

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Can we be thankful?

Back in 2008, when my wife retired after 35 years as a teacher in the Pottstown School District, we suddenly became wealthier than 99 percent of the people on earth.

No, we didn't inherit a windfall. My wife simply qualified for a full teacher's pension, guaranteed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

A 2007 study by a team of economists commissioned by the United Nations concluded that assets of \$520,000 or more places a household in the top 1 percent in the world in wealth.

At the time of her retirement, the annuity value of my wife's pension — without considering the worth of our house or Social Security — was more than that.

And there are at least 30 Pottstown School District retirees who enjoy higher pensions.

Most Americans have no conception how wealthy we are compared to people on the rest of the planet.

Even if you only have \$10,000 in assets, you are still wealthier than half the people on earth.

In Pottstown, the median household income is \$50,000. Worldwide, the median household income is about \$10,000.

Pottstown's household income is

higher than the median in most European countries, and ten times higher than the median in most African and southeast Asian countries.

Last week's elections showed democracy is still alive in America. But the freedom we take for granted is missing in China, Russia and other autocracies.

The Ukrainian people have suffered destruction, misery and death since the entirely unprovoked invasion of their country last February. Millions

have fled their country, and millions more have lost electricity and water from Russian missile strikes on essential Ukrainian infrastructure.

Estimates for reconstructing Ukraine, if the war ended today, which it won't, range to \$750 billion.

Ukraine could simply surrender, but polls show that Ukrainians overwhelming want to fight on.

With all this misery in the world, it's embarrassing to see all the constant handwringing about Pottstown's perceived ills and injustices.

Can we be thankful for what we have?



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton



**DESPERATE TO BE IN AMERICA** — This recent *New York Times* photo shows members of a Venezuelan family struggling through the Panamanian jungle on their way to the U.S. border, more than 2,000 miles away. They hope, probably in vain, to be admitted. Congress has been struggling for years to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill.