

## What next? It's always something

I can't concentrate on this column, or anything really, because of this bit in USA Today, "Officials at a maximum-security research lab in Texas report that a vial of a potential bio terror agent is missing, but they say it's likely that the virus has been destroyed and poses no danger."

The bio terror agent is one of five small plastic vials of an obscure virus called Guanarito. It is missing from a locked freezer. And as you read, officials aren't worried. They say we're fine. But Guanarito causes Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever. I don't know what hemorrhagic fever is but I know I don't want it.

I realize I may be alone in my anxiety. It seems like the general public is handling this news of missing Guanarito just fine.

Another thing impeding my ability to get anything done is sink holes. Seems like every day there is a new giant sink hole swallowing entire homes. Out of *nowhere*. Imagine just sitting in your kitchen and sinking into oblivion. I do! At the very least this would impede your ability to write a humor column about domestic life, don't you think? What's the point? The house could sink to China or something.

And speaking of China, am I the only one concerned about the report that there's an entire office-sized building filled with people whose job it is to cyber-spy on the United States? Probably they know what I've been Googling.

And while I'm dealing with all these issues, managing as best I can, I find I'm also worried about celebrities, some of which I'd heretofore never heard of, diving into swimming pools. Of course, I'm talking about this new ABC show "Splash."

I totally had forgotten that Louie Anderson existed and now I'm in love with him. He's 60 and still looks like Louie Anderson. These two factors led to an epic struggle as he tried to get out of the pool. A struggle he won. But I'm worried: What are they going to make him do next?

Also on the program is Ndamukong Suh. Dude. The Lions have enough to worry about and you go and hit your head on the bottom of the pool?

And the very *last* thing I want to do is root for "Baywatch" cast members but dang it, I'm all Team Nicole! Nicole Eggert, former "Baywatch" babe, is battling back after the baby weight — and merciless media taunting. Somehow "Splash" has me yelling "You go, Nicole" at the television screen.

"Splash," I hate that you made me care and worry. I don't have time for this. I've got bigger concerns.

Like is there an Illuminati? Is Beyonce in it? What is it? And sidenote, I worry that I will be included in a Harlem Shake video. Harlem Shake videos are multiplying like bedbugs. How can we be sure we're not included in one against our will?

Finally, how can I be absolutely certain to avoid a fate worse than sink holes, rogue Guanarito and cyber-spies?

Seriously if you have any sure fire ways to get out of making the deviled eggs on Easter, let me know.



Rebecca Regnier

Rebecca Regnier is an award-winning television journalist and writes the humor blog *doesthisblogmakeusfat.com*.

## ONE BOOK, ONE COMMUNITY

# Author shares her own stories

■ Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni read passages from her books "One Amazing Thing" and "Oleander Girl" at a presentation Wednesday night.

BY PAULA WETHINGTON  
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The author of "One Amazing Thing," this year's One Book, One Community theme for Monroe County, captured the attention of a crowd at the Meyer Theater at Monroe County Community College Wednesday night as she related stories of how the book came to be and recited passages from that novel and her newest work, "Oleander Girl."

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a writing professor at the University of Houston, explained that she likes to write in the morning, sometimes pulls her hair out in frustration and lets the characters "take over the story."

In the novel "One Amazing Thing," the emotions swing from anger to frustration to laughter as those who are trapped share stories of their lives to help break tension and fear after an earthquake shakes an office building to rubble.

The stories include someone who hoped to travel to India for the first time, to someone who is in America in part to escape from a failed marriage.

The idea for the book came from Dr. Divakaruni's own experience during Houston's evacuation in preparation for Hurricane Rita. When the freeways clogged with traffic and stalled vehicles, she said people started to get out of their cars and tried to find ways to deal with their frustrations of being trapped.

This year's One Book campaign, which includes 23 community partner agencies and organizations, includes children's story times, cultural films and dance demonstrations and will conclude April 12 with an Indian and Asian buffet dinner.



Chitra Divakaruni, Houston-based author of the novel "One Amazing Thing" (right), talks with Diane Shull during a meet-and-greet event held at Monroe County Community College's La-Z-Boy Center prior to her talk Wednesday night. Mrs. Shull had brought a photograph taken of her in 1974, when on a graduate study trip to India she met Indira Gandhi.

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Dr. Divakaruni proudly showed off her turquoise and blue sari as a salute to her Indian heritage and a huge smile crossed her face many times when she was on stage. But she was not always so comfortable in front of a crowd, she said, explaining how she had been so nervous as a rookie college professor standing in front of a classroom that she shattered a piece of chalk.

