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Give LGH credit where credit is due

As reported by the *Intelligencer New Era*, the opening of an additional South East Lancaster Health Service at 333 N. Arch Street was made possible in part due to a one-time contribution from Lancaster General Hospital of \$2,500,000. This is praiseworthy.

According to LGH's Federal 990 report for 2008, it contributed a total of \$2,630,000 to the clinic, which suggests a subsidy of \$130,000 towards operations. The \$2,630,000 represents 3.3% of LGH's \$78,844,643 'profits' for the year. The previous year, LGH donated \$87,149 to the Clinic out of 'profits' of \$113,326,709 which comes to less than 1/10th of one percent.

At the same time it contributed \$117,000 to Franklin and Marshall College "for program support"!

The bulk of the other grants reported are payments in lieu of taxes to the City and School

District of Lancaster (\$1,380,000 and \$1,372,126 respectively). Other sizable contributions in 2008 went to the James Street Improvement District (\$150,000), the Lancaster Alliance (\$36,0878), Lancaster County Medical Foundation (\$75,0900), Substance Abuse Services Inc. (\$37,000), Susquehanna Association for the Blind (\$25,000), Water Street Rescue Mission (\$51,000), United Way of Lancaster County (\$87,000), Franklin and Marshall College (\$111,0900), and LGH's College of Nursing (\$60,320).

LGH is a Public Charity which dominates the market for health care, so its profits both come from higher charges to the insurers and indirectly from the population. The onetime \$2,500,000 contribution is indeed commendable. But is there any reason why LGH should not be donating 20% of its earnings (our earnings!) for public health, education and social services each and every year?

Is Amtrak brain dead to a tune of over \$1.5 billion annually?

From the "CRS Report to Congress, March 14, 2008: *The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110-161), provided \$1.325 billion in grants to Amtrak plus \$30 million to the states in a new matching grant program for passenger rail-related capital improvements.. Amtrak is requesting \$1.671 billion, which is \$316 million more than Congress appropriated last year...*"

If Amtrak mishandling of the reconstruction of parking at their Lancaster station is an example of how they run the company, there is little surprise that they cost taxpayers over \$1.5 billion in subsidies each year.

First they came up with a parking layout that was stupid beyond belief, in that it didn't add any parking spots for their customers. Instead they relocated employee parking to the prime area. Thanks to *NewsLanc* which raised 'hell' with Amtrak, their local engineers, and officials, the plans was totally revamped.

Next we learn that a couple of weeks ago Amtrak advised the County Commissioners that costs would be \$2.5 million instead of the \$1.7 million previously estimated. How can any enterprise be off by 50% on cost estimates after obtaining bids?
[Continued on back]

Then a visit to the train station indicates that little thought has been given to commuter parking during the construction period, with no spaces set aside for short term parking and an outlandish charge of \$5, be it only for a minute.

We read in the *Intelligencer / New Era* that Amtrak has agreed to accept full responsibility for

the any cost overruns. Is this because there will be no cost over runs or because Amtrak is scared about the adverse publicity and possible investigation by authorities?

We love Amtrak. But we loath wonton stupidity on the part of people who should know better.

LETTER: Shutting down city streets for funeral

“No disrespect intended but this is a state road – did they get permission to do this?”

“THREE HOURS?!? Shutting the street down, right before the court house?! What on earth is the justification for this? This was not the President of the United States.”

SUNDAY NEWS: Editorial “**Lame Excuses**” notes: *“In his two terms, Gov. Rendell has been awfully free with OPM – other people’s money.”*

WATCHDOG: There is no questioning Ed Rendell’s charisma or intelligence. But we have felt disdain for the man ever since he gave a deaf ear to county commissioner and fellow Democrat Molly Henderson’s plea that the state hold off providing \$20 million towards the convention center due to its lack of feasibility. Apparently, his political debt to then powerful senator Gibson Armstrong plus the lobbying efforts of Stevens and Lee on behalf of the High companies were all that mattered to Rendell.

Well, the huge state deficit and resulting cut back on essential services mean a lot to the citizenry. For one example, but for \$3 million of promised funds being diverted to cover convention center cost over-

runs, Lancaster would have a fully renovated and expanded Duke Street library

Has anyone noticed any benefit to businesses or increase in tax collections? Do we see offices moving downtown and stores opening, as promised? Where are all of the minority jobs that were supposed to be created? Hasn’t the CC situated across from the Lancaster Newspapers created a dead block of Queen Street, thus deterring gentrification to the south?

Meanwhile hoteliers throughout the county are taxed to subsidize the albatross without deriving any benefits. Lastly, there is a matter of losing a million dollars a year despite millions in subsidies from the hotel room tax, which ultimately will come from the tourist bureau and the tax payers.

A wag of the tail for the *Sunday News*.

**The above have been excerpted from NewsLanc.com.
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