

Chasing ghosts

Paranormal investigators seek signs of otherworldly spirits in the Southern Tier, PAGE 1D

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A sea scorpion model in one of the museum's dioramas.

NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO

Smithsonian displays find home in Ithaca



NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO

The wing joint of the Quetzalcoatlus.



NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO

A model of the Quetzalcoatlus.



NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO

Steggy, the 110-year-old stegosaurus model.

Prehistoric beasts migrate north to thrill, chill Museum of the Earth visitors

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Some 65 million years ago, the pterosaur Quetzalcoatlus, named for the feathered deity of Mesoamerican lore, once flew above the heads of dinosaurs, its 40-plus-foot wingspan pushing the creature through the cretaceous skies and over the expanse of the arid Texas plain.

Now, Quetzalcoatlus, specifically a model of it, will permanently float in stationary flight above crowds of gawking tourists.

Numerous relics, statues and other displays once calling Washington, D.C.'s Smithsonian Institution home will now be found in a new, permanent home at Ithaca's own Museum of the Earth. The Smithsonian is renovating to make room for new displays and decided rather than disposing of items to "transfer" them to the collections of Ithaca's Paleontological Research Institution.

"When they were planning to make that happen, the planning staff knew there were things they weren't going to include in the completed plan," Warren Allmon, Director of PRI said. "But they didn't want to pitch it."

Three tractor-trailers filled with items came to Ithaca earlier this year, bringing some famous former tenants of Washington's revered museum and adding to a legacy of collaboration between the two museums.

The museum's artist in residence, John Gurche, created numerous



IF YOU GO

What: The Museum of the Earth
Where: 1420 Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca
Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Monday
Admission: \$8 for adults, \$6 for seniors and college students, \$5 for youth ages 4-17
Website: www.priweb.org
How to donate: Donations can be given in person or on the Paleontology Research Institute's website.

Windfall doesn't thwart tax hike

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A \$583,000 windfall in state-mandated pension costs could have left the county tax levy virtually flat for 2016.

Instead of passing the savings to taxpayers, Tompkins County lawmakers spent the majority of the potential savings.

"I'm concerned that we spent that money; frankly, I think some of it could have been put aside," Tompkins County budget committee chairman Jim Dennis, D-Ulysses, said.

Two days after Tompkins County Administrator Joe Mareane released the county's recommended budget, New York's comptroller announced that state-mandated pension costs were significantly less than Mareane had estimated.

"It was two full (percentage) points less than what we had projected — that meant that the pension cost for 2016 were about \$583,000 less than we had estimated in the recommended budget," Mareane said.

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Garrett delivers university address

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During her State of the University address Friday, Cornell University President Elizabeth Garrett discussed plans to hire more faculty, open an office in Shanghai and make the university more competitive for grant opportunities.

The event was part of the 2015 Cornell Trustee-Council Annual Meeting.

During the speech, Garrett touted awards that Cornell professors have recently won, and said she plans to hire 80 to 100 new faculty this academic year.

She mentioned organic chemistry professor William Dichtel, who recently won a MacArthur genius grant.

The university outpaces the national success rate for winning National Science Fund grants, Garrett added. Cornell wins about 25 percent of the grants

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