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ERIE READER

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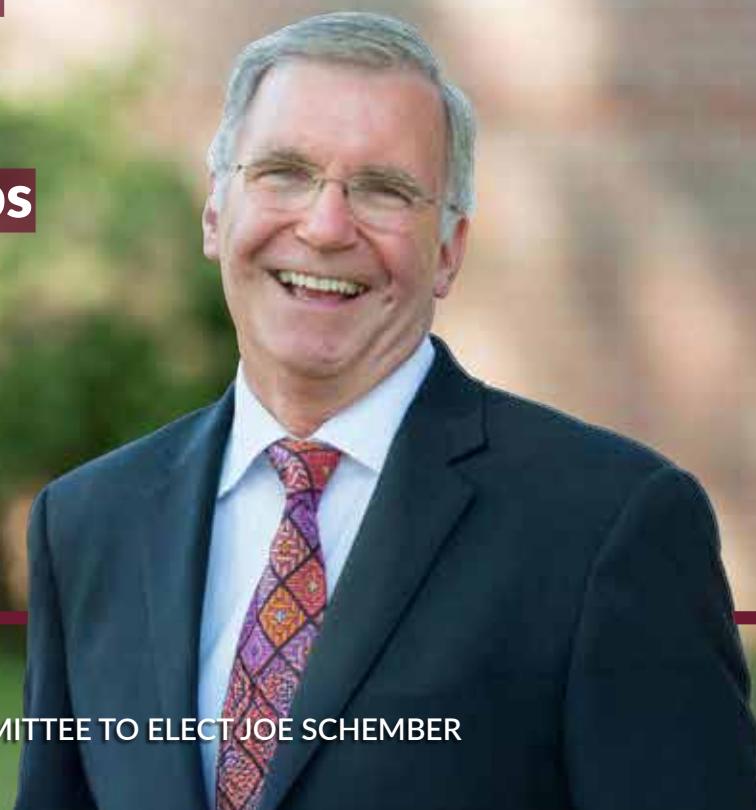
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From the Editor

Yes, in my backyard

My grandma Rosalie always said, "three snows on the daffodils." It was her way of tempering her own expectations of any kind of real spring before at least mid-May in Erie and belying her own impatience. And I've largely found this sage wisdom to be accurate — even though every fiber of my being wants to get out and start planting things in the dirt, I must hold back. We are due for *at least* one more snow on those daffodils.

As the state of the union continues to nose-dive, and as our newsfeed fills up with some fresh hell upon the hour, there are things, like the ecosystems of our own backyards, that we desperately need to focus on in order to ground ourselves. The current administration wants us to despair; they want us to feel overwhelmed; they want us to give up. Russell Vought, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget literally said, "We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected. When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want their funding to be shut down so that the EPA can't do all of the rules against our energy industry because they have no bandwidth financially to do so."

The rage that we feel at thinking that our local environment could actually go back to some version of Bill Murray's 1977 parody "Lake Erie swill," as if that is a good thing for our economy, can *absolutely* feel overwhelming. The politicians attempting to roll back regulations that give citizens the right to clean air and water (you know, to, like, live on planet Earth) are the *real* villains, make no mistake. And absolutely no one wants this. Even the most loyal area Trump supporters cannot say that, in their heart of hearts, they prefer a lakefront with a chemical haze and unusable, polluted beaches. This month, Erie environmentalist and 2024 40 Under 40 honoree Jenny Tompkins unpacks what's happening with the EPA and how that will negatively affect our local waterways and way of life, and what we can do to combat it.

To attempt to avoid that aforementioned overwhelm, let's look to our own figurative backyards, shall we? What are we doing regionally to combat the current administration's war against a healthy planet? Within this issue, you'll find a story about an inner-city grassroots bike co-op, working to get affordable bikes into the hands of anyone who wants or needs one — simultaneously reducing our carbon footprint, recycling discarded bikes, and improving our cardiovascular health. You'll also find a story about a market that is radically local — featuring local and regional produce and products, as well as Erie's first licensed shared-use kitchen. You'll find a column about a nearby maple farm, and how you can take some of your food consumption needs into your own hands. You'll find a story about lesser known parks, hiking trails, and green spaces in the Erie area — for when you desperately need a moment away from your newsfeed.

And there's always your literal backyard (whatever that may look like) calling for you to care for it and nurture our own, personal, natural resources. Doing so allows for some amount of control over your environment as well as providing a necessary disconnect from that which aims to overwhelm and exhaust us. Just don't plant any tender shoots until after those daffodils suffer one more time. You can be sure to thank Grandma Rosalie later.

A New Normal for New Americans?

Assessing the impact of Trump's immigration policies in Erie

By: Dan Schank

Of all the sweeping changes made by the incoming Trump administration, the approach to immigration has been perhaps the most disruptive — and the least surprising.

Though we are less than four months into his second term, Trump has already frozen our refugee resettlement program, substantially limited access to asylum along the U.S./Mexico border, and authorized military aircrafts to deport migrants. During his first three months in office, daily detentions by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have fluctuated between 600 and 872 people per day, according to the New York Times. ICE has also been authorized to enter schools and churches. University professors and graduate students have been detained — and even deported — due to Palestinian advocacy at a time when faith in Israel's handling of the conflict is collapsing. Although some of Trump's decisions are being challenged in the courts, the message is clear — his administration is doing everything possible to establish nativist nationalism as the “new normal.”

So what does this mean on a local level? Contrary to what you may see in your social media feed, the percentage of foreign-born residents in the City of Erie (6.1 percent, according to 2023 U.S. Census data) is lower than the state average (8 percent), substantially lower than the national average (13.6 percent) — and slowly *decreasing* over time. Within that 6 percent of our neighbors, about 57 percent are naturalized U.S. citizens. Obviously, the undocumented population in Erie creates a substantial uptick that is difficult to tally. Finding local data about the undocumented is tricky, but one reliable estimate from the Migration Policy Institute puts the national number between 3.5 and 4.5 percent of the total U.S. population.

Ultimately, about 5,650 legal residents of Erie were born in another country. And our city has made real efforts to welcome them and help them succeed. 2019 saw the creation of a New American Council to connect our newest arrivals to appropriate local agencies and resources. In 2020, Erie became a Certified Welcoming City after meeting several standards regarding equity, economic development, civic engagement, education, and safety — with plans to renew our contract with the nonprofit for four more years in the works. To fortify strong connections with our refugee and New American community, Mayor Schember established an immigrant and refugee liaison for the city in 2018 as well.

Diminishing federal resources

Saeed Taraky, who arrived in Erie following a decade advising the U.S. military in his native Afghanistan, serves as Erie's current liaison. Although he is quick to note that our city “has no role in the implementation or enforcement of federal immigration policy,”



The percentage of foreign-born residents in Erie sits soundly at 6.1 percent, according to the most recent census data, and more than half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens. With the current administration's ruthless crackdown on immigrants and their available resources at the federal level, concerns abound for Erie's New American population.

he worries about diminishing resources from Washington. “The new administration's policies have affected funding sources for Erie's three resettlement agencies,” says Taraky. “These agencies provide vital services such as housing support, job placement, language assistance, and cultural integration.” He is also troubled by the Trump administration's broad rejection of programs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), noting that “resettlement agencies may face difficulty in providing essential services to New American communities. This has made it necessary for local organizations to seek alternative funding through state programs, private foundations, or community partnerships.” Diminishing federal funding will require “creative funding solutions and community-driven initiatives,” according to Taraky.

One important community partner is the Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC), which has provided essential services to our New American population for nearly 50 years. Its executive director, Katie Kretz, finds the new administration's approach to immigration devastating for Erie. “Unfortunately, we have already seen a major shift that will directly impact our work and the entire New American community in Erie,” says Kretz. “We recently received notification from the Department of State that our National Resettlement Agency, the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), has had its Reception and Placement (R&P) program contract terminated. Our two local resettlement partners, USCRI (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants) and Catholic Charities, have also

received the same notice. What we understand this to mean (at this time) is that incoming refugee resettlement into the City of Erie will be eliminated.” It should be added that the families served by the MCRC have all arrived *legally*, and that these cuts may jeopardize their ability to integrate effectively. “Our capacity to provide critical services,” says Kretz, “such as employment assistance, English language learning, and cultural integration will be severely impacted.”

Overcoming barriers and unpacking stereotypes

New Americans arrive in the U.S. in a variety of legal manners. Refugees, asylum seekers, and people with temporary protected status (TPS) all arrive legally. Broadly, legal immigration occurs for humanitarian purposes (refugees fleeing conflicts, for example), family-based purposes (such as parents, siblings, or spouses seeking visas for loved ones), and employment purposes (attracting skilled laborers, students, and professors). Acquiring legal status is complicated and very time-consuming. On a Zoom call in early April, immigration lawyer Alexandria Iwanenko, of the Amicangelo & Theisen law firm (and 40 Under 40 Class of 2024), related a story of a client who put in a visa request for their sister in 2004 that is just being processed *this year*. There are geographic challenges as well. “In Erie, where the refugee population is the bulk of applicants, all citizenship applications are handled in Buffalo,” according to Iwanenko. Some asylum seekers have to travel as far as Arlington, Virginia in their quest for long-term legal residency.



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Time constraints and changing policies can be especially exhausting for separated families. Saeed Taraky notes that “more than 10 Afghan families in Erie had children or parents who were left behind during the evacuation [following the return of the Taliban]. These family members have completed all the legal processes to join their relatives in the U.S., but recent policies have directly impacted their travel plans. It’s been over three years since these families were separated. Some parents are here, but their children remain abroad. In other cases, the children are here while the parents are left behind. Can you imagine being away from your parents or children for years, only to have your reunion delayed even further due to changing immigration policies?”

In addition, New Americans are constantly reckoning with inaccurate stereotypes and misconceptions. As a New American himself, Taraky often finds himself addressing the assumption that immigrants are “resistant to integration.” He counters that “many are eager to learn and adapt, supported by community programs such as language classes and cultural exchanges. Immigrants play a critical role in sectors like healthcare, education, and agriculture, and they are also involved in grassroots organizations that provide essential services.” Alongside these contributions, he notes that “many refugees demonstrate remarkable resilience in rebuilding their lives after traumatic experiences.”

Katie Kretz of the MCRC is especially proud of the New American entrepreneurs in Erie. “Many refugee-owned businesses are thriving, creating jobs, and enriching the community with new services, restaurants, and cultural contributions.” A drive along Parade street on Erie’s east side confirms this conclusively. In storefronts that might otherwise have eroded into blighted eyesores, you’ll find a variety of thriving food markets run by Himalayan and Iraqi immigrants, creating economic life in a neighborhood that lacks sustained development.

But what about crime and danger? Are “massive ethnic enclaves” leading to surges in violent crime, as Vice President J.D. Vance has implied? This may be our most misguided moral panic. First and foremost, violent crime in Erie is declining locally regardless of the legal status of its perpetrators. More specifically,

legal immigrants are not only statistically unlikely to commit crimes, they appear to be *dramatically* less likely to commit them than native-born citizens. According to a wide ranging academic study from 2023, led by Stanford University economist Ran Abramitzky, “immigrants are 60 percent less likely to be incarcerated than all U.S.-born men, and 30 percent less likely to be incarcerated relative to white U.S.-born men.”

“One of the biggest misconceptions is that New Americans are a burden on public resources when, in fact, they are critical contributors to our local economy,” says Kretz. This assumption, while inaccurate, is perhaps slightly more understandable in a city where nearly a quarter of our residents live in poverty. However, according to a 2021 report prepared by the city and the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, foreign-born residents in Erie County contributed \$463.5 million to Erie County’s GDP in 2019.

Still, resettling New Americans requires some social service investment — and that ultimately relies on tax dollars, right? Not entirely. Consider one of the Trump administration’s most baffling decisions — its funding halt for Welcome Corps, a program established by the Biden administration in 2023 that transfers much of immigration’s spending burden onto individual citizens. “Welcome Corps costs nothing to taxpayers,” says Iwanenko. “It’s a privately-sponsored program where U.S. citizens, at least five people or more, essentially take the place of resettlement agencies.” Families, friends, and loved ones, working in partnership with employers, colleges, and universities, take on the primary responsibility for integrating New Americans into our communities. In Erie, Iwanenko is working with several Syrian families that were counting on the program to reconnect with members of their immediate family they haven’t seen since 2016. And the program was indefinitely paused by executive order in late January.

Where we’re at and what to do about it

If this is the new normal, it feels pretty bleak. In her conversations with clients, Iwanenko is hearing reports of increased ICE presence in Erie. To her

knowledge, there haven’t been any literal raids yet, but “they’re going to homes and issuing warrants. They’re showing up in public spaces, like parking lots during work shift changes, and making random stops.” She’s also hearing stories about businesses that are reluctant to hire New Americans because of potential consequences. At the MCRC, Kretz is seeing “increased reports of discrimination, both in the workplace and in everyday interactions. This is especially concerning for young people who may feel targeted simply for speaking a different language or wearing cultural attire.”

So, what should we do in response?

According to Kretz, “one of the most impactful ways to help New Americans is through direct engagement — whether by volunteering, donating, or supporting refugee-owned businesses.” In addition to supporting organizations (like hers) that provide direct services, she recommends contacting local representatives and urging them to “support policies that protect refugee and immigrant rights.” If you own a business, she suggests “offering mentorship or job opportunities to help New Americans integrate into the workforce.” Taraky suggests connecting to local resettlement agencies that “often need financial support, donations, and volunteers to teach English.” Both stress the need for interpersonal engagement as well. “Your readers can meet with New Americans, listen to their stories, learn about their plans for a better future, and share in cultural exchange,” says Taraky. Kretz concurs, “It’s about welcoming them into your life, sharing experiences, and offering friendship, guidance, and encouragement as they continue building their lives here.”

The coming months will surely be difficult, but the work to build an inclusive community continues regardless. “While challenges exist,” according to Kretz, “our refugee and immigrant families bring resilience, innovation, and cultural richness to the region. Their success is Erie’s success.”

For more information or to support Erie’s Multicultural Resource Center visit mcrcerie.org

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Is the Rural Democrat Extinct?

A survey of Corry residents says otherwise

By: Jeff Bloodworth

Editor's note:

Several individuals interviewed for this story requested anonymity due to concerns about local backlash in their predominantly Republican community. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities.

“I almost got beat up. But we did have our guns.” When Jimmy Taylor walked into a Corry-area biker bar no one much noticed the mustachioed, long-haired Harley rider. Like a Yuen-gling, he fit right in—or at least appeared to. Taylor soon found himself in a shouting match with Trump supporters that nearly turned violent. I wondered, “How did people know you were a Democrat?” Taylor winked and barked in his best gravel, “Have you heard me speak?”

Welcome to rural Erie County, where being a Democrat might get you pummeled. In 2024, Trump took 68 percent of the Corry vote. This neatly mirrors the president's monopoly of rural, small-town America. In 2024, Trump won 93 percent of all rural counties by beating Harris 60 to 40 in small metropolitan areas and rolling her, 69 to 31, in rural quadrants. Peter Johnson, Taylor's motorcycle riding companion, is not surprised. He helped build a giant Kamala Harris sign in Corry. Johnson told me “After it was torn down, I helped repair it, then it was graffitied.”

Taylor and Johnson describe one side of Corry and small-town America's political tribalism. But Kat DiVittorio urges us to look deeper. The 36-year-old Corry native is the assistant director of the Corry Higher Education Council. The registered Democrat has no love for the president, but she adores and understands her hometown. She told me that for Corry-area Trump voters, they think “he sees me.” DiVittorio explained, “The people of Corry don't feel seen or heard—they are bitter. They feel as if they have to defend their right to exist. It might not be the case, but people feel that way.”

Liberals may roll their eyes at “he sees me,” but DiVittorio is onto something. Being seen matters. In 2008, Barack Obama saw rural Americans. The Democrat launched his general election campaign in rural Virginia. More than a year of rural organizing in swing states, like Pennsylvania, raised the Democrat's rural vote by eight to 12 percent. The Democrat won all four of Corry's voting wards. Sure, John McCain beat Obama 62 to 37 percent in rural Pennsylvania. But keeping the rural margins close was entirely the point. By doing so, Obama not only took Pennsylvania and the swing states, he won Indiana, lost Missouri by 3,000 votes and kept the race tight in Montana and North Dakota on his way to landslide victory.

Sixteen years later, Democrats have all but dis-

CONTRIBUTED



Being a Democrat in the reddest municipalities of Erie County is not easy – and although Corry, Erie county's second city, went for Trump in 2024, there is a hearty enclave of Democratic voters that is continually fighting to have their voices heard.

appeared from Corry and rural America. Lynlee Thorne, a Democratic organizer with Virginia's Rural Groundgame, hears a constant refrain in rural Virginia “I've never met a Democrat before.” Alana Cloutier, an organizer in rural southeast Kansas told me she hears “I've never met a Democrat before” along with “You are the first person to knock on my door since 2008.” Absence matters. In 2024, Trump pummeled Harris 73 to 26 percent in rural Pennsylvania. That proved the difference in a close race.

I, like many, was fooled by the Harris campaign's turnout efforts. Last fall, Harris opened more than 50 offices in Pennsylvania. The campaign based several paid staffers in Erie. Thousands of volunteers traveled to swing states to knock on an eye-popping 42.6 million doors. Despite this, Harris lost every single swing state. A Midwest political analyst explained it to me, “Tactics are not strategy.” In other words, parachuting out-of-towners to canvass in the final weeks of a campaign has limited utility. Jim Hightower, the iconic Texas populist, put it to me bluntly, “You don't know the language, the issues, the backroads, or the locals. You don't know the place.

You are a tourist.”

Thorne understands DiVittorio's “he sees me.” She explained to me that one in five voters, or almost 50 million Americans, live in towns like Corry or rural regions outside of it. Democrats spend 3 percent of party money to reach this 20 percent of voters. Thorne exclaimed “Three percent, c'mon! What would it look like if we tried? We don't deserve votes that we don't earn. The GOP is present. We are not. They show up. If we don't show up, we concede they are entitled to power.”

To be sure, the Erie County Democratic Party is better than most. Jim Wertz, when he served as county chair, opened a satellite office in Union City and expanded the Democrats' rural outreach. He did as Jess Piper, the founder of the rural-based Blue Missouri, explained, “We start by being there, by being around for more than a few weeks before an election.” As a result, Joe Biden took Erie County in 2020. But Erie County is just one of 3,143 counties in America; Democrats have a county chair in approximately 300 of them. In vast stretches of the nation, the party is absent. Piper remembers when Democratic Clubs host-

ed potlucks, discussed issues, and ran candidates in rural Missouri. In 2024, her husband asked, “why was my ballot so short?” Piper disappointedly admitted “no Democrat is running for county office.”

As DiVittorio warned, when folks don’t feel seen or heard — they turn bitter. And rural, small-town voters have good reasons for bitterness. Since 1980, rural-urban income inequality has grown by 40 percent. Nationally, the rural share of the nation’s GDP is 7.8 percent. As the fruits of a knowledge economy flow increasingly to the urban and highly educated, rural small-town America gets left behind. Piper explained that in her rural Missouri town, “there is no place to buy milk. The school is all that is left.”

No place embodies the rural-urban divide more than Corry. Nearly a century ago, in 1930, the town reached its population peak at 7,400. Today, 6,100 call Corry home. In nearby Union City and Jamestown, New York, the story is the same. Sue Miller, a retired, lifelong resident of Corry longs for the days when it used to be “a thriving community.” Linda Murphy, another retired Corry resident, recalled in 1971, “The day after I graduated [high school]. I applied for three jobs. By the time I got home, they were already calling.” Jimmy Taylor remembered that in 1970s Corry, “there was a job on every street corner.”

Well into the 1970s, big employers like Corry-Jamestown, Ajax Ironworks, and Erie Plastics drove the economy. Corry was home to half a dozen grocers, several local jewelers, and national chains, including

Sears, Montgomery Wards, and J.C. Penney. When those behemoths closed, Murphy sighed and told me, “Little bitty businesses replaced them.” She, and Taylor, laughed about the grant money lavished upon startups at the local office park. The duo told me in unison, “They would move there, get grants, promise jobs, and evaporate.” Corry’s downtown is quaint and home to upscale boutiques, restaurants, and a yoga studio that are all adjacent to a rails-to-trails pathway. But even DiVittorio admits there is a sentiment beyond the town that, “Nobody wants to live in dying and stupid Corry.”

Corry is far from stupid. My focus group of Corry residents are smart and perceptive. Some are life-long Republicans, others, like Taylor, are hardcore Democrats. All fear Trump’s overreach. Sue Miller told me, “There’s a lot of people [in Corry] who feel this way — but they feel powerless.” Taylor admitted, “I don’t want the recognition [of being a Democrat]. I shouldn’t be here running my mouth!” These are smart, patriotic Americans — who happen to disdain Trump.

Murphy asked, “Who said America isn’t already great?” Taylor added, “Here, you can do anything, you can be anything. It is the greatest place.” In 2004, a big city, multiracial Democrat agreed with Murphy and Miller. He termed his country a “magical place: America.” That 2004 speech rocketed Barack Obama to political stardom. In 2008, he won Corry, and a majority of the white working-class vote in a series of

Northern states stretching from Minnesota to New Hampshire. He became the first Democratic president to win a majority vote in consecutive elections since FDR. From Corry to Harvard Square, Obama saw all Americans.

Rural America is not inherently conservative or liberal. Jim Hightower, a longtime Bernie Sanders ally, explained this to me. In 1982, the lefty populist ran for Agriculture Commissioner in Texas, a state Reagan had just won by 9 points in 1980. To win, Hightower needed rural votes. On the campaign trail, he met with a Tyler, Texas judge for an endorsement. Outfitted in a starched shirt, cowboy hat, and boots, the judge was seemingly sent from a Hollywood set. As Hightower explained his stance on natural gas monopolies, the Judge leaned back, stretched his legs, and put his boots on the desk. Finally, he interrupted the young candidate to drawl, “Wouldn’t you say, they [the monopolies] are f**kin’ us?” Hightower got the endorsement and won his race.

Laughing at this memory, Hightower said of this judge, his own father, and many rural Americans, “Even though they call themselves conservatives — they are mad as hell, little ‘d’ democrats. Believe in the power of ordinary people. They are the champions of this country.”

Jeff Bloodworth is a professor of American political history at Gannon University. You can follow him on Twitter/X @jhuey-bloodworth or reach him at bloodwor003@gannon.edu

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How Erie Tried to Bury Rock 'n' Roll

Records, once trashed, now treasured

By: Liz Allen

In mid-September 1959, Erie was projecting confidence and embracing progress. Prominent Eriettes cruised the new St. Lawrence Seaway two months after it opened. There were serious plans to build a bridge to Presque Isle State Park from the city. Youngsters gamely grinned as they got life-saving polio shots in school gyms. With autumn approaching, even Erie's fickle weather cooperated. After hitting a record high of 94 the previous week, temperatures dipped to the pleasant 70s.

Still, some feared a bad influence had crashed onto our shores — namely, rock 'n' roll. They vowed to exorcise it with a big splash, by dumping 7,000 records into the bay.

I learned about this odd tale when I perused archived files about Erie radio stations at the Hagen History Center with my friend Jane Ross, who was researching family history. Her late father, Ronald Smith, had been station manager at WWGO, which began broadcasting at 1450 on the AM dial in 1964.

WWGO's previous call letters were WLEU, and the history center archives include items that WLEU enclosed in a time capsule in 1960, opened with much fanfare in 1985. Among the documents are news stories reporting on WLEU's promotion to unveil the station's new format on Sept. 14, 1959 — ditching rock 'n' roll in favor of "good music."

To mark the change, WLEU staged a funeral. Beginning at its studio in the Commerce Building at 12th and State streets and proceeding to the Public Dock, Erie motorcycle cops escorted a hearse packed with 7,000 records, which were then heaved with glee into the bay.

The gimmick attracted worldwide attention. The Japanese edition of Stars and Stripes carried the story. So did JET, a weekly magazine for African Americans.

United Press International's wire service coverage, full of bad puns, was tame compared to reporter Tom McCormack's Erie Morning News story, "It's Now Official: R and R is dead." McCormack thundered: "As a last concession to the pegged-pants and pony-tails crowd, WLEU devoted (if that's the word) all of Sunday to blotting out an incessant flow of gyrating, rattling, pulsating, heaving, thumping, grunting, screaming, echoing sounds that were never endorsed by the Erie Philharmonic Auxiliary."

In 1959, I was too young to gyrate, grunt, or scream along with Elvis or the other musicians that McCormack denigrated, including R&B and doo-wop singers like the Heartbeats, the Crows, the Impalas, Sam "The Man" Taylor, and Little Willie John and heartthrobs such as Paul Anka and Frankie Avalon. I was content to sing along to "Purple People Eater" by Sheb Wooley on the record player my Uncle Howard gave me for my eighth birthday.

But my friend Jeff Pinski, former Morning News



The Erie Police motorcycle squad escorted a hearse packed with 7,000 rock 'n' roll records from WLEU radio to be dumped into Presque Isle Bay, seen here near 12th and State streets.

managing editor, remembers that era well, including WLEU'S (premature) obit for rock 'n' roll.

That September, Pinski had just started 10th grade at East High, playing sax in the marching band, writing for the school newspaper, and attending teen dances at the YMCA's Y-Co. "Sophomore swagger. No inhibitions. Life was boundless and the music incredible," Pinski said.

At the time of the funeral stunt, Pinski said he was "still recovering" from the deaths of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and "The Big Bopper" in a plane crash on Feb. 3, 1959. Don McLean immortalized that tragedy as "The Day the Music Died" in his 1971 hit, "American Pie."

"In those days, WJET-AM got out ahead of the pack when early rock began to take over the local music scene from the Big Band and crooner era," Pinski said. Oogie Pringle, Barney Pip, Johnny Nash and Erie's "morning mayor" Frank Martin were entertaining listeners at WJET, he said. "King Paul" was the popular disc jockey at WLEU, but the station finally acknowledged it couldn't compete in the rock 'n' roll market, Pinski said.

On the day before WLEU switched its format to easy listening music, the station "first played every one of its rock records, then broke each one on the air after they played it," Pinski said. Those records were "more China-like fragile than the current flexible vinyl 45s and made a shattering noise on the air,"

he recalled.

Exactly one year later, and at the same time, 1:35 p.m., WLEU commemorated the funeral with a memorial service. Hundreds of Erie residents flocked to the Public Dock to watch as a wreath was floated on the water.

Famed Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson was also there. When the Blue Dolphins Skin Divers Club brought some records to the surface, Jackson commented that they were "all warped, just like rock and roll," according to the Erie Daily Times. The newspaper added: "Many more (records) were in the murky water, all in bad condition."

Fortunately, 65 years after those rock 'n' roll records were deemed to be in "bad condition," you can find pristine old records as well as new album releases at Graham's Records at 613 W. 26th Street. To shop the extensive collection at Grahams Records, you need to make an appointment by calling owner Michael Graham at (814) 314-9625.

But there's an exception: on National Record Store Day on Saturday, April 12, Graham's store will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. It's first-come, first-served that day.

National Record Store Day began in 2007 "to bring you into independent brick-and-mortar stores," said Graham, who started his business in Edinboro in 1992 and moved to West 26th Street in 1999.

By advance appointment or on April 12, it's worth a

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It will be first-come, first-served for customers on National Record Store Day on Saturday, April 12, according to Michael Graham, owner of Graham's Used Records, Tapes, and CDs. Graham has owned his business since 1992, which sells new releases in addition to old albums.

visit to this record store to admire the rows and rows of vinyl as well as the building's ornate tin ceiling. Constructed as a hardware store in 1908, the building later became a Loblaw's grocery store, then Loper's furniture store and, next, The Rage, an antique

store.

Whether you are looking for old or new albums, Graham's store sells much more than classic and hard rock. You can also find pop, jazz, heavy metal, easy listening, big band, new age — and more.

Vinyl albums retain their appeal for a variety of reasons. "There's the nostalgia factor for old records. New albums might be limited editions, alternative takes, demos, music by new bands, albums reissued after originally being on CD or out of print for decades," Graham said.

Some people prefer to own their music. "If you have a Spotify collection, you're renting your music," said Graham, who owns his merchandise stock and doesn't take albums on consignment.

Some album-buyers like the cover art. "That's a little extra bonus. There's artwork in their hand," Graham said.

There are also the audiophiles with high-end systems — to them, vinyl sounds better. Graham compared the difference in music media to a digital photo versus an actual print photograph. With both photo prints and vinyl albums, you find more detail, depth, and delicate features, he said.

The most gratifying part of his job, Graham said, is "when I feel like someone is really appreciative" of all the delights that albums convey. It's also fun to sell old eight-track tapes, he said, to classic car owners.

In addition, he enjoys the "teaching aspect" of his job and reminds people that records must be treated

with care, as his store signs warn: "Fingerprints kill records."

That reminds me. WLEU did not actually kill rock 'n' roll at 1450 AM. Five years after the funeral, the station became WWGO — which played rock. That station, in turn, became WWGO AM and FM, then WCCK-FM and WEYZ AM, then K104 and Star104, according to Jane Ross, who remembers pestering the DJs to "get on the radio" when she'd accompany her dad to the station. Penn State Behrend now operates WPSE at the 1450 AM frequency.

"Good music" didn't disappear, either; it just moved to other channels, although I admit to being creeped out when I read that WWFM at 99.9 became WLUV "with scientifically developed mood enhancer" music after being subjected to "psychographics ... to doctor out irritating sounds," as the Erie Daily Times reported in 1975 on yet another radio station format change.

But that's a story for another day.

Instead, with the 55th anniversary of Earth Day coming up on April 22, I've concluded that some Erie people truly had rocks in their head to dump 7,000 records into Presque Isle Bay, creating microplastics pollution before we even knew it existed.

Liz Allen thanks Pauline Stanton from the Hagen History Center and Debbi Lyon from the Blasco Library's Heritage Room for their help in researching this story. You can reach Liz at lizerie@aol.com.

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Recent Federal Actions Are Impacting Clean Water, Public Health Efforts in Erie

Underscoring the need to protect our environmental assets

By: Jenny Tompkins

I want to live in a country where people have access to safe, affordable drinking water and wastewater services. I believe we should prioritize public health by investing in environmental agencies that implement our laws and hold polluters accountable. I acknowledge that people of color and people living in poverty face higher levels of pollution, and I support targeted, increased investment in these communities because zip code should not dictate life expectancy.

Good news: most voters agree with me. Polling by the Environmental Protection Network, a bipartisan group of former US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials, showed at least 80 percent of voters support a strong EPA without funding and regulatory cuts, and support increased investments in the most polluted communities.

Bad news: recent federal environmental actions are way off base from the beliefs most of us share.

Erieites need not look far to see the importance of federal policy and investment for water quality. Once SNL's punchline and Dr. Seuss' cautionary tale, Lake Erie is no longer "dead." Consistent, bipartisan federal leadership — in collaboration with Canada, eight U.S. states, and many local governments — made Lake Erie's and the Great Lakes' redemption stories possible. The Clean Water Act, for example, set necessary limits on industrial pollution discharges and created processes to study lake and stream water quality, allowing for targeted restoration.

However, we still have a lot of work to do and letting up now will only cost more in the long run. Our region still faces harmful algal blooms, aging water infrastructure, invasive species, toxic plastic and PFAS pollution, fish consumption advisories, and increasingly severe weather and flooding. Communities of color and those in poverty — like Erie — are disproportionately impacted by these challenges.

We should absolutely be concerned about how recent decisions of the White House and newly appointed

CONTRIBUTED



Lake Erie has had its time as the punchline of many a joke, back before the Clean Water Act and federal EPA regulations helped transform it from a polluted mess back into the beautiful natural resource it is meant to be. Current cuts to environmental programs at the federal level should be particularly concerning to Great Lakes residents. Environmentalist Jenny Tompkins spells out her concerns and what we can do to ensure the future health of our local waterways.

federal agency administrators, in conjunction with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), could negatively impact the Great Lakes and threaten 50+ years of intentional clean-up and public health investments. I've listed below just *some* current and possible impacts related to attempts to fire federal employees and cut or freeze funding.

DOGE's Current and Potentially Harmful Impacts on Erie and the Great Lakes Region

The White House wants to cut 65 percent of the EPA's budget. These EPA cuts are not about reducing spending; the EPA's budget accounts for less than half a penny of every federal dollar spent. This would likely mean fewer staff to investigate and clean up

toxic sites like the former Erie Coke property, enforce permits, respond to pollution reports, and assess chemicals for drinking water regulation.

During his first term, President Trump tried to eliminate or reduce federal funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) multiple times, but was thwarted by **bipartisan Congressional support**. Since 2010, the GLRI has provided over \$8.5 billion in funding across 8,000 projects for habitat restoration, toxic cleanup, and invasive species management. Multiple agencies coordinate to administer the GLRI, including EPA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Massive staff cuts may limit admin-

istration of the program in a timely and efficient manner. In Michigan, the state already stepped up to cover staff costs needed to protect critically endangered piping plovers after federal cuts slowed the release of GLRI funds. Here in Erie County, as an example, we are using GLRI funding to combat the spread of the invasive spotted lanternfly.

DOGE fired NOAA Great Lakes staff who monitor ice cover and harmful algal blooms, operate water-level gauges, and deploy weather buoys. These services safeguard shipping routes, drinking water, and public safety.

DOGE cuts initially led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to fire 12 probationary and 25 seasonal positions of its lamprey control unit, which works to reduce these invasive

NEWS & OPINION

“vampires of the Great Lakes.” Sea lampreys threaten the \$7 billion Great Lakes Fishery. Last year, USFWS applied lampricides in Conneaut Creek in Erie County to protect trout, wall-eye, and other species. Following legal action and advocacy, USFWS has permission to hire back those staff, but it is unclear how many will choose to return and how this season’s work may be further impacted.

NOAA, ordered to make additional staff cuts, is expected to see a 25 percent reduction in capacity. Its Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is currently considering designating a Pennsylvania Lake Erie National Marine Sanctuary. If Erie loses the opportunity for designation, we miss out on substantial federal funding, research, and technical support.

Funding Freeze for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (January 20th Executive Order)

The BIL (2021) and IRA (2022) remain the largest targeted investments in U.S. history for climate action, clean water, and support for polluted communities.

Erie Water Works received \$42 million, the vast majority as grants, to speed up its proactive, multi-decade initiative to remove toxic lead from its drinking water system. While there are no reported impacts to Erie’s funding, DOGE review processes are currently holding up \$50 million in this lead funding from Massachusetts, worrying other awardees and putting health and safety at risk.

Since 2023, over 500 municipalities and hundreds of organizations in all 50 states were awarded \$1.5 billion of USDA urban and community forestry funds to grow and maintain urban

trees and tree canopy in communities. Investments in urban trees result in cooler neighborhoods, improved health outcomes, filtration of polluted stormwater runoff, increased property values, and more local jobs. Here in Erie, \$500,000 of USDA Urban and Community Forestry Funds awarded to the nonprofit Groundwork Erie, and their paid job training opportunities for 28 young adults, are in jeopardy. Groundwork Erie recently launched its Green Future Fund, to boost local support for its efforts in the face of federal funding uncertainty.

The Erie County Redevelopment Authority also faces frozen funds, including EPA grants for remediation at the former Erie Malleable Iron and Erie Coke sites. There are few legal mechanisms to prevent companies from abandoning toxic properties and this federal funding targets cleanup in areas like Erie to incentivize private reinvestment.

The City of Erie has \$500,000 in Department of Energy funding in limbo. These funds were awarded to conduct energy audits of Erie homes to reduce energy usage and save households money in areas most impacted by pollution and extreme weather.

Erie and the Great Lakes have so much to lose if we weaken our capacity to protect our waterways and drinking waters sources. Call on your members of Congress and other elected officials to defend against these cuts and take responsibility to fund environmental protection.

Jenny Tompkins is a clean water advocate dedicated to protecting Lake Erie and the Great Lakes. She was a member of the Erie Reader’s 2024 40 Under 40 class. A Meadville resident, she shares equal space in her heart for French Creek and its watershed.



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NEWS & OPINION

The Reader Beat Monthly Recap

Summary of March council meetings

By: Alana Sabol

The Reader Beat aims to cover city and county council meetings as well as other important government and community-related meetings and events. The following is a summary of each meeting for the month of March.

City Council March 5:

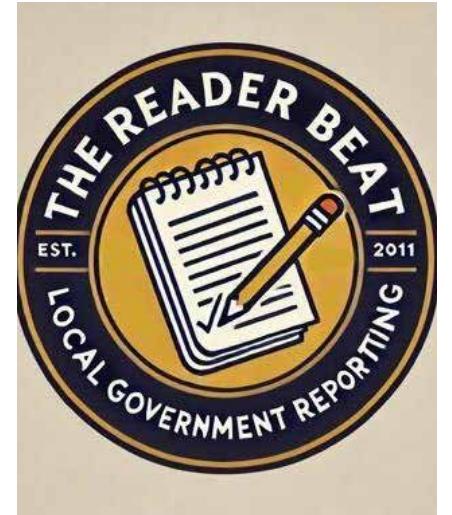
An ordinance in the sum of \$50,000 administered by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a Community Partnerships program grant was passed unanimously. City Council President Mel Witherspoon was honored by the Police Athletic League for his work in youth programs. "PAL is a very important part of our community. It's an excellent program," Witherspoon said. "A lot of kids need direction and many of them don't get hugs when they go home." Public comments addressed immigration and ICE detainment concerns in Erie.

County Council March 11:

An ordinance amending the Erie County Administrative Code to establish restrictions on the use of county resources and to limit their use to official government business passed unanimously. This was an important issue and talking point across a few county council meetings, in particular, the way County Executive Brenton Davis and his administration have been using the official County Council Facebook Page. Borough Manager of Wesleyville Marcus Jacobs encouraged council to pass the ordinance, saying, "Make sure that county resources, especially public information resources, are kept clear, or at least transparent."

City Council March 19:

An ordinance amending Part 7, General Offences, to establish Article 723, entitled Unlawful Manufacture of Firearms to add prohibitions on the use of 3D printers, to impose prohibitions relating to the transfer, use, or conversion of unfinished firearms, the manufacture of firearms,



and to prescribe additional penalties for violations of the Article was adopted on first reading 7-0. Some public comments addressed this ordinance. "I'm an immigrant from Colombia and I've seen the real consequences of an open-armed conflict," Carlos Mora said. Following the City Council Meeting on April 2, this ordinance failed at the final passage with a tie vote.

County Council March 25:

An ordinance overrode the County Executive's veto of an ordinance to establish restrictions on the use of county resources and to limit their use to official government business unanimously. Another ordinance overrode the County Executive's veto of an ordinance for supplemental appropriation of \$138,793 for revised revenue and expenditures in the Courts Computer Bureau and Waiver of the Human Resources Code Section 7 and was passed 5-2 with Council Member Charlie Bayle and Council Member Ellen Schauerman voting no.

Environmental Advisory Council March 26:

A presentation on Erie's carbon emissions in 2023 by Pennsylvania State University showed that transportation produced the most greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 37 percent of the total emissions. Industry came in second with 27 percent and residential in third

with 19 percent. The students suggested that more accessible public transportation, electric bikes and scooters, and low-emission vehicles could lower Erie's carbon footprint in transportation. Director Jacqueline Spry brought up the possibility of modifying the 100 buildings that the city owns to be more energy efficient. "We could do a local government operational inventory of all of your facilities," Dr. Peter Buck, the co-director of the Local Climate Action Program at Penn State said. "The [Local Climate Action Plan] would be very eager to have you as part of our cohort next year."

Following March's County Council meetings, the tension between council and the Davis administration is palpable. Public comments and council members alike have expressed frustration. "That's a little ridiculous that we can't do our job for the public of Erie County because somebody is having a hissy fit," Chairman Terry Scutella said during the March 25 meeting while addressing issues the council was having in getting information out to the public and his interest in having the courts take over IT work as opposed to the Davis administration.

What's coming up this month?:

County Council Meeting, April 8 at 6 p.m.

City Council Meeting, April 16 at 6:30 p.m.

County Council Meeting, April 22 at 6 p.m.

French Creek Indivisible

Activism group urges solidarity in trying times

By: Alana Sabol

The small front room at FEED Media Arts Center was packed, and the audience shuffled around for space while Judy Dauson, one of the founders of French Creek Indivisible, spoke about the group's focus and mission. The meet-and-greet took place on March 21 from 5 to 7 p.m. with the goal to share ideas and action plans around the current state of democracy. Dauson shared an updated version of the quote by Martin Niemöller, "First they came for the socialists..." to reflect modern times, referencing xenophobia and discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community.

French Creek Indivisible is a local chapter of the national progressive movement Indivisible, which aims to fight for democracy and oppose the Trump administration. French Creek Indivisible covers Erie and Crawford county but Dauson added, "We don't have to stay within those boundaries. We are just trying to get as many people activated as possible."

Dauson was initially interested in the movement following the 2016 election. Though French Creek Indivisible effectively paused in 2020, they were reinvigorated in 2024. In February and again in early April, the group organized a rally and protest downtown.

"I couldn't not do something. So, I just



The organizers behind the grassroots group French Creek Indivisible, a subset of the national progressive movement Indivisible, held an informational session at FEED Media Art Center during which they discussed upcoming protests, shared petitions to sign, and informed constituents on how to best communicate with our regional lawmakers.

started moving forward and got about 50 people to come and so we reactivated all of those tools and the group has grown. We've doubled what we had, but we need more people," Dauson explained to the audience.

During the event, French Creek Indivisible provided petitions to sign and send to local government officials including Congressman Mike Kelly, Senator John Fetterman, and Senator Dave McCormick. The petitions highlighted key concerns such as supporting the Environmental Protection Agency and National Parks, public education, reckoning with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and Elon Musk's role in cutting government funding and programs, and the deportation and criminalization of immigrants. French Creek Indivisible also

highlighted 30 agencies that have been affected by budget cuts or downsizing.

Addressing local government concerns, Marcus Jacobs, who is running for the District 4 County Council seat, said "[County Executive] Brenton Davis is way outside of his boundaries."

Terry Chylinski, a retired nurse, explained to me that protests and activism have historically been effective, citing protests against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and '70s. "You don't want to lose your voice," Chylinski said.

To learn more about upcoming events, protests, or to get involved, visit facebook.com/frenchcreekindivisible

Alana Sabol can be reached at alana@eriereader.com

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Easter Sunday:
Sunday April 20
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Join us at St. Mark's at **10:00 A.M.**

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134 W 7th St. Erie, Pa 16501

Finding Common Ground: Edinboro Market Expands, Creates Opportunities to Connect

New location evolves from storefront to bona fide community center

By: Chloe Forbes

On a sunny Friday afternoon, local farmers Xinyang and George Sylves unloaded dozens of fresh chicken eggs — a hot commodity — into the back of the newly expanded Edinboro Market at 211 Mill St. in Edinboro.

“What’s awesome about this market — and I’ve been to a lot of markets — this market has its shit together,” George proclaimed.

The new market space was buzzing as people filtered in to grab meals and friends caught up in the cafe. In the kitchen, chef Rusty Blumish prepared an apple dessert while operations manager and co-founder Curtis Hals rolled up the dough for his chocolate espresso cookies.

After more than doubling its size, Edinboro Market is expanding its services, too. Reminiscent of an Old World market in Western Europe, Edinboro Market intends to be a community center for commerce and gathering rather than just a storefront.

George walked out of the kitchen, telling partner Xinyang, “I just told Curtis that next year, we’re going to start selling cucumbers, and we’re going to have cucumbers from early spring until late fall.”

The two producers own Highland Farm and Gardens in Meadville, which started as a hobby farm and transformed into a full-scale business in 2021.

They now have alpaca, sheep, chickens, ducks, geese, thousands of pawpaw trees, and more. The market is what they believe is a first step in the right direction for local growers and artisans.

“All I have to do is bring them up and drop them off, and they do all the work — paperwork, selling, labeling, advertising — and we go back and work on the farm. And that’s what we need to do,” George explained.

Pawpaw trees bear a sweet fruit with a custard-like texture that tastes similar to banana and mango. Xinyang explained that pawpaw fruit have a short season and shelf life, so she’s excited about the market’s new com-



Livia Homerski, who began working for the Edinboro Market in 2021, feels confident standing behind the products they offer — specifically the fact that so many of their offerings are ethically raised and sourced.

mercial kitchen, which she can use to preserve them frozen or as ice cream. “A value-added product,” she said.

The market, which opened in 2017 as a nonprofit focused on serving producers and consumers, has gone from its 900-square-foot space to over 1,500 square feet of retail space, along with a cafe, commercial kitchen, and a storage and loading area in the back.

The market began implementing its expansion plans in 2023 when it received federal grant money from the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The market was required to match the \$663,699 it requested, which it was able to do with funds from Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), Erie Community Foundation, a philanthropic donation, and the purchase of the building, which previously sat vacant behind the Tim Horton’s on Edinboro’s main stretch.

Marti Martz, co-founder of the Ed-

inboro Market alongside Hals, explained that “the commercial kitchen is the first licensed shared-use kitchen in Erie County. Food producers, farmers, anybody, can rent that kitchen by the hour and sell their product in a retail outlet. Because again, if it’s sold in a retail outlet, it has to be produced in a certified commercial kitchen.” Growers like Xinyang can use the space to extend their season and profit on products year-round.

The cafe area, which will double as a classroom, is around 400 square feet. The market will work with programs like Erie Farm to School to introduce students to farming and culinary careers. The program is already established, but Edinboro Market provides a classroom space and a county-city connection.

There will also be cooking classes for residents of all ages beginning in May. Topics include making sourdough bread, fermenting foods, pasta mak-

ing, and meal preparation on a budget, as well as programming specifically for children.

For the next two years, the market will also be working with the Center for Regional Food Agriculture and Transformation (CRAFT) out of Chatham University to produce business classes for farmers on subjects like website design, social media management, food labeling, grant writing, accounting, and food regulations.

Martz said she surveyed farmers and talked with CRAFT for 18 months before adding them to the grant process so she could nail down programming that would be in demand and truly benefit local growers.

In its new cafe, the market offers grab-and-go goods and meals from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

They aim to make all their food with ingredients from local farmers.

CHLOE FORBES



Rusty Blumish and Curtis Hals work in the communal kitchen space available at the newly expanded Edinboro Market. This kitchen is the first licensed shared-use kitchen in Erie County and allows anyone to rent it by the hour.

In the retail space, shoppers can find fresh produce, dairy and meat products, coffee, artisan products, and fresh-baked goods, including gluten-free breads and snacks. Above each product is information about the producer of that product. “We have

little producer profiles that talk about who they are, what they do, and why they do it,” Martz said.

She said they are looking for new vendors who would like to join the space. The growers and farmers set their prices and receive 75 percent of

the product revenue.

After applying, which vendors can do online, Martz visits the farm or business to see how everything operates. She said it’s another source of revenue outside of farmstands or farmers markets in the summer.

Livia Homerski began her health food journey in 2020 and started working at the market in 2021. She’s one of the first faces people see when they walk in. “One of my favorite things about working here is that we have so many products that I personally can stand behind and I consistently buy and take home,” she said. “All of our animal products are ethically raised and sourced and the animals are fed well and taken care of with love and respect. So I really appreciate that I can recommend things to people that genuinely I use and love and am passionate about. It makes me feel good.”

She said that between the home-steaders, college students, business people, and more, the market is a diverse space that uses food to come together. Plus, the market accepts SNAP and EBT. “I think that also really helps it become more inclusive and

give everyone the opportunity to access things that make them feel well and also access things that genuinely support other people in their community — people that they know and love rather than it going to corporations where you’ll never see that one come back,” she said.

Martz said she’s also hoping to use the space as a place for well-cultivated conversations and connections. She foresees doing events like book discussions, ethnic food nights with guest chefs, film showings, and more. “People come together around food, and it’s such a great way to expand our knowledge and our friendships and our contacts,” she said. Now that we’re here, we can take a breath and say, ‘Phew, that was huge.’ But what comes next is the really exciting part.”

Stay updated with Edinboro Market on social media and find cafe menus and producer/artisan applications at edinboromarket.org.

Chloe Forbes is a local journalist, reach her at chloeforbes14@gmail.com.

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The Erie Bike Co-op: Building Community on Two Wheels

Local nonprofits collaborate to provide accessible and sustainable service

By: Erin Phillips

At the heart of any co-op is cooperation — both literally and figuratively. And cooperation has been the name of the game for the newest iteration of what was originally the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network's (SSJNN) community bike program (which collected donated bikes and redistributed them into the neediest communities), as it cooperates with local nonprofit and bicycle advocacy group BikeErie to settle into a relaunch of operation and outlook as the Erie Bike Co-op.

The established values of any cooperative organization, and in particular the Erie Bike Co-op, involve a number of tenets including accessibility, empowerment and education, mutual aid and volunteerism, sustainability, and transformation. All of these values center around what project leader Garrett Raszmann states is the overarching goal of the program: "I think of this space as a community space, first and foremost." The Erie Bike Co-op's overarching vision is for "an Erie where bicycles connect people, strengthen communities, and transform lives."

Built over a decade ago as a charitable way to get bikes to those in our community who had the greatest need, and run with limited hours and resources by volunteers from either BikeErie, the SSJNN, or just folks in the cycling community that wanted to help — the program began to realize that their capacity was limited and that the amount of bikes they were receiving as donations was outpacing their ability to repair and rehome them in an efficient way.

Executive director of the SSJNN Heather Caspar shares some of the program's history: "The bike program started as the idea 'Pedal Mettle,' which was conceived of by some Bike Erie members as a program to fix up donated bikes and give them to youth who 'earned' their bike by spending time learning about bike safety and maintenance. Pedal Mettle quickly grew to also get bikes into the hands of adults, especially refugees and New Americans referred from MCRC, USCRI, and Catholic Charities, who

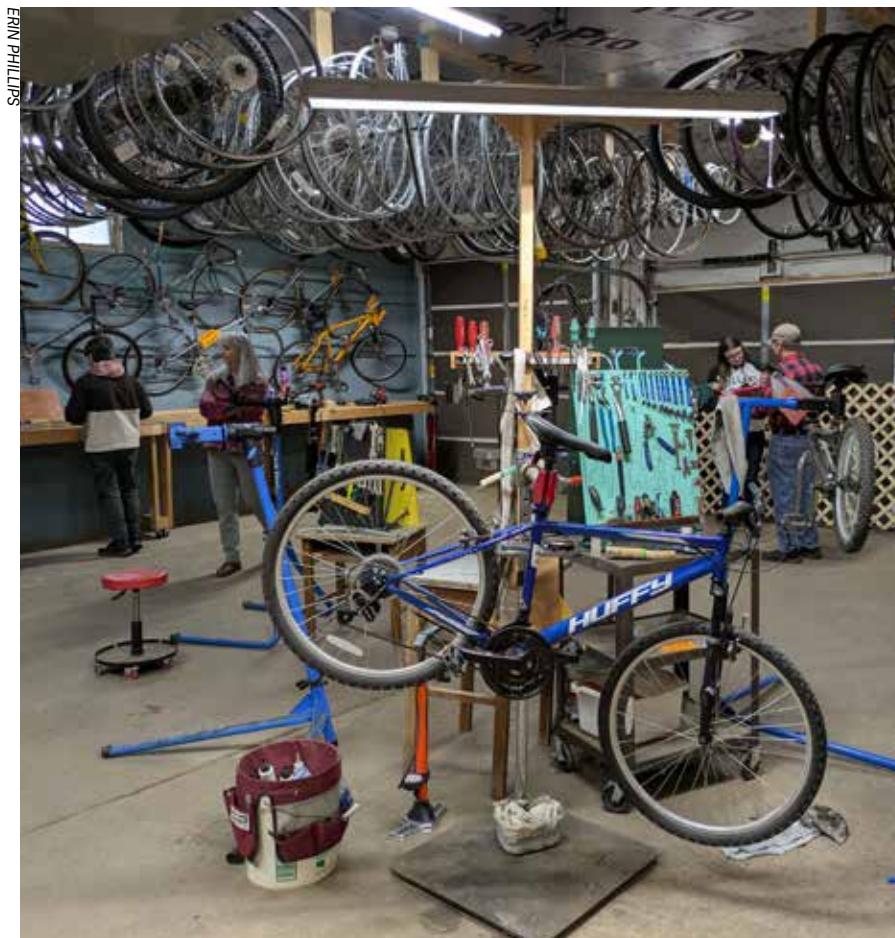
needed transportation to work. Bike Erie continued to provide volunteers and donations of bikes grew to the point that we've been giving out between 150 and 250 bikes every year."

As the groups recently secured grant funding through ECGRA and the Erie Community Foundation, they were able to bring on Raszmann (who is also a board member for BikeErie) to help organize the program, convert it to a cooperative model, expand their services and offerings to serve the general public (no longer as a totally needs-based program), and generally make bikes, maintenance, and educational opportunities more available and affordable to more people with expanded hours.

And that has been the initial goal of the new Erie Bike Co-op — putting systems in place to be able to meet all of those aforementioned cooperative values. Raszmann expands on how the Erie Bike Co-op is working to meet those goals: "With the co-op model, essentially there is a recycling mechanism, where unwanted bikes are aggregated and combined with an opportunity for volunteerism around that. And we then work to get those bikes back to the people who need them the most in an equitable fashion. Additionally, there's sharing of knowledge of bike maintenance, access to tools, and access to education that is equitable as well."

As pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements, as outlined in the Active Erie plan (an active transportation plan implemented by the City of Erie to improve conditions for people walking and bicycling in the city), begin to take shape and more of the street-level improvements in that plan are implemented, more and more people in Erie will feel comfortable choosing biking as their mode of transportation (additionally, those who bike because they have to will be safer). With more folks cycling in Erie, the demand for bikes, parts, and services will increase. Raszmann hopes that the Bike Co-op will be able to help fill all of those demands in an affordable and accessible way.

Raszmann is working towards organizing the bikes on hand (and those that continually stream in, either



The Erie Bike Co-op is working to organize, repair, and rehome the hundreds of donated bikes in storage in their public space at 436 E. 26th St. Raszmann stresses the need for regular volunteers to help with bike maintenance, as well as organizational tasks.

from individual donations or through city/municipality programs, an outlet for abandoned bikes throughout the county) into tiers which include:

Project Bikes: These bikes are in their initial state of donation. There has been very little value added to them in terms of volunteer hours or parts. These are generally available on a sliding scale of payment, which allows people to "pay what they can." There is a suggested price on these bikes of around \$30 — but again, that is flexible given the need.

Ready Bikes: These are bikes that have had some amount of maintenance performed on them by a volunteer or had parts replaced or repaired. Raszmann explains, "These are basic, affordable bikes that have been put back into service — volunteers have helped it move from the project room. It's not a full rebuild but it is in good, safe working order."

Fancy Bikes: These are higher grade bikes that have more value, both be-

cause of their intrinsic quality but also because of the amount of work put into them. These are still affordable, but more expensive than your basic Ready Bike and the co-op sees these bikes as an income avenue which will aid in the co-op becoming more sustainable in the long run.

Each bicycle available to the public will come with a sheet noting the work that the volunteers at the Erie Bike Co-op have put into it — outlining the value, both in parts and in labor. And the beauty of the co-op model is that if you want a fancy bike but aren't able to afford it, you can volunteer your time to earn it. The Erie Bike Co-op's work/trade program allows folks to swap their time and effort to help improve services at the co-op in exchange for (or as a discount towards) that top-tier, fancy bike.

Raszmann stresses the importance of and need for reliable volunteers — and folks don't necessarily have to know the mechanics of a bicycle in or-

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FEATURE

ERIN PHILLIPS



Garrett Raszmann, who has long been part of the cycling community in Erie, has stepped up to help convert and expand upon the Sister of St. Joseph community bike program as it transformed into a cooperative model as the Erie Bike Co-op.

der to help out. As with any business or operation, needs go well beyond what the public sees. Like to work on websites or on social media channels? Good at organizing paperwork, spreadsheets, or schedules? Able to answer questions, clean, or inventory parts? These are all needs where a volunteer's time is valued alongside the obvious needs of folks able to mechanically work on the multitude of donated bikes coming through the doors.

In addition to bikes, parts, and services, the Erie Bike Co-op is also checking off that "education" component of their co-op values by offering regular classes to the public. Coming up in May, they'll be offering Bike Maintenance 101 and Fix-a-Flat Workshops which will take place bi-weekly on Wednesdays. Bike Maintenance 101 will cover basic safety checks, lubrication, and brake, drivetrain, and bearing adjustments. Fix-a-flat is just as it sounds, as patching, tube reinstalls, and tire pressure will be covered. Both of these classes allow participants to bring their own bikes, so that the lesson will be directly applicable to their individual needs. Classes are limited to five participants and pre-registration is required. And again, these classes are a suggested \$30 fee, but, in the spirit of

equitability, still on a sliding scale, in a pay-what-you-can way. Volunteers can also exchange their time for class fees.

Caspar notes, "The Erie Bike Co-op will continue to serve youth and adult neighbors in need, just as we've always done. But it can now become so much more — a community space for bicycle enthusiasts, a place to meet for rides, open lab space with tools and parts to fix your bike, and more. More than SSJNN could have ever imagined or made happen on our own."

As a program that was bare-bones but well-intentioned for many years works towards becoming a place people can rely on as a source for obtaining a quality bicycle, parts, service, and education, they need as much support from the community that they can get. For more information on volunteering, attending an event, class, or open house, or making a (much needed and appreciated) monetary donation, please visit their (budding) website at eriebikecoop.com. Open houses are held the last Tuesday of each month and the next open house will be held on Tuesday, April 29 from 4 to 7 p.m.

When not ogling all the fancy bikes available at the Erie Bike Co-op, Erin Phillips can be found at erin@eriereader.com



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Go Off-the-Beaten-Path: Erie's Lesser Known Sylvan Arcadias

Nurture a deeper appreciation for nature this spring

By: Jonathan Burdick

After a brutal winter season where Erie and Syracuse, New York were duking it out for the title of America's Snowiest City in the Golden Snow Globe Competition, spring has *finally* arrived. It's the time of the year when many are simply ready to get back outside to breathe in some fresh air, soak in some sunshine, and get back in touch with nature. Of course, there are plenty of well-known outdoor staples for such occasions including Presque Isle, Asbury Woods, and Wintergreen Gorge — but if you are itching for some *new* places to explore the springtime beauty that Erie County has to offer, here are a few ideas to get you started.

West Branch French Creek Conservation Area

Only a couple of miles past Seneca High School on Wattsburg Road is the West Branch French Creek Conservation Area. This preserve is over 1,000 acres of uplands and wetlands and includes over six miles of frontage along French Creek. Near the parking lot is a paved and handicapped-accessible path that takes visitors to a pavilion with tables and outside grills, perfect for an afternoon picnic. There is also a one-mile unpaved dog-friendly hiking loop as well as a boardwalk providing scenic views of the wetlands. You'll see beaver dams, ponds, and plenty of birds including cardinals, blue jays, sparrows, warblers, red-tailed hawks, and, if you're lucky, bald eagles.

Speaking of French Creek, if you have never had the pleasure of kayaking or canoeing it, there are plenty of public access points across the county for you to paddle along the same water route that George Washington famously once took. Find an experienced friend and enjoy a few hours of quiet on the creek.

Lake Pleasant

On your way to or from the West Branch French Creek Conservation Area, you can also make a pit stop at the 61-acre glacier-made, groundwater-fed Lake Pleasant located in Venango Township just past the Greene Township line. There's a boat launch

for non-motorized boats, great spots for fishing, or you can merely find a spot to sit down, relax your brain, and take in the flora, fauna, and fresh air.

As my own kids hear me repeat every time we drive by it, Lake Pleasant quite famously is the site where the Moon Mammoth was discovered by scuba diver George Moon in 1991. It remains one of the most complete mammoth skeletons ever discovered (currently located at the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg for research purposes). If you are lucky while at the lake, you may also get to see scuba divers in action, as the lake is used often for certification diving.

Erie Bluffs State Park

This state park, officially established in 2004, is definitely not *unknown*, but it still surprises me how many people who live in Erie County have told me they have never visited. Just past Lake City and only 12 miles west of Erie is the nearly 600-acre park which has a full mile of undeveloped shoreline that includes vertigo-inducing bluffs nearly 100 feet high overlooking Lake Erie.

You can explore the old growth forest, dip your toes into Elk Creek, and look for some of the dozens of species of birds, mammals, plants, reptiles, amphibians, and fungi while on your journey. Afterwards, swing on over to Raccoon Park in East Springfield for some additional exploring and, once they reopen in May, drive a few extra minutes to Conneaut, Ohio for some shredded turkey sandwiches and a frosty root beer at the White Turkey Drive-in.

Headwaters Park

Maybe I shouldn't advertise one of my favorite super duper secret summer spots, but, hey, sharing is caring, right? This 72-acre park is located off Route 8 on Wager Road, nestled, of all places, between an industrial park and Interstate 90. Made up of streams, wetlands, woods, and meadows, it's a little taste of reclaimed forest paradise only a few minutes from the city.

The park gets its name for containing the *headwaters* of Mill Creek. It has eight intersecting and well-maintained trails totaling around three



Headwaters Park somehow still remains a hidden gem in Erie – the 35 acres at the (literal) headwaters of Mill Creek offers over three miles of trails with resources for hiking, picnicking, dog walking, and nature exploration.

miles and includes a short but serene ADA accessible trail overlooking wetlands. The forest is populated with hemlock, yellow birch, beech, black willow, and maple trees.

It also serves as an educational hub on environmental sustainability. Many schools visit Headwaters Park throughout the year, which helps serve its intended purpose of connecting people with nature and building “a spirit of stewardship of the environment among its visitors.” The best part? There are many times when visiting the park that we have had the whole woods to ourselves.

Six Mile Creek Park

Past Harborcreek but before North East off of Clark Road is the 425-acre Six Mile Creek Park, gifted to Harborcreek Township by the county in 2011. While Wintergreen Gorge may get all of the glory, this is still an enjoyable outdoor visit if you are looking for a new place to explore. It has a short and sweet 0.7-mile loop, a handicap accessible trail, the peaceful Six Mile Creek, and plenty of scenic views that would look *great* on your Instagram. There are also numerous unmarked trails that people explore on land intended for future park development. As with Headwaters Park, there is also a good chance that you will have the

whole place nearly to yourself.

Howard Eaton Reservoir

Just shy of the New York line, nestled between Ashton and Findley Lake roads is the Howard Eaton Reservoir, sometimes referred to as Bull Dam. This nearly 250-acre reservoir was built in 1941 on a tributary to French Creek to provide water for North East residents. Today, it has an easy and relaxing 3.2-mile trail around it called Bull Dam Loop along with numerous other wooded trails to the north and south of the reservoir. For fishing, the reservoir is plentiful with bass, bluegill, walleye, black crappie, and northern pike.

Shades Beach

If you're looking to walk some serene beaches on Lake Erie, but want somewhere different than Presque Isle, give Shades Beach off of East Lake Road a visit. There is, of course, the beach where you can walk and search for the lake's famous beach glass, but there are also wooded trails on the bluffs overlooking the glistening lake, as well as a boat launch, rental pavilions, and a well-maintained playground. Swing by Park Tavern or Fiddle Inn on the way to pick up some of the area's best chicken wings to enjoy by the water. Just don't forget your napkins.

JONATHAN BURDICK



Edinboro Lake is a great place to spend a day with family in the summertime. As we in Erie emerge from the hibernation of a long winter, getting outside and exploring the parks and forests throughout the county feels better than ever.

Picnicana Park

In 1966, Summit Township purchased Picnicana Park from the Klaus family, who had first established it as a picnic area in 1951. U.S. Army Veteran Andrew Klaus had dreamt of creating the park since his time in Europe during World War II and, upon his return, used 23 of his farm's 80 acres to build it. After the

township purchased it, for years it was a popular spot for horseshoe leagues, volleyball and basketball camps, and other summer recreational activities. The Erie Times-News described it at the time as one of "nicest parks in the entire county."

Today, it still offers up 34 acres of woods to explore with 1.5 miles of

trails added in 2014. The park also includes a great playground, as well as a softball field and basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and horseshoe courts.

Union City Dam

While Crawford County has the popular Woodcock Dam, Erie County has its own dam located between Union City and Waterford, a short distance off Route 97 on Middleton Road. After the passage of the Flood Control Act of 1962, the dam was authorized and then completed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in 1971 to prevent flooding along French Creek.

The dam's gate is open from 7 a.m. to dusk all year to soak in the tranquil views, take a hike, bird watch, or fish the water's perch, bluegill, crappie, and occasional muskie. Picnic tables, grills, and restrooms are also available.

Edinboro Lake

Edinboro Lake is a 250-acre glacial kettle lake that is a popular summer spot for locals and tourists. If you attended Edinboro University or lived in one of the surrounding towns, you already likely know that Edinboro Lake

has some unique summer lake town vibes. On the west side of the lake, there is Pat Crawford Beach and the uniquely designed Billings Park Playground. Kayaks can be rented daily at the south boat launch along Lakeside Drive. Simply walking up and down Pine, Maple, Hickory, and Walnut streets, looking at all the various summertime houses and cottages is an enjoyable time.

On the eastern side of the lake is Edinboro Lake Resort where you can snag some grub at the Sunset Grill overlooking the water, hear some live music, and rent kayaks, canoes, or pontoon boats. If you have friends or family visiting from out of town, have them skip the hotel and instead rent one of their one or two-bedroom log cabins right on the lake. While in Edinboro, you can also check out the Hurry Hill Farm Maple Museum, Wooden Nickel Buffalo Farm, and, of course, the original John's Wildwood Pizzeria.

Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com

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CHRONICLES

Bird of the Month April 2025: Brown Thrasher

Avian rustler

By: **Mary Birdsong**

You're walking down a trail through the woods and you hear rustling just off the path. Chipmunk? Squirrel? Maybe. It could also be a Brown Thrasher, a ground foraging bird that is migrating into our area right now.

Brown Thrashers are at the forefront of forest bird



Try to spot the migratory Brown Thrasher moving through (and hanging out for a while) our region right now. The ground foraging bird is often heard before being seen, rustling and rummaging through underbrush and leaves.

migration here, that exciting time when birds are heading north for nesting. Lucky for us, this charming bird will stay in our region to breed.

Brown Thrashers are indeed brown. The top of their heads, back, and long tail are a reddish brown that is often referred to as rufous by birders. Their undersides are white, adorned with dark vertical streaks. Their look is completed with two thin white lines on each wing (called wing bars), yellow eyes, and a long, slightly curved bill. Both males and females have the same coloration.

They get the "thrasher" in their name from their unique feeding behavior — a rapid side-to-side motion, sweeping leaf litter and top soil layer for insects, fallen seeds, and berries. Their primary food in the breeding season is insects and other arthropods, but they turn to fruit and berries in late summer and fall.

Because thrashers spend a considerable amount of time in dense brush, they can be difficult to spot, but don't worry, their loud, emphatic voices often give away their presence. Thrashers sing a rich, bubbly song that is repeated two or three times with pauses in between each phrase.

They are one of three representatives of the *Mimidae* family found in our area. The *Mimidae*, or "mimic thrushes" are famous for copying phrases of songs from other species and incorporating them into their own repertoire. They are joined in this group by Gray Catbirds and Northern Mockingbirds.

Their delightful vocals are performed to impress potential mates and advertise their territories. When they do pair up, they nest low in a tree or shrub, or sometimes even on the ground. Both male and female birds incubate a clutch of three to five eggs and feed their young once they hatch.

They are relatively common in our region during the summer but their population is on the decline overall. Look for them at the edges of fields or near large clusters of shrubs and trees. Many can be found at Presque Isle or woods near you. Just listen for that rustle and its bouncy song.

Mary Birdsong is the lead shorebird monitor for Erie Bird Observatory. Learn more at eriebirdobservatory.org or on their social media channels. She can be reached at mbirdsong@eriereader.com

Edwina Tries... Barefoot Massage

Monacella Massage and Kinesiology's therapeutic Ashiatsu will work out your kinks

By: **Edwina Capozziello**

We usually assume that massage therapists are skilled with their hands, but who knew their feet could have the same finesse? This month, I wanted to try something a little different from the kind of massage I've had before and tell you all about it. Enter Ashiatsu (from Japanese "ashi" meaning "foot" and "atsu" meaning "pressure").

For this experience, I visited Monacella Massage and Kinesiology, a beautiful, modern, state-of-the-art massage therapy practice staffed by licensed therapists with an owner who offers a variety of services customized to individual needs, from pain relief to relaxation. When I arrived at their new facility at 4 Sassafras Pier, I was greeted by owner Missy Hitz, BS LMT and given a tour of the new digs. The place is gorgeous, from the decor that includes a water feature in the lobby, right down to the lighting and perfect temperature — it has a very inviting, spa-like feel.

Missy introduced me to my therapist, Ryan Logan LMT, who showed me to the Ashiatsu room and he explained the whole process. The room feels much like a doctor's office patient room but has wooden ballet type barres attached to the ceiling. Ryan lowered the lights and told me that he would leave while I undressed to my comfort level and got situated under a sheet on a super cushy massage table.

A few minutes later, Ryan knocked and then came back into the room explaining that he had washed and sanitized his feet, climbed onto the massage table and got started with the best and most intense massage I have ever had in my life. Ryan and I talked throughout



This month Edwina treats herself to a massage at the local, newly relocated and renovated Moncella Massage and Kinesiology, but not just your typical massage. Edwina tries out an Ashiatsu massage which is a deep tissue technique where therapists use their feet to apply pressure.

and he constantly was checking in with me ("How's that pressure?") while answering interview questions from me at the same time. The deep tissue massage was certainly intense and worked out knots I feel like I've had my whole life. Toward the end, I was able to

turn while Ryan worked on the front of my legs and my arms and I got to watch him at work. The balance and core strength Ryan has is nothing short of amazing. He worked in a graceful, trained manner that is truly

[Monacella Massage and Kinesiology's new facility at 4 Sassafras Pier] is gorgeous, from the decor that includes a water feature in the lobby, right down to the lighting and perfect temperature — it has a very inviting spa-like feel.

impressive to watch even while he was punishing the too-tight muscles of my quadriceps. The massage ended with my face and head (using his hands, not his feet).

I was happy to have my partner drive me to and fro as I felt too dazed and relaxed after to operate heavy machinery. I cannot wait to go back and try the brand new body scrub with Vichy Shower or a couples massage, maybe add some hot stones or reflexology. Schedule a visit and don't be afraid to try something a little different. You'll be in great hands (and feet)!

Edwina is Erie's (self-proclaimed) biggest fan who loves being a tourist in our own town. If you have an idea of something new she should try you can email her at edwina.capozziello@gmail.com

The Erie Localvore: Maple Sugaring Season

A shoo-fly pie recipe made with Four Mile Maple syrup

By: Erin Phillips

It was a sunny, cool day in March when I took a drive to Greene Township with my dad, stepmom, and nephew to tour the set-up of a home-hobbyist-maple-syruper who has turned his passion into a full-on operation. Owner of Four Mile Maple (named because Four Mile Creek runs directly through the property) Ed Allgeier has maple syrup running through his veins: "I've been making maple syrup here for about 30 years, but I've been making it since I was young with my family. It's in my blood."

He purchased his property in 1992 and at the time, it had a decent amount of maple trees on it — enough to satisfy Ed's innate urge to collect sap and boil it down into the liquid gold. He has since planted about 600 more sugar maple trees, connected them all with a series of multicolored tubing, routing the sap into a reverse osmosis filter machine, which then funnels the concentrated sap into an old-timey sugar shack run by a wood-burning stove.



This month, Erin Phillips visited the maple farm of Ed Allgeier at Four Mile Maple to learn about his passion for producing maple syrup from the 600+ trees on his Greene Township property.

Ed sells his syrup at Urbaniak Brothers Quality Meats and this year's fresh stock should be available after it cures: sometime in April. But, Ed tells me, anyone with a couple of maple trees on their property should feel confident that they can collect enough sap to satisfy their family's maple needs. Tapping and bottling equipment is available affordably and locally at A. Caplan Company in Waterford. All you need are some trees, a little patience, and who knows? Maybe that maple syrup bug will strike you next.

The following recipe is adapted from the cookbook *Earth to Table* by Jeff Crump and Bettina Schormann.

Maple Shoo-fly Pie

Crust Ingredients:

Half pie crust recipe of your choosing (I love the King Arthur sourdough discard pie crust recipe, but any buttery shortcrust pastry recipe will work)

Topping Ingredients:

½ cup AP flour
¼ cup dark brown sugar
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ cup unsalted butter (cold and cut into ½ inch cubes)

Filling Ingredients:

1 cup pure maple syrup (Four Mile has a cinnamon-infused variety that would work beautifully)
½ cup light molasses
¼ cup honey
3 large eggs (beaten)
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt



This maple shoo-fly pie was created using a cup of maple syrup from Four Mile Maple — with its cinnamon spiced crumble top and sticky sweet filling, it's a unique dessert that highlights this locally sourced ingredient.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

Press pie dough into a lightly greased 9-inch pie plate and chill for 20 minutes. Prick chilled shell all over with a fork.

Make the topping: Stir together all dry topping ingredients and cut in the butter with a fork or pastry cutter until it resembles coarse sandy crumbs.

Make the filling: Combine maple syrup, molasses, and honey, stir in beaten eggs, baking soda, and salt. Pour filling into the prepared pie crust and sprinkle with the crumb topping.

Put pie on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until the crust is golden and the topping is crisp (45-50 minutes). Let cool for at least 30 minutes before serving up a slice of this local, maple goodness — topped with a generous scoop of vanilla ice cream and some toasted pecans.

Erin Phillips will be highlighting a locally sourced, seasonal ingredient each month. She can be reached (whilst baking and eating) at erin@eriereader.com

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EVENTS

Erie Zoo Illuminates With Chinese Lantern Festival

Catch inaugural artistic centennial celebration through June

BEGINNING THURSDAY, APR. 17

The Erie Zoo will light up the night sky to celebrate their centennial anniversary with Glow Wild: Chinese Lantern Festival. Featuring displays of glowing animals and handcrafted lanterns produced by Hanart Culture, the event showcases a world of illumination with live entertainment and interactive experiences for guests.

"Glow Wild offers an unforgettable opportunity to experience your Erie Zoo in a whole new way," Erie Zoo CEO Roo Kojancie described. "As we mark our centennial year, this event is a celebration of culture and creativity, bringing a unique and vibrant experience to our community. Guests will see the zoo illuminated like never before, and our team is excited for everyone to take in the stunning displays and immersive atmosphere."

In partnership with Holiday Inn Erie and the Bayfront Sheraton, the zoo also offers Overnight Bundle packages for guests traveling to Erie for the festival. Complimentary drinks and an appetizer are provided within the Glow Wild Adventure Package from the Bayfront Sheraton alongside two tickets. Also, guests can receive a discount to the expErience Children's Museum by presenting their Glow Wild ticket at the



Be sure to stop in to see the Erie Zoo adorned with a colorfully unique display of handmade lanterns at their Glow Wild: Chinese Lantern Festival, weekends through June 15.

museum's front desk.

Glow Wild is the first Chinese Lantern Festival within the Erie region, with the work of Hanart Culture's experienced performers and artisans being featured at Zoo Atlanta and the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Each lantern is hand-made by masters in Zigong within the Sichuan province of China, with intricate designs taking hundreds of hours to craft. "The art of

making Chinese lanterns is a tradition that goes back many centuries. We are happy to share the beauty of not only the lanterns, but the Chinese culture," said George Zhao, president of Hanart Culture. — Thomas Taylor

Thursdays through Sundays from Apr. 17 to Jun. 15 // 6 to 10 p.m. // Erie Zoo, 423 W. 38th St. // \$15-\$22 // For tickets and info: eriezoo.org

Bring It on Down to Earth

The Erie County Public Library hosts an array of activities celebrating Earth and Arbor days

BEGINNING MONDAY, APR. 21

Mother Nature will be in the limelight this month with the Erie County Public Library (ECPL) hosting a week-long celebration to include workshops, presentations, themed storytimes, seed libraries, seed starting, poetry readings, live plant giveaways, and more.

"This is our second annual event and a great way to connect some of our library resources with our environmental partners," Alyssa Johnson, outreach coordinator of the ECPL said. The landing page gives the full details on the events happening at all branches, "but the main event on April 26 is happening at the Blasco location," Johnson added.

One partner for the Earth Day Extravaganza is the Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park (LEAF). Along with the City of Erie Urban Forest Committee, "we'll have a variety of native species available on a first-come, first-served



The Erie County Public Library is hosting a celebration of the planet with their upcoming Earth Day Extravanza, hosting events, workshops, classes, and children's activities along with a native tree giveaway from ReLEAF.

basis for homeowners to plant," said Erin Green, LEAF executive director.

An astounding 55 years since its inception, Earth Day continues to serve as a catalyst for action. Check out one of these many offerings and see what it might spark in you.

— Gretchen Gallagher Durney

Events happening the week of April 21 through 27 // Various times // Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. and branch locations // Free // For more info visit: erielibrary.org or call 814-451-6900

MONDAY

WHITE BUFFALO
\$3.00 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **75 WINGS** ALL DAY

IRISH COUSINS
\$2.25 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **60 WINGS** ALL DAY

TUESDAY

PHILLY ON THE ROCKS
\$2.50 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **\$1 WINGS** ALL DAY

COACH'S BAR & GRILL
\$2.50 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **BOGO WINGS** ALL DAY

WEDNESDAY

DOC HOLLIDAYS
\$3.50 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **75 WINGS** 7PM-9PM

THE LIBRARY
\$2.00 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. CANS | **80 WINGS** ALL DAY

THE CAB

\$3.00 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **75 WINGS** ALL DAY

FAT WILLIES

\$2.00 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **90 WINGS** ALL DAY
\$6.95 AN ORDER OF BONELESS WINGS

WEDNESDAY

UGLY TUNA
\$3.50 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **\$1 BONELESS WINGS** 7PM-9PM

ROSCOE'S
\$3.00 BUSCH LIGHT DRAFTS | **60 BONELESS WINGS** ALL DAY

EASTERIE MOOSE
\$1.85 BUSCH LIGHT DRAFTS | **65 WINGS** ALL DAY

MCKEAN TAVERN
\$3.50 BUSCH LIGHT 22oz. DRAFTS | **60 BONELESS WINGS** ALL DAY | **\$1 TRADITIONAL WINGS** ALL DAY

THURSDAY

CHICO'S
\$3.50 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **\$15 10 WINGS** 12:00AM-8:00PM

BRUCE'S PUB & GRUB
\$2.50 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **\$10 8 WINGS** ALL DAY

THURSDAY

BEECHWOOD BAR & GRILL
BUSCH LIGHT \$3.00 12oz. BOTTLES | **75 WINGS** REGULAR | **50 WINGS** BONELESS 4PM-CLOSE | \$2.00 CANS

DARCY'S PUB & GRUB
\$2.50 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **\$10 8 WINGS** ALL DAY

RED FOX INN

\$2.00 BUSCH LIGHT DRAFTS | **\$12 WINGS** AFTER 3PM

WHITE BUFFALO

\$3.00 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **75 WINGS** ALL DAY

CORNERSTONE

\$3.00 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **\$10 AN ORDER OF 10 WINGS** ALL DAY
\$8.00 AN ORDER OF BONELESS WINGS

TAMARACK TAVERN

\$2.50 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. CANS | **\$10 AN ORDER OF 10 WINGS** ALL DAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

CHIPPERS

\$2.00 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **\$11.95 10 WINGS** ALL DAY

THE CAB

\$3.00 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **75 WINGS** ALL DAY

HAGGERTY'S

\$2.25 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **HALF-OFF WINGS** 6:00PM-8:00PM

SUNDAY

GREENGARDEN LANES

\$3.50 BUSCH LIGHT ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **\$10 AN ORDER OF 10 WINGS** ALL DAY

HOSE COMPANY #27

\$2.00 BUSCH LIGHT 12oz. BOTTLES | **69 WINGS** ALL DAY

MON-FRI

AJ BAYVIEW

\$3.50 BUSCH LIGHT 16oz. ALUMINUM BOTTLES | **\$1 OFF WINGS** 4:00PM-6:00PM

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Flagship City Comedy Fest Returns with Five Days of National Talent, Local Flavor, and Unfiltered Laughs

The growing comedy festival blends big-name headliners with hometown charm

BEGINNING WEDNESDAY, APR. 23

The Flagship City Comedy Festival is bringing the funny back to Erie for its fourth consecutive year, running from April 23 to 27. What started as a grassroots effort to showcase local talent has since evolved into one of the state's fastest-growing comedy festivals — complete with nationally recognized headliners and creative showcases for local talents.

Festival founder Anthony Morelli admits that putting together a multi-day comedy event is no small feat.

"In the immediate days before 2024's festival started, I was telling anyone that would listen that I'm never producing this again," Morelli jokes. "But once the festival kicked off, I got to meet all the comics, see the local venues full of people laughing, and watch the success of the weekend firmly plant myself and the festival in a positive national light, it immediately had me working on 2025."

This year's lineup is headlined by some serious comedic firepower: Shane Torres, Dwight Simmons, Brandie Posey, and Ben Roy, all of whom have made waves on platforms like Comedy Cen-

tral, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, MTV, and *Conan*. They will be joined by dozens of other comedians from across the country in venues throughout the city, including 10/20 Collective, Room 33, Calamari's Squid Row, Werner Books, and Black Monk Brewery.

But the Flagship City Comedy Fest isn't just about the big names. The festival continues to elevate local talent while experimenting with formats and venues that are anything but traditional. One standout concept is the return of a fan-favorite event where comedians get tattooed during their sets.

"It's a show that has yet to be nationally duplicated," Morelli explained. "Comics try to sit still and not wince while delivering their set as artists from Andromeda Studios tattoo them live on stage. This year it moves to 10/20 Collective to make room for everyone ready to witness pain and laughter simultaneously."

Another unique event is "Comics Against Humanity," a Cards Against Humanity-inspired showcase at Hazard's Mini Golf Pub where comedians riff off audience prompts and cards for



The Flagship City Comedy Festival returns in 2025 for their fourth annual event, highlighting headlining out-of-town acts (including Dwight Simmons, Brandie Posey, Shane Torres, and Ben Roy) and local comics alike in a wide array of venues throughout Erie County.

an unpredictable experience.

Ultimately, the heart of the festival lies in community — both the one Erie has built and the one it's continuing to welcome.

"The thing that brings the most joy is hearing the national talent come through and compliment not only our town and the locally raised comedians," says Morelli, "but that they're excited to come back because the rooms have been so warm and fun."

As the festival grows, so does its am-

bition. Morelli says the ultimate goal is to one day fill the historic Warner Theatre with a marquee headliner. Until then, the Flagship City Comedy Fest continues to punch above its weight, turning Erie into a must-visit destination for comedy fans and performers alike. — Aaron Mook

Wednesday, Apr. 23 through Sunday, Apr. 27
// Various times and venues // \$0-\$20 // For tickets visit: tickets.eriereader.com // For more info: flagshipcitycomedyfest.com

Get to Know the *Boys in the Band*, Revived at PACA

Pre-Stonewall era play retains relevance today

BEGINNING FRIDAY, APR. 25

The original production of *Boys in the Band*, a groundbreaking play about a group of gay men who gather for a birthday party, played Off-Broadway in 1968, one year before the Stonewall Riots, at a time when queerness was criminalized and being gay meant staying hidden to stay safe. Fast forward to today and Michael Weiss, who is directing the upcoming production of the show at PACA, feels that, "the play, in a lot of ways, is more relevant today than it may have even been 60 years ago."

This isn't Weiss' first experience with *Boys in the Band* — the veteran director starred in a local performance of the play at the Erie Playhouse back in 1973. He comments, "At that time, the show was very controversial and we were one of the first community theaters in the nation to produce it. It was a different era." This version of the *Boys in the Band* is very faithful to that

original production, and the cast that Weiss has put together is, as he puts it, "brilliant," featuring a slate of Erie theater all-stars including Patrick Vahney, Michael Haas, Zach Thomas, Jim Nash, AJ Holman, Howard Lang, Matt Fuchs, Brandon Vogt, and Zach Mota. "I was very lucky to be able to put all these men together and it's coming together beautifully," Weiss comments.

Weiss reflects on how the play has matured, both in subject matter and its impact, "This show is about a time when people still had to live in the closet. We have survived so much throughout gay history, and this show sends a message of acceptance to younger generations, and that it's still a tough road, but they're not alone."

The characters are inherently relatable, each having their own "issues," and as the evening wears on, and more and more drinks are consumed, drama and hilarity ensue. "I want to encourage people from different backgrounds



Join a locally-star-studded cast at PACA in April for their production of *Boys in the Band*, a groundbreaking play which premiered off-Broadway in 1968 and tells the story of a group of gay men at a birthday party, and the drama that ensues.

and generations to come and see it — it's a fun show. The dialogue is very funny and the characters are funny and it really is an entertaining evening." — Erin Phillips

Fridays and Saturdays from Apr. 25 through May 10 at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, May 1 at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, May 11 at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$20 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

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EVENTS

The Pizza Bomber Play, a Devoted Surrender

Play unpacks the 'why' and 'what if' of one of Erie's wildest crimes

BEGINNING FRIDAY, APR. 25

Over 20 years ago traffic came to a standstill on Peach Street as one of the most notorious crimes in Erie's history played out: The Pizza Bomber affair. We'll spare you the lurid details, which have been recounted by numerous journalists, authors, and TV programs, on account of the incident's wildly unpredictable and complex unfolding. Yet two decades later, the story still fascinates, and for David Durst, that fascination would culminate in him becoming the writer, director, and producer of *The Pizza Bomber Play, a Devoted Surrender*.

Written over the course of a handful of years, before its first production in 2023, the play will be newly staged at Basement Transmissions, under the auspices of owner Bob Jensen, starting in late April, with performances on Friday and Saturday nights, as well as Sunday afternoons, into mid-May.

According to Durst, "I thought audiences needed to get some sort of answers to 'why' did all this take place." That meant creating a fictional aspect to "help satisfy that need. Ultimately, Durst said, "The play asks the question, 'What if?' as we witness the decline of a beautiful, young, talented, and extremely intelligent girl, into a violent,

M. HARRISON PHOTOGRAPHY



We all know the infamous story of Erie's "Pizza Bomber," but we may not know it like this. In a locally written, directed, and produced play that fictionalizes the story to help flesh it out — catch this one-of-a-kind dramatization at Basement Transmissions.

out-of-control, mentally ill, murderous adult. Yes, she was responsible for doing horrific tragic things, but what if she had gotten help sooner?"

The mental health aspect of the story is a strong thread that weaves its way throughout the play.

"[It] is told in a tasteful and honest way, with a focus on the human aspects of struggling with untreated mental illness," Durst asserted. "The play does contain strong language, sexual situations, simulated drug use, and

violence. It is for mature audiences," he added. A portion of ticket sales will go toward local nonprofit mental health organizations and the play is presented in support of Mental Health Awareness Month. — Cara Suppa

Weekends, Apr. 25 to May 10 // Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door // For info and tickets: basement-transmissions.square.site

Get a Read On the Love, Light & Healing Psychic Fair

A bevy of spiritual offerings await open-minded seekers at seventh annual event

SATURDAY, APR. 26

The number seven is a special one. While it can, of course, be "lucky," it also carries a spiritual weight. It can be a sign of new opportunities, signify



Explore the metaphysical world at the seventh annual Love, Light, & Healing Psychic fair, hosted by Spiritually Connected and Girard's Love Light Heart Soul shop which will feature a wide variety of psychics, mediums, and vendors.

intuition or a search for truth, and even build a connection between the human world and the afterlife.

It might be fitting, then, that this is the seventh annual incarnation of the Love, Light, & Healing Psychic fair, hosted by Spiritually Connected and Girard's Love Light Heart Soul shop.

Attendees can get a chance to explore the world of the metaphysical and learn about different practices of clairvoyance and prognostication all under one roof. Gathered together at the Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center, psychics, mediums, and a wide assortment of vendors will showcase crystals and jewelry, and offer free demonstrations and lectures from energy healers, holistic and reiki practitioners, and more. Personal sessions are available for 15 or 30 minute blocks with 16 different readers, with seven special clinics and group experiences on the hour.

Between private readings, gallery readings, and presentations, seekers can experience the following: Psychic and medium sessions, tarot and oracle card readings, psychometry, past life regression, live animal communication, rune stone and Ogham divination, pendulum reading, spiritual coaching, Heart Vortex and vibrational attunement, and astrology, as well as courses on chakras and the shamanic journey.

Special guests will include Amanda Deshong, Bunny Dupuis, Livia Homerski, Willow Hurlburt, and many more. — Nick Warren

10 a.m. to 8 p.m. // Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center, 7794 Peach St. // \$5 general admission, free for children under 12 // Readings are for entertainment purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for legal, financial, or medical counsel // For tickets go to lovelightfair.com or visit ER Tix

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For more information and to purchase tickets starting May 1, visit eriebrewingco.com

2025

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Erie Reader Book Club: April 2025

North Woods presents unconventional take on both fiction and climate

SUNDAY, APR. 27

The Erie Reader Book Club will be reading and discussing the novel *North Woods* by Daniel Mason in correspondence with the Earth Day Erie Reader issue.

The genre of this book is difficult to pin down — within it there are elements of historical fiction, climate fiction, nature writing, mystery, and magical realism. Essentially, *North Woods* tells the story of a single plot of land throughout the entire colonial history of America, beginning with an absconding pair of young Puritan lovers who settle on this land (somewhere in Massachusetts), followed by

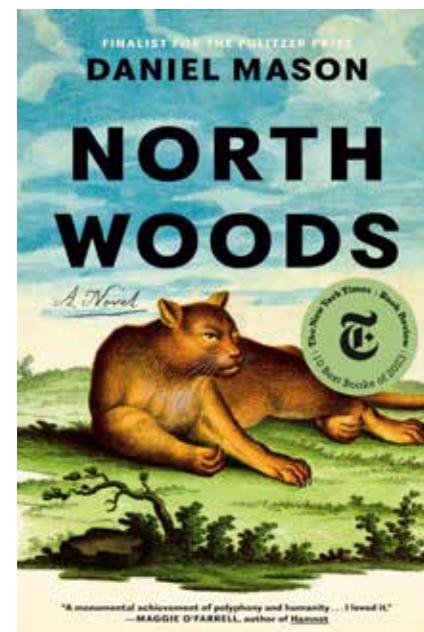
a legacy of inhabitants throughout American history including an indigenous conflict, a British soldier turned apple farmer, a pair of spinster twins, a crime reporter, a painter, a conman — all alongside natural characters from the surrounding woods like an ubiquitous puma and a beetle searching for a mate.

The book is at once grand-sweeping while remaining inherently readable — as it barrels through the generations, it eventually moves into the near and subtly apocalyptic future in which the Earth's climate and the titular landscape changes because of human activity, human history, weather

events, and invasive species.

"...the only way to understand the world as something other than a tale of loss is to see it as a tale of change." The changing landscape, cast of characters, and history of the land is at the crux of this unique novel, and the Erie Reader Book Club will, among other things, discuss all three of these sources of change at their April meeting. The club is free to join (cost of book not included), and anyone is welcome with no commitment to join in the future. — Erin Phillips

1 p.m. // Werner Books and Coffee, 3608 Liberty St. // For more info: wernerbooks.com



A Labor of Love

City Gallery owners celebrate 10 years of the Harmony and Blessings Concert Series

CONTINUING SUNDAY, APR. 27

Stephen Trohoske, co-owner of City Gallery, says when he was in his "late teens and early 20s and playing bass in multiple bands around town, I could not have imagined that my lake town would have been hotbed for some of the greatest jazz, blues, avant garde, folk, and creative music acts in the world."

Trohoske was inspired by his early work with John Vanco's Erie Art Museum Concert Series and Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival. "I started meeting and actually collaborating musically with some of these people, forming long friendships that would be an invaluable part of not only getting the Harmony and Blessings Series off the ground but

keeping it going," Trohoske reflects.

In 2015 Trohoske and his wife, artist Lena Logvina, opened Artlore Studio, expanding to bring in national and international acts, and eventually moving into their current location at City Gallery at 1503 State St. Trohoske recalls, "The phone started ringing and friends and musicians were spreading the word. I was shocked by some of the calls I was getting. We had no real plan, no grants, no bank loans — just a date, time, price, and prayers that there were enough people in my community that we could keep it going."

When the unfortunate decision was made to cancel Blues and Jazz Fest in 2023 for the first time in 30 years, Trohoske and Logvina were able to host

the headliners at City Gallery via the Harmony and Blessings Festival, which has morphed into its current iteration: the Harmony and Blessings Concert Series.

The next concert in the series is scheduled for Sunday, April 27 with Kelly's World (led by local musician Kelly Armor) playing reimagined jazz standards, original songs, and innovative arrangements of African folk songs. Other upcoming events include Joe Gonda's Bass Odyssey on June 20, Spin Cycle on June 21, and David Murray and Kahil El'Zabar on June 22.

Trohoske adds, "Every year I say this is it, every year it changes so much, but something keeps me going, something much deeper than my love for music or



Local art gallery and venue space City Gallery will kick off their latest series of Harmony and Blessings concerts with Kelly's World, a local group that features reimagined jazz standards, original songs, and innovative arrangements of African folk songs.

creating. This feels truly like life's purpose." — Edwina Capozziello

4 p.m. // City Gallery, 1503 State St. // For tickets and info: facebook.com/citygalleryerie

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24th Annual Walk for autism 2025

AUTISM SOCIETY - NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2025

LAKE ERIE SPEEDWAY NORTH EAST

PRE-REGISTRATION CLOSES APRIL 21, 2025

2025 Limited Edition Commemorative Walk apparel only available if registered by April 4

Registration 9:30am Walk Starts 11:00am

Autism Society
Northwestern Pennsylvania

Event made possible in part by:

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Walk Information & Registration
SCAN HERE! <https://bit.ly/AutismNWPAAWalkReg2025>

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autismnwpa.org
814.455.3540

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Top of Hampton Inn
130 E Front St., Erie Bayfront

Oliver's
BEER GARDEN

OPENING MAY 2
OliversRooftop.com/Beer-Garden
Behind Hampton Inn
130 E Front St., Erie Bayfront

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1 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

1 YEAR ANNIVERSARY
RomasErie.com | OpenTable App
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RESORT

GOLF IS NOW OPEN
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1405 Olde Rd., Clymer, NY

SPA
AT THE PEAK

PKNPK.com/Spa-At-The-Peak
716-355-4141 x 7148
1405 Olde Rd., Clymer, NY

EVENTS

Aaron Tveit Takes the Stage at Mercyhurst

MIAC hosts concert for award-winning performer

THURSDAY, MAY 1

The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) presents the Tony Award and Outer Critics Circle award-winning Aaron Tveit's return to Erie and the university's Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center.

Artistic Director Dr. Brett Johnson shares, "MIAC strengthens the vibrancy of the Erie region by presenting world-class performing arts experiences that lift the spirit, galvanize the intellect, stimulate the imagination, and encourage the free exchange of ideas."

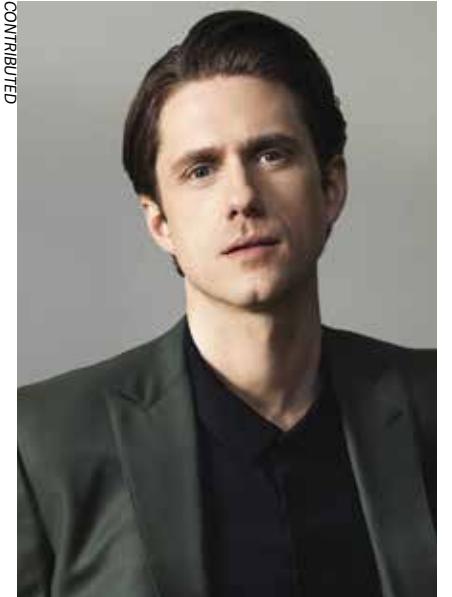
[MIAC performer Aaron] Tveit holds an extensive resume in theater, television, and film.

By making these programs available and accessible to the broadest possible audience, the Institute strives to create an environment of richly varied, inclusive cultural experiences."

Tveit holds an extensive resume in theater, television, and film, appearing across Broadway in shows like *Sweeney Todd* and *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*, and popular TV shows like *Graceland* and *Gossip Girl*. Film credits include his role as Enjolras in *Les Misérables*.

"It's inspiring to watch a great artist evolve over time, as they hone their craft, deepen their storytelling, and harness their extraordinary talent for the enrichment of humanity," Johnson

CONTRIBUTED



Catch Tony and Outer Critics Circle award-winner Aaron Tveit at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center at Mercyhurst University as he brings his Broadway energy to the stage.

remarked. "These qualities distinguish the performers who have enthralled us all for the past seven seasons, including those like Tveit, who have headlined our 2024-25 season, bringing new shows and new set lists, but also new perspectives on their work and the world."

With such a wide appeal, the night is projected to mark an unforgettable experience suitable for all ages. —Cassandra Gripp

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$40-65 // For tickets and info: tickets.erieereader.com

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Gem City Style

A conversation with Jim Potratz, owner of Potratz Floral Shop and Greenhouses

By: Jessica Hunter

On a cold and rainy afternoon, I ventured over to Potratz Greenhouse and Flower Shop on Buffalo Road, in the heart of Erie's east side. As I set foot into the 70 degree greenhouse, I found owner Jim Potratz helping a customer. He was explaining the root structure and watering schedule of a plant. Having recently purchased houseplants from Potratz and been impressed by the quality and selection (especially in the middle of a harsh Erie winter), I appreciated the time and knowledge Jim shared during my prior visit. This day seemed no different, with Jim cheerfully chatting with customers and tending to his plants. After getting a full greenhouse tour our interview began in the "warm house," an area of the greenhouse designed to maintain higher temperatures for propagation.

Jim shared that his grandfather started the business after immigrating from Europe around 1919. Back then, the greenhouse focused on growing vegetable transplants for local farmers. "I guess the trolley ended here, and the people would pitch their horses at this location. Buffalo Road was a dirt road at the time," Jim explained, painting a picture of the early days. They also sold their produce at the old Parade Street Market, an open-air market offering fresh vegetables, fruit, and more.

Over time, the business evolved. "We got into the floral business because we would take a lot of flowers and plant them out front, and then people would stop by and say, 'Hey, can I buy some of those flowers?'" Jim said. This led to selling cut flowers, arrangements, and eventually offering delivery services.

I asked Jim about the challenges and rewards of running a greenhouse in Erie's climate. He pointed out the diversity of their offerings: "We diversified in the sense that we do the cut flowers. We grow tropical plants. We grow seasonal plants, such as mums, poinsettias, spring plants, but tropicals year-round. And we have a number of different kinds. You can visit the tropics any time of year here at Potratz."

Jim shared some interesting insights into how they manage the elements. "In the wintertime, the snow, if it comes down and blankets the roof, actually insulates the greenhouse a little bit," he noted, gesturing with a hose as he continued to tend to the surrounding plants. But the short day length in winter requires supplemental lighting for some plants. Some plants come into flower, like poinsettias and holiday cactus types, he added, seamlessly transitioning back into an in-depth explanation of the greenhouse's climate control. This blend of hands-on work and extensive botanical knowledge is typical of Jim, who, despite his busy tending, is always ready to offer a detailed lesson on any plant that catches a visitor's eye.

Environmental concerns are important to Potratz Greenhouse. Jim mentioned their composting practices and innovative methods for controlling insects, including the use of synthesized spider venom. "I



Owner of Potratz Florist and Greenhouses Jim Potratz is passionate about plants – as Jessica Hunter points out, "the blend of hands-on work and extensive botanical knowledge is typical of Jim, who, despite his busy tending, is always ready to offer a detailed lesson on any plant that catches a visitor's eye."

sometimes tell some of these plants, 'if you don't grow you're getting composted,'" Jim joked.

We also discussed how customer preferences have changed over the years. "I mean, in the '70s, it was kind of a craze for a lot of the foliage plants and hanging baskets," Jim recalled. He also noted the impact of re-

"We got into the floral business because we would take a lot of flowers and plant them out front, and then people would stop by and say, 'Hey, can I buy some of those flowers?'"
— Jim Potratz on the evolution of his business

cent events: "Sure, it's evolved over the years like, you know, COVID, a lot of people had to be home, so they thought, 'Well, some plants in here would be nice.'" Ultimately, he feels that the Erie community shapes the business through their preferences for indoor and outdoor plants, hardy varieties, and even cactus and succulents. Jim emphasized the importance of light and water for plants, noting that customers control

these factors in their homes.

The staff has a close-knit, family-like dynamic, and Jim highlighted their diverse expertise, from landscaping to interior plant care and customer service.

When asked about customer favorites, Jim said people come to Potratz for both "the tried and true, and the unusual." He showed me a vanilla orchid, explaining how they grow in the crevices of trees, eventually reaching the top to bloom. I shared my love for the large tropical plants, and we chatted about the mature plants in the back greenhouse, some of which are older than Jim.

Potratz Greenhouse is more than just a business; it's a living testament to Erie's history and a place where the community can connect with the beauty of nature. And much like the plants within its walls, Jim Potratz' passion and dedication have cultivated a style that's both deeply rooted in tradition and constantly growing towards the future of Erie.

To learn more about Potratz Greenhouses or Floral Shop, visit potratzfloralshopandgreenhouses.com or pay them a visit at 1418 Buffalo Rd. during their open hours Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Gem City Style is a monthly column featuring an intimate Q&A with someone making a creative impact in Erie. If you or someone you know would make a good fit for a future Gem City Style, email jessica@eriereader.com



Neil Young
Oceanside Countryside
 Reprise Records

★★★★★

Within Neil Young’s Analog Original Series (AOS), a collection of albums reproduced from the original analog master tape recordings (as was custom before digital audio workstations), was a curious inclusion — a “lost” album recorded from May to December of 1977, intended as a follow-up to 1977’s *American Stars ‘N Bars*. The would-be prequel to 1978’s *Comes a Time* includes demos and original mixes of “Human Highway” and “Field of Opportunity” (which appeared on that album), as well as an acoustic demo of “Goin’ Back.” The name *Oceanside Countryside* is likely a reference to the two sides of the album — the first five songs (Side A) are solo performances by Young recorded in Florida, while the following four songs (Side B) were recorded in Nashville with a full bluegrass band. The album ends with an acoustic performance by Young on an early mix of “Pocahontas,” which would later be featured on 1979’s *Rust Never Sleeps*, with Crazy Horse. Two standout tracks on the album are “The Old Homestead” featuring The Band’s Levon Helms and the catchy “Dance Dance Dance” featuring the “King of the Cajun Fiddlers” Rufus Thibodeaux. Neil Young has said of this release, “Listening to it now, I think I should have put it out back then.” This is a laidback masterpiece filled with cunning lyrics and catchy tunes that gives the listener a glimpse into the writing and recording process of one of America’s greatest musicians. — Larry Wheaton



Playboi Carti
MUSIC
 AWGE/Interscope Records

★★

Playboi Carti’s long-awaited third studio album is an exhausted, costly mess. Saying this album had a lot to live up to is an understatement. Starting development under the name Narcissist, the Atlanta-born rapper’s project had an original shelf date of Sept. 13, 2021. Days, weeks, and years passed with no sign of this album. However, that seemed to change in December 2023 with several singles released on multiple social media platforms. These songs and visuals pointed to cryptic “I AM MUSIC” and “2024” messages, indicating that this album was finally dropping in that year. These singles continued until March of 2024, followed by absolute silence. Jump cut to March 12, 2025. Spotify used its large-scale Times Square billboard to announce that Playboi Carti’s *MUSIC* would be released that Friday. So, with all that time in development, how does *MUSIC* sound? Sadly, this project is nothing new. Over 91 minutes, Playboi Carti and his slew of featured guests deliver categorically lackluster performances. Even with 52 different producers, every song is the most bare-bones trap/rage rap in the space. This project does not feel like it took four years to make. I would be shocked if it even took four months. The result is an album that exudes mediocrity, bearing few memorable moments or tracks, even if it is marginally listenable. Playboi Carti’s *MUSIC* is a slap in the face to his fans and music listeners alike. — Nathaniel Clark



Seann Clark and Friends
Hallow Dreams
 Self-released

★★★★★

Featuring a revolving door of Clark’s long-time collaborators from the Erie area and beyond, *Hallow Dreams* is a love letter to all the brilliant, heartfelt sounds that he has been making for years. While Clark has long been a local mainstay, he’s recently kept up a feverish stretch of recording, releasing this nine-track album on St. Patrick’s Day, following a 12-track LP in January, and nine individual tracks since 2024. This can likely be credited by his team-up with Josh Karickhoff of Lonelyman Productions, who also provides much of the album’s blistering lead guitar work. The opening few tracks of the album are definitely highlighting Seann Clark and Friends. Sporting a multi-genre party atmosphere, you can tell that everyone is having the greatest time making this music. The tones then shift from smoky bar room anthems like “One Way Jesus” and “Belladonna” to vulnerable ballads like “It Was Always You” and “Sometimes” to everywhere in between. Clark is joined by some of his most frequent guests, like vocalists Colette Bone, Brenna Bone Webb, and Shelly Peeso, along with his former Mighty Sea bandmate Abby Barrett on strings. Tony Kellogg provides lap steel, Adam Holquist piano, and Frank Marzano ukulele and guitar. Eric Hall lays down some bass, Jon Lane Teater drums, and our own Larry Wheaton guests on trombone. McKenzie Sprague and Josh Bodenweiser add guest vocals as well, with Dave Tamulonis on violin, Jeremy Kloekner and Lonnie Pound on cajon, with Jonny Evans adding a few verses as well. It’s all held together by Clark’s guitar, gruff, yet warm vocals, and his passionate songwriting. — Nick Warren



Youth Lagoon
Rarely Do I Dream
 Fat Possum Records

★★★★★

When we last heard from Trevor Powers in 2023, he was just finding his voice after an allergic reaction left him without speech for months. Not even two years later, the songwriter behind Youth Lagoon now barrels forward by examining the past. Inspired by a collection of home videos found in his parents’ basement, *Rarely Do I Dream* captures family history and blurs it with stories about all kinds of supernatural encounters. The result is an album less cohesive than 2023’s masterful *Heaven is a Junkyard*, but every bit as emotional (and even more expansive). There is a kaleidoscopic trait to the way Powers incorporates new genres into his songwriting, from the electronic buzz of “Speed Freak” to the gorgeous slide guitar featured on “Football.” Much of the rural feel featured is reminiscent of Hovvd’s recent output, but elsewhere, on “Lucy Takes a Picture,” he dips into something that sounds closer to the slightly abstract pop of The Blue Nile. It’s true, the defining sound of *Rarely Do I Dream* is hard to pin down, but that’s also part of its unique charm; the album feels like a short story collection flirting with different tones, but somehow pulling off each one exquisitely. — Aaron Mook



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Cosmic Horror: Ash Can't Find Its Own Identity

Flying Lotus' foray into sci-fi treads familiar territory

★★

Science fiction is such a large genre that there are nearly limitless possibilities for what kind of story to tell and rapper/composer Flying Lotus (Kuso) tries to tackle nearly all of these ideas with his new film *Ash*. It is an ambitious film in scope that, despite some impressive visuals, is bogged down by a derivative story and some lackluster performances.

In the distant future, a woman named Riya (Eiza Gonzalez) wakes up in a spaceship that has landed on some mysterious alien planet. She finds that the rest of the crew has been brutally murdered and she has no memory of what happened. When Brion (Aaron Paul), another crew member who was separated from the ship, returns to find her, the two must piece together the mystery in front of them. Did the crew succumb to cabin fever? Can Riya and Brion truly trust each other? Or is there something on this planet that wants them dead?



The film has some visual flourishes, creating a world that looks uniquely alien and the special effects are surprisingly decent for a film of this budget. It's also no surprise that the score (provided by Flying Lotus) is appropriately atmospheric. Unfortunately, the story and characters are not given nearly the same attention. Flying Lotus wears his inspirations on his sleeve (in particular, *Alien* and *The Thing* with a little *Event Horizon* and *Solaris* sprinkled in) and as a result, the film never really

finds its own identity. He has some interesting ideas here and there, but this kind of claustrophobic sci-fi/horror has been done much better so many times over.

Ash is currently in theaters and comes to Shudder on April 22. — Forest Taylor

Directed by Flying Lotus // Written by Jonni Remmler // Starring Eiza Gonzalez, Aaron Paul, Iko Uwais, Kate Elliot, Beulah Koale, and Flying Lotus // XYZ Films // 95 minutes // Rated R

Death of a Unicorn is a Promising Concept

It's a kind of magic

★★★★

There has been some heated discourse lately about the rise of "elevated horror" films, or horror movies with very obvious sociopolitical themes and symbolism. It's a silly term because horror has always been socially conscious, but it has helped define a certain look for a lot of recent horror movies. Alex Scharfman's directorial debut *Death of a Unicorn* almost feels like a parody of the subgenre. It is an imaginative throwback to Spielbergian wonder with a cynically modern helping of social commentary thrown on top. The result feels like it wants to say something while not really saying much at all.

Elliot (Paul Rudd) is traveling with his daughter Ridley (Jenna Ortega) to a company retreat deep in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest. On their way, they strike and kill an animal with a more than passing resemblance to a unicorn. Upon hearing this news, Elliot's boss (Richard E. Grant) wants to test the animal and discovers that its blood has amazing healing abilities. While the company heads start using its remains for new pharmaceuticals, more of the creatures come to the



house seeking revenge.

The idea of a fantastical creature being exploited by greedy opportunists is hardly new, but Scharfman has fun with the idea; turning these magical horses into killing machines and giving horror fans some gleefully sadistic scenes of violence. Unfortunately, the social satire is so on-the-nose to be nearly ironic. I know it's not meant to be taken seriously, but the message about the evil pharmaceutical

business feels slapped on and (unlike the titular unicorns) has no bite. The film itself is entertaining enough, but I don't think every horror film needs an "important" message to stand out. — Forest Taylor

Written and directed by Alex Scharfman // Starring: Paul Rudd, Jenna Ortega, Will Poulter, Sunita Mani, Steve Park, Anthony Carrigan, Tea Leoni, and Richard E. Grant // A24 // 107 minutes // Rated R

PBS
KIDS

WQLN KIDS CLUB

2025 Member
Events

Waldameer
June 22

Erie SeaWolves
June 4
August 21

Sunview Golf
August 1

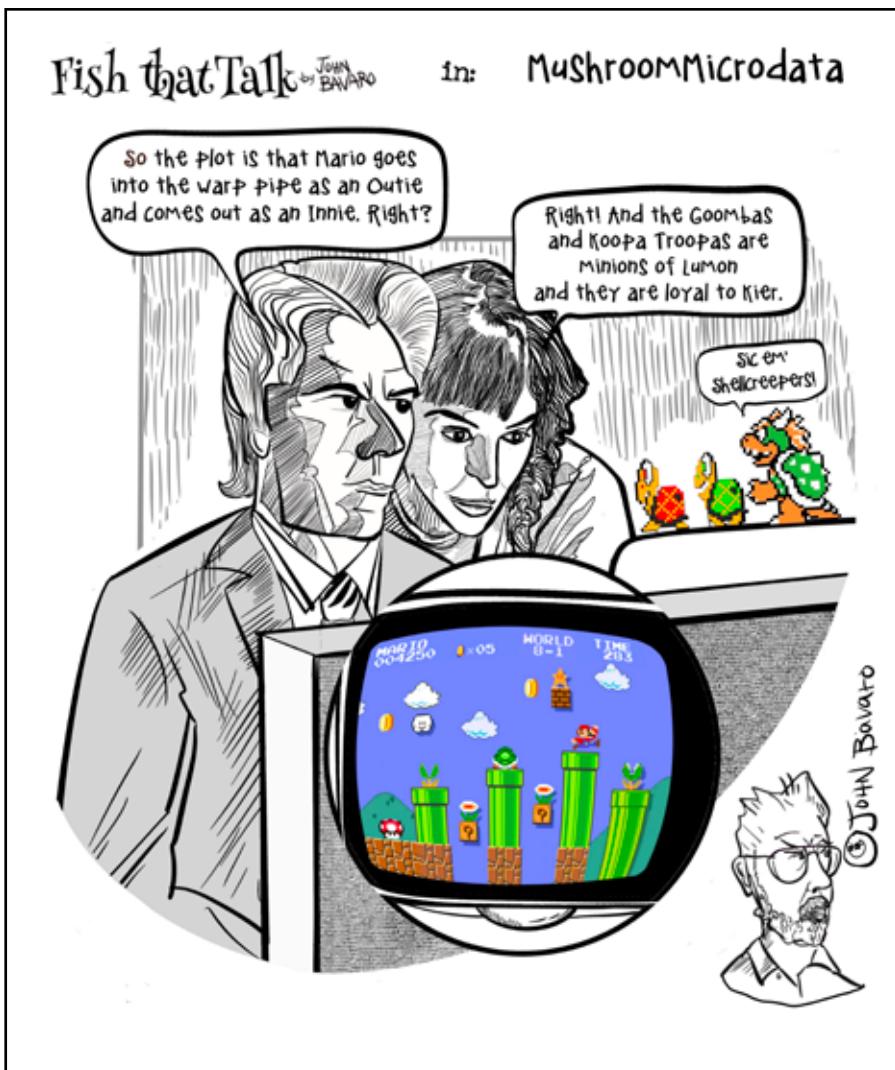
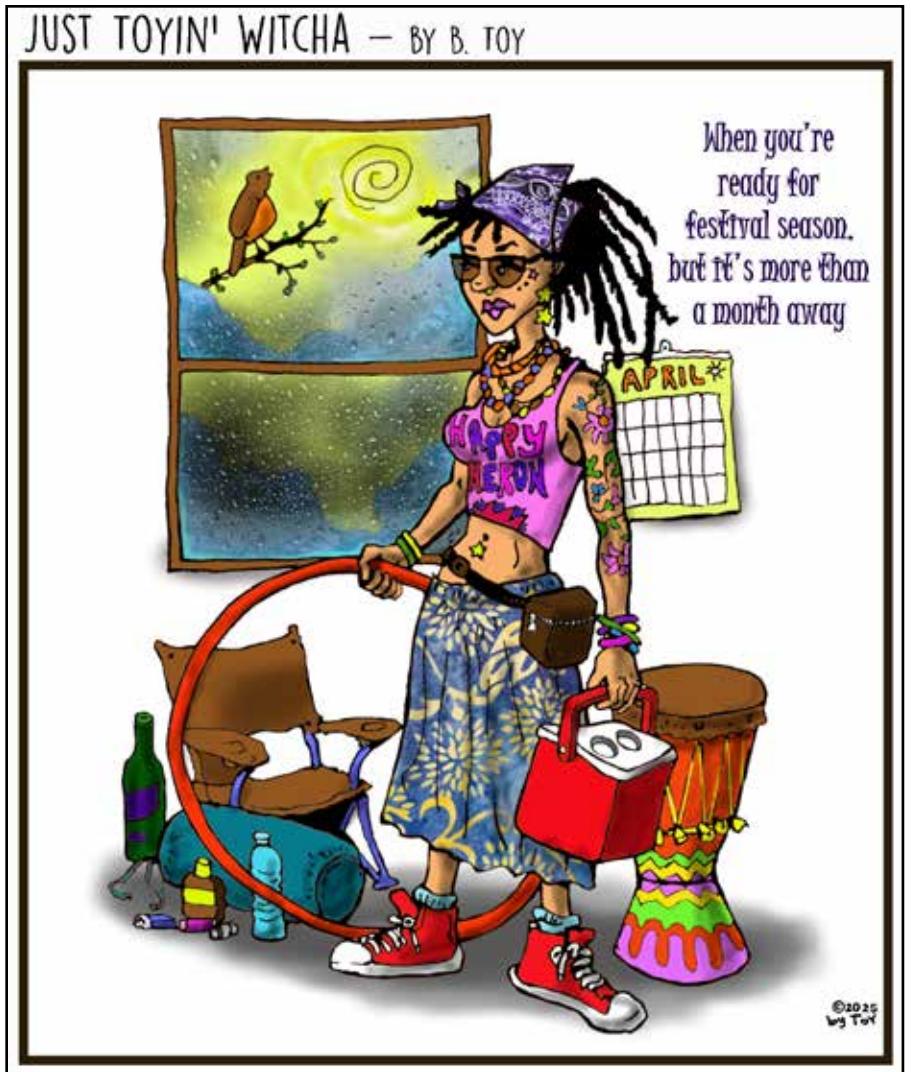
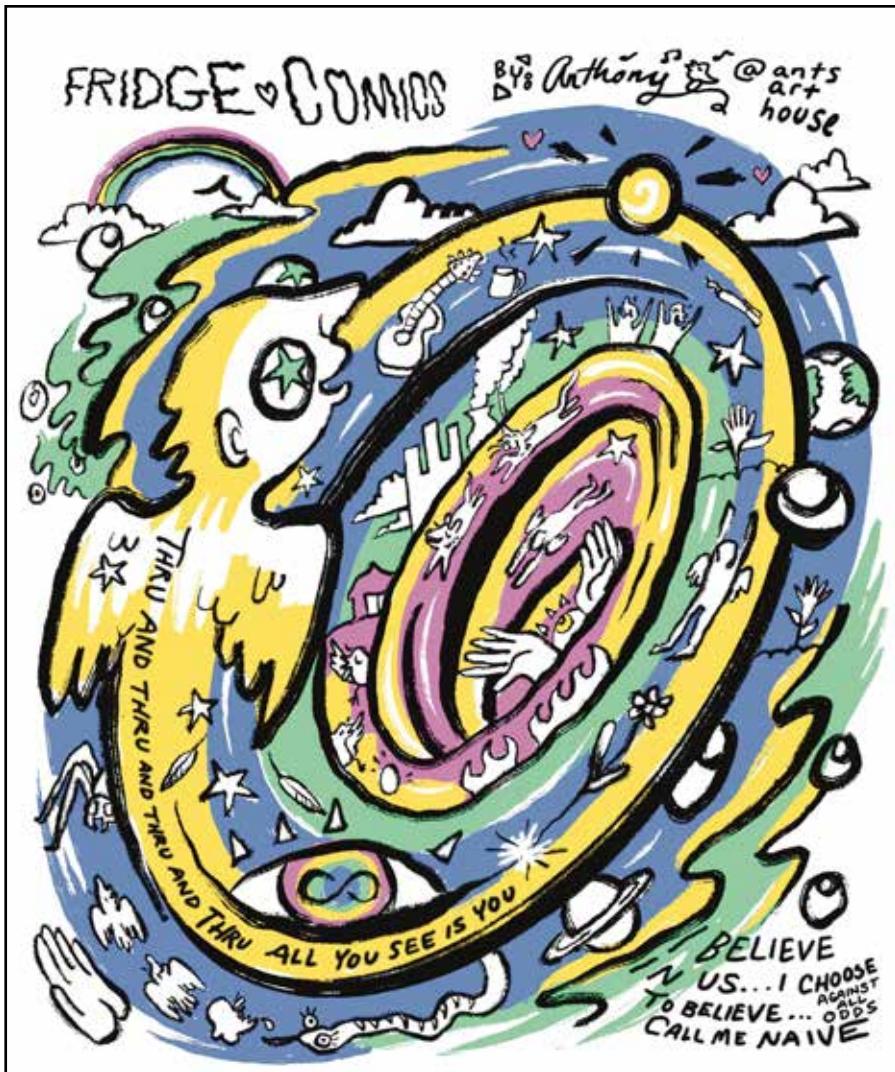
Erie Zoo
September 20

Q-Boo Bash
October 23

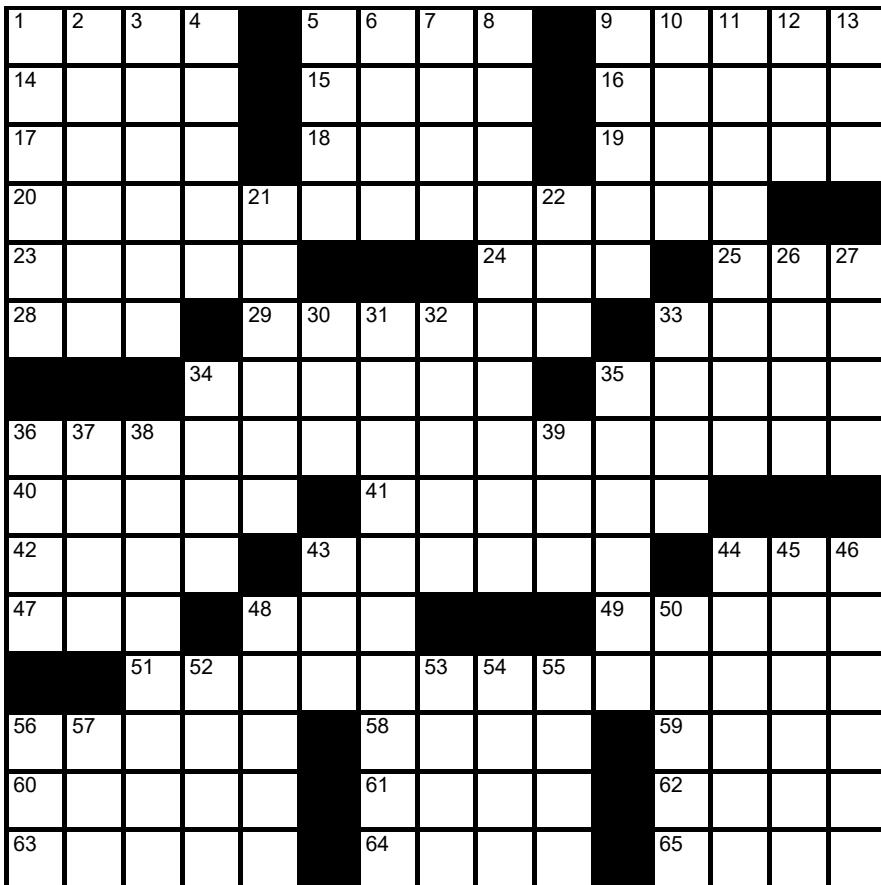


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CROSSWORD



Across

- 1. Actress Stone
- 5. "Booyakasha!" speaker
- 9. Picture's perimeter
- 14. Money repaid with interest
- 15. "Blade Runner 2049" actor Jared
- 16. Enthusiast
- 17. "A Man ___ Importance" (musical based on a 1994 film)
- 18. Suffix after teen
- 19. High-level
- 20. "Provided the whole thing's a solo effort"?
- 23. Capital home to Willamette University
- 24. Feature of "j" but not "j"
- 25. "All Things Considered" host Shapiro
- 28. Greek vowel
- 29. Gargamel's cat
- 33. Evita's husband
- 34. Least likely to mix
- 35. "Book 'em, ___!" ("Hawaii Five-O" catchphrase)
- 36. What happens when the first preservation doesn't seal?
- 40. Arm bones
- 41. Paul of "Mad About You"
- 42. Severance
- 43. Psychologist Abraham known for his "hierarchy

of needs"

- 44. Bee prefix
- 47. A.L. East squad, on scoreboards
- 48. 2025 Fox medical drama where the main character suffers a brain injury
- 49. "The Thursday Murder Club" author Richard
- 51. Horror movie where the clown trades a balloon for a bouquet?
- 56. Informal summons
- 58. Think tank output
- 59. Pt. of MIT
- 60. Performance space
- 61. Bad sign
- 62. Gratuitous
- 63. LP's other half
- 64. World's longest river
- 65. Rain protector

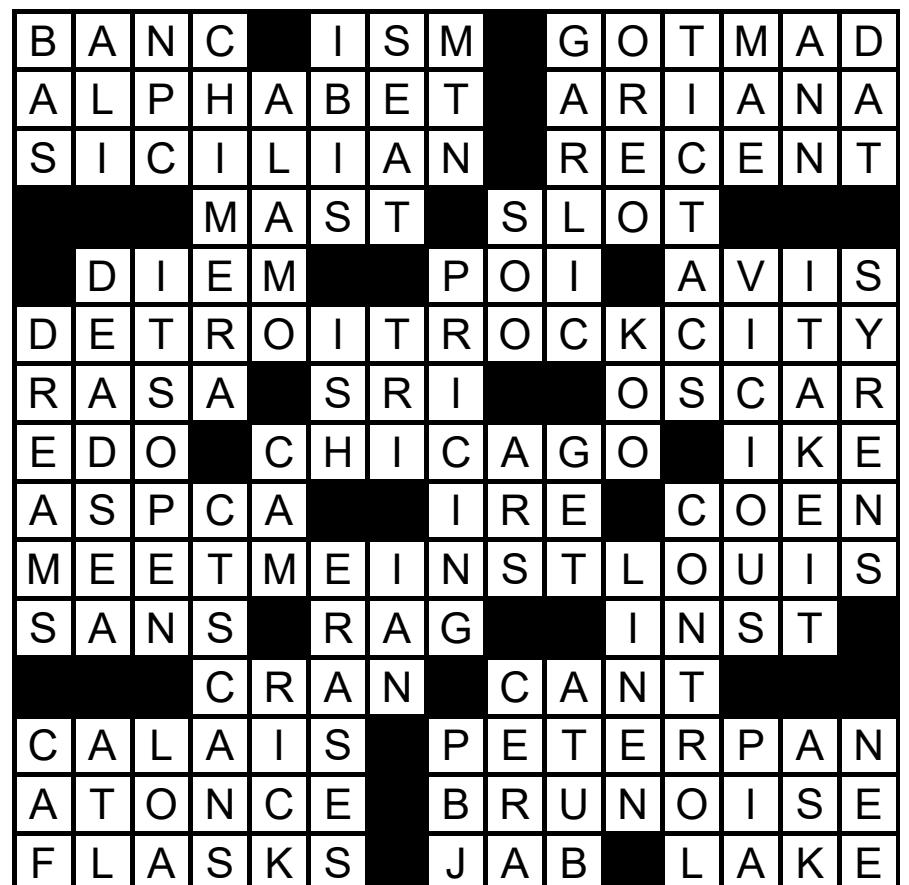
Down

- 1. Plaza Hotel kid
- 2. "SNL" alum Alex
- 3. Site of an Ali-Frazier showdown
- 4. + end of a battery
- 5. "'Tis a pity"
- 6. Interlockable brand
- 7. Piece of info
- 8. Shocking tidbit, maybe
- 9. Admiral's ships
- 10. One in a restaurant basket
- 11. Birds of a given region

- 12. Annual host of a notable gala
- 13. Before, in poems
- 21. Plains natives
- 22. Sun, in Spain
- 26. Punjabi princess
- 27. Part of, as a plot
- 30. CA red wine
- 31. News error follow-up
- 32. Biennial cricket match between England and Australia, with "the"
- 33. Hockey legend Jaromir
- 34. "The Acrobat of ___" (Al Jarreau epithet)
- 35. Korean carmaker bought by GM
- 36. Mongolian tent
- 37. Miscellany
- 38. Drop on Facebook
- 39. "General" on menus
- 43. Miss Piggy, to herself
- 44. Chief deity of Egypt
- 45. Sentence breaker-downer
- 46. Arched foot part
- 48. Dorky person
- 50. "The Tortured Poets Department" artist
- 52. "That does add up"
- 53. Computer-to-TV cable
- 54. Sense
- 55. Olympic pool division
- 56. Chain with long receipts
- 57. "Kill Bill" tutor Pai ___



Answers to last puzzle



CALENDAR

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Fri 4/11

Palace of Machinery / Works from the FEED Collection
@ 5pm / \$5
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Brad Ford: Broken Sculpture
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

TINYstage
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Glitch Theater: Samuel R. Delany
@ 8pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Open Mic/ Karaoke CONTEST!!! Hosted by DJ JAY
@ 9pm / \$2
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

Sat 4/12

Dash to Donate 5k run/walk
@ 8:30am / \$25
301 Peninsula Dr, Erie, PA 16505, (near Beach No. 1 Runners Club Pavilion), Millcreek

Palace of Machinery / Works from the FEED Collection
@ 5pm / \$5
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

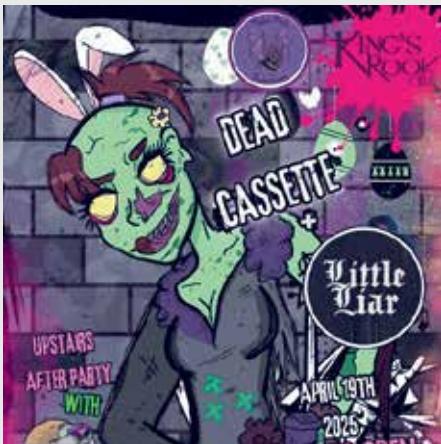
Thu 4/17

Open Mic Teaching Workshop (Upstairs) + Easter Basket Giveaway Hosted by Terry Crebel
@ 8pm / \$2
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

Sat 4/19

TINYstage
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Featured



Dead Cassette + Little Liar+ Fastfall
DOWNSTAIRS/Upstairs Afterparty with Moonbagel Bodega + Running Backwards
@ 9pm / \$7
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Thu 4/24

Room 33 Showcase
@ 6pm / \$10
Room 33, 1033 State Street

A Night in Mykonos at the Watson-Curtze Mansion
@ 6:30pm / \$105
Watson-Curtze Mansion, 356 West 6th Street

Featured



Feature Headliner
Dwight Simmons
@ 8pm / \$15
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street



Fri 4/25

Palace of Machinery / Works from the FEED Collection
@ 5pm / \$5
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Brad Ford: Broken Sculpture
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Featured



Boys in the Band
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street



Featured



Feature Headliner
Brandie Posey
@ 8pm / \$15
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street



Sat 4/26

iRock Fitness "Enduro"
@ 8am / \$50
2312 W 15th Street, iRock Fitness

Featured



7th Annual Love, Light & Healing Psychic Fair
@ 10am / \$5-\$70
Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center, 7794 Peach Street



7th Annual Love, Light & Healing Psychic Fair
@ 10am / \$5-\$70
Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center, 7794 Peach Street

Palace of Machinery / Works from the FEED Collection
@ 5pm / \$5
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Brad Ford: Broken Sculpture
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Headliner Shane Torres 9:30pm Show
@ 9:15pm / \$20-\$25
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street

Featured



Headliner Shane Torres 7pm Show
@ 7pm / \$20-\$25
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street



Thu 5/01

Boys in the Band
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street

Fri 5/02

Featured



Nail Bite, Eden on Fire, Strange Culture, Traverse the Abyss and more
@ 9pm / \$12
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Sat 5/03

Brad Ford: Broken Sculpture
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Sun 5/04

Mercyhurst University 5k Run/Walk
@ 9am / \$25
501 E 38th St

Calendar information is provided by event organizers. All events are subject to change or cancellation. This publication is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in this calendar.