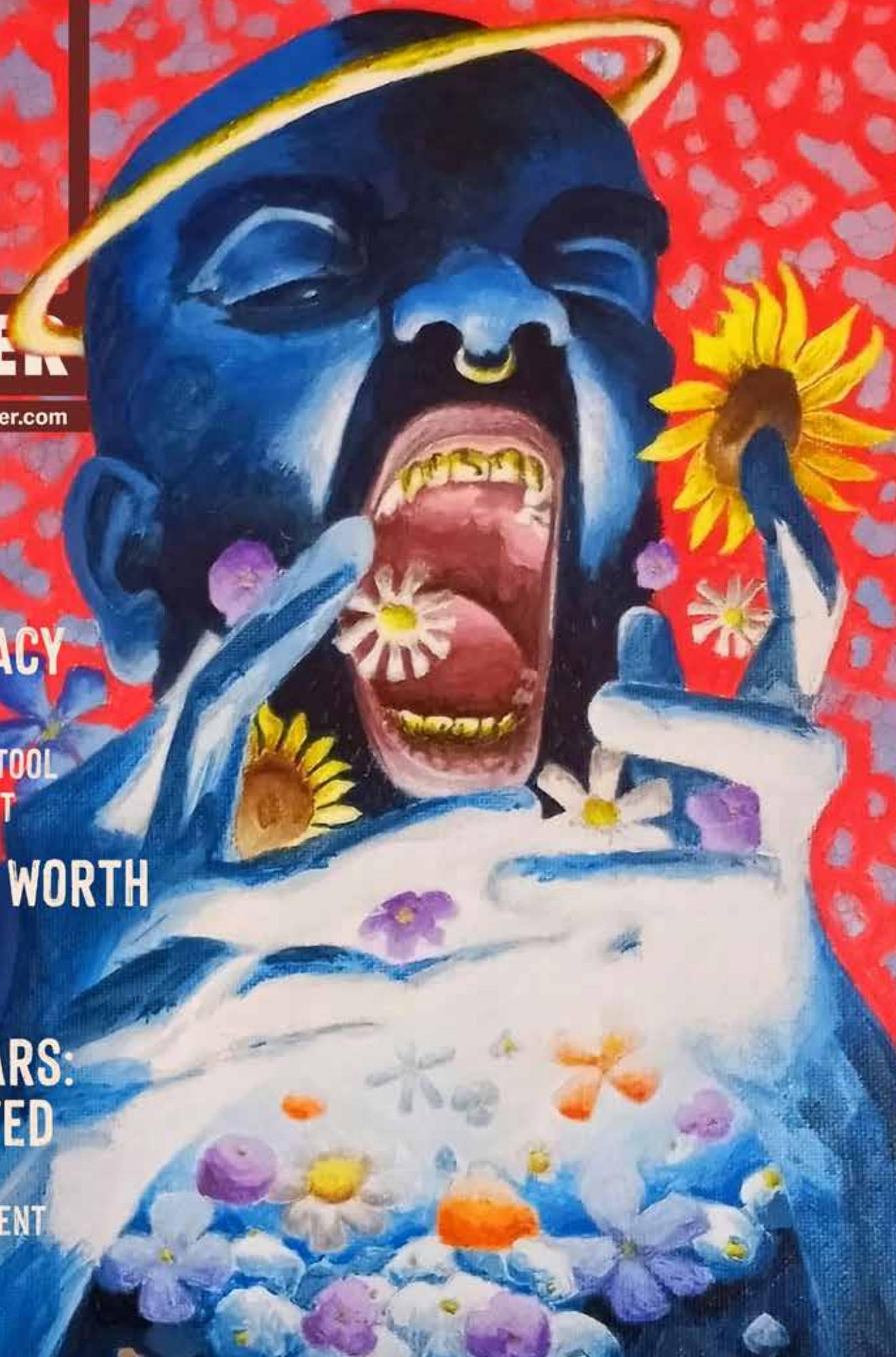


The only local voice for news, arts, and culture

R

ERIE READER

Feb. 2025 // Vol. 15 No. 2 // ErieReader.com



SHAKING THE LEGACY OF SEGREGATION

HOW INTEGRATION CAN BE A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GET YOUR WORD'S WORTH

REVAMPED CAFÉ 7-10 COMES WITH POETRY PERKS

A BAND BEHIND BARS: SOUL INCARCERATED

PODCAST SHINES A LIGHT ON CREATIVITY AND IMPRISONMENT

BEBE DESIGN HOUSE | ERIE AFRICAN ARTS GALLERY | PERRY WOOD OSCARS PREDICTIONS | FLORENCE PRICE | REMINISCENT & MORE **FREE**

The best time for a
new beginning is
now.

L|E|C|O|M HEALTH

Join Us at EC3 West Campus!

Open House

Date: Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Time: 4 PM - 7 PM

Explore: Facility tours, meet faculty, observe classes, and discuss programs with advisors.

Instant Enrollment

Date: Saturday, March 29, 2025

Time: 11 AM - 1 PM

Get Started: Apply, register for spring classes, and tour the campus.

Location: 2403 W 8th, Erie PA 16505

Questions? Call 814.413.7000 or email admissions@ec3pa.org



ERIE COUNTY
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



Editors-in-Chief

Brian Graham & Adam Welsh

Managing Editor

Erin Phillips

Copy Editor

Matt Swanseger

Contributing Editors

Ben Speggen

Nick Warren

Media Editor / Photographer

Jessica Hunter

Contributors

Liz Allen

Mary Birdsong

Jeff Bloodworth

Edwina Capozziello

Anthony Carson

Nathaniel Clark

Chloe Forbes

Cassandra Gripp

Ally Kutz

Tommy Link

Brad Pattullo

Alana Sabol

Dan Schank

Jen Sorensen

Cara Suppa

Forest Taylor

Thomas Taylor

Bryan Toy

Larry Wheaton

Morgan Yezzi

Cover Art

Nicholas Cardell Gore

Cover Layout

Nick Warren

1001 State St. Suite 1315
Erie, Pa., 16501
contact@eriereader.com

The Erie Reader is published monthly and distributed at over 350 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well as social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 1315, Erie, Pa, 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct sales inquiries to 814.314.9364. For editorial inquiries, email contact@ErieReader.com.



CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

Immigrant Voters Shift Right - 4

Lessons from an inauguration Lyft ride

Wood Announces Campaign for Erie County Executive - 7

ECGRA director aims to return collaboration to county government

Get Your Word's Worth - 8

Revamped Café 7-10 comes with poetry perks

Shaking the Legacy of Segregation - 10

How integration can be a tool for economic development

Edwina Tries...Erie African Arts Gallery - 17

Celebrate Black History Month at this lovely downtown locale

Bird of the Month: Northern Shrike - 18

A bird of song and a bird of prey

The Erie Cook Book Revisited: Mrs. Lambing's Boston Brown Bread - 19

Antique cookbook staple reflects resourcefulness

Spotlight on Erie - 20

But don't change a hair for me, not if you care for me: Valentine's Day at FEED, Basement Transmissions, and PACA, Reminiscent Band, Florence Price, and more.

A Band Behind Bars: Soul Incarcerated - 27

Podcast shines a light on creativity and incarceration

NWPAMade Business Program: Regional Brand Launching This Spring - 28

Free entrepreneurial support program with ErieMade Business Academy

Gem City Style: February 2025 - 30

Nadia Shabanza-Pero: Owner and Founder of BeBe Design House

The 2025 Academy Awards Proves Surprising and Disappointing - 32

The times, they are a-changin'

Album Reviews - 34

The latest cuts from locals Blunt Guts and Ed Randazzo with Mac Miller and The Weather Station

Recent Romance Reads Just in Time for Valentine's Day - 37

A roundup of some recent releases from the genre

Local, Original Comics - 38

The latest from Tommy Link, John Bavaro, Anthony Carson, Bryan Toy, and Brad Pattullo

Crossword Puzzle - 39

The latest stumper from Matt Jones, Jonesin' Crosswords

From the Editor

On micro-community

On the very same day that Americans have, since 1986, set aside to honor the life, work, and memory of one of the greatest civil rights leaders of our time, we inaugurated a president who immediately got to work undermining much of the progress that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. inspired into action. Petty, white colonialist moves like renaming Mt. Denali paired with ICE raids and mass deportations, elimination of DEI initiatives across the board, and the unsanctioned installation of an unelected billionaire, with his hands (and technology) all up in our social programs. It's terrifying, the speed with which all of these things are happening, and it is an affront to the American people, what we've built, and the safety nets we thought were secure.

February, whether the current administration likes it or not, is Black History Month. It is especially important now, more than ever, to lift up our Black neighbors, to learn Black history, to acknowledge America's role in its brutality and our responsibility to repair (as covered within, in Chloe Forbes' piece about racial segregation in Erie), to support Black-owned businesses (like BeBe Design House, in this month's Gem City Style) and Black artists (like Nicholas Cardell Gore, as featured on our cover). King once said, in a 1968 speech, "Always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal."

And with economic withdrawal comes economic redirection. We have to continue to work to build Erie up to bravely be a place of refuge, support, encouragement, and fairness. Additionally, we have to look to micro-communities for individual spiritual and financial support. Micro-communities like Erie's thriving poetry scene (covered within by Liz Allen), Erie's diverse art scene (like Erie African Arts and FEED's February slate of events), and Erie's welcoming music, comedy, and theater scenes (like at PACA, Basement Transmissions, and Werner Books and Coffee, all within). Redirecting our dollars and energy away from oppressive, DEI-denying corporations, and more into our own micro-communities is a direct act of support and resistance.

Our cover artist this month, Nicholas Cardell Gore, captures the dichotomy of living in the world today in his striking piece, *Saturn Eats His Sun*. Although created during COVID, the juxtaposition of rage and optimism has never felt more relevant. Read more from him on this piece and his inspiration below. And hold on to hope, Erie. We've got a long road ahead.

About the Cover Artist: Nicholas Cardell Gore is a self-taught mixed media artist raised and now living in Erie. "My artwork is the expression of my imagination and experiences as a Black man in America who's had the opportunity and privilege to travel the world. I use those experiences to form language and imagery to tell intimate and compelling personal stories and build space to explore emotions Black men are not always able to navigate or communicate. It's my mission in life to pay tribute and honor the depth and vibrancy of Black culture and its history."

"I completed this piece, *Saturn Devours His Sun*, in August 2021, months after recovering from a severe case of COVID which almost took my life during a historically destructive and deadly ice storm. This piece, which was directly inspired by Francisco Goya's *Saturn Devours His Son*, allowed me to convey the pain, depression, yet optimism I had towards my health and personal future. Connecting with art gave me purpose and vision of what goals I wanted to achieve, and it's this memory I hold onto and drives me to this day." *To learn more about Nicholas Cardell Gore and his work visit nicholascardellgore.com*

Immigrant Voters Shift Right

Lessons from an inauguration Lyft ride