After the program, she signed books and the line for the autograph session took about 40 minutes to settle out. This was at the end of a day that had included visits to MCCC classrooms and meetings with community members.

While the book has been the topic of more than a dozen local or regional "one book" campaigns in the past couple of years, Dr. Divakaruni said Monroe's effort stood out for

her because of its community essay project. Area residents have been invited to write their amazing stories for posting on The Evening News' Web site, and selected ones have been appearing in the newspaper in recent weeks. Community writers also were encouraged to record their stories on video for airing this spring on Monroe Public Access Cable Television.

Those attending the program included MCCC students Kaitlin Moore of Dundee, an English language and literature major, and her friend, Chris Butson of Monroe, a philosophy major at Wayne State University, Detroit, who is part-timing at MCCC.

Mr. Butson has not had a chance to read the novel yet, but planned to do so soon because he enjoys literature and writing.

Ms. Moore has finished the book already and found it to

be the topic of discussion at two classes in addition to the community events she had attended. So far, she's found it to be a popular topic.

"I've heard a lot of good things about it," she said.

That being said, neither one admitted to having discovered an amazing story to share about his or her life.

Dr. Divakaruni would probably have been disappointed if she heard that conversation. One of the most heart-felt moments on stage happened when she recited the question posed by one of the characters in her book:

"In everyone's life, there is at least one amazing thing. What's yours?"

She added, "When I wrote that line, an electrifying feeling went through me."

Find the author on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/chitradivakaruni](http://www.facebook.com/chitradivakaruni) or at [www.chitradivakaruni.com](http://www.chitradivakaruni.com).

## GLAD YOU ASKED



A steel beam is maneuvered into place as repair work resumes on the building adjoining (but not owned by) the River Raisin Centre for the Arts last week. Once the beams have been installed, work on the deteriorating roof is planned to begin.

## Building under repair

**Q.** I saw there was something going on at the dilapidated building next to the River Raisin Centre for the Arts on S. Monroe St. What's happening?

**A.** Dan Swallow, director of economic and community development for the City of Monroe, said the building department issued repeated orders to the prior and current owner of the building that it needed repairs and rehabilitation or it would be demolished by the city.

Due to a change in ownership, inactivity by the contractor and discovery of the "unforeseen" structural issues with the build-

ing, repair work had been "significantly delayed," Mr. Swallow said.

The building is owned by LCS Holdings LLC of Monroe.

The recent work being doing was being completed by Iott Building Co.

LCS Holdings bought the building in February, 2012. At the time, the holding company indicated the building would become a beauty salon.

"The city's focus has been accelerating the rehabilitation of the building so that the safety wall can be removed," Mr. Swallow said.

Have a question about something? E-mail [barb@monroenews.com](mailto:barb@monroenews.com) with "Glad you asked" as the subject line and we'll try to get an answer.

## CITY OF FLAT ROCK

### GED course offered in Flat Rock

FLAT ROCK — Flat Rock residents can sign up for a free tutor class that begins Tuesday to obtain a General Education Development diploma.

The course will be held every Tuesday and Thursday through June 12 at Mr. Beans Treatery, 26314 E. Huron River Dr.

Anyone 18 and older can take the class.

There is a \$150 fee for taking the exam at Asher School in Southgate.

People can register online at [supportlocalflatrock.nation-builder.com](http://supportlocalflatrock.nation-builder.com)

The GED test will measure

proficiency in science, mathematics, social studies, reading and writing.

Passing the test gives those who did not complete high school the opportunity to earn their high school equivalency credentials.

The course can accommodate up to 20 people, said Sean Gillaspie, president of [supportlocalflatrock.com](http://supportlocalflatrock.com), a nonprofit organization.

"The slots are filling up," Mr. Gillaspie said earlier this week. "About 25 percent of the population dropped out of high school. This is a good opportunity to complete your certification."

## STATE OF MICHIGAN

### Opponents of emergency manager law sue

DETROIT (AP) — Opponents of Michigan's new emergency manager law are seeking to block it in federal court, saying the measure is unconstitutional.

The tougher emergency manager law, which was passed by the Legislature and signed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder in December, takes effect today.

It gives state-appointed managers authority, among other things, to modify or throw out union contracts.

A lawsuit Wednesday in U.S.

District Court in Detroit seeks an injunction to stop the law.

It claims that the new law is similar to one that voters rejected in November and violates the collective bargaining rights of workers.

Snyder defends the new law, saying it is needed to fix city finances.

Detroit recently got an emergency manager.

Civil rights leader the Rev. Al Sharpton and others plan events today in Detroit.