assigned to the "South" station firehouse then located on the corner of Cherry and Main streets. He became a member of the emergency squad. One of his firefighter jobs, partly because he was left-handed was to ride on the back of the old hook and ladders and steer. In 1973 Michael applied for an inspector position and was promoted. In 1975, Michael was promoted to Captain and would serve as the Fire Marshall until his retirement in 1992.

He and Karin have lived in the same house for fifty years this November. They spend their days just enjoying life, riding matching Schwinn bicycles and for much of their marriage competing in rifle marksmanship events where they both held expert ratings.



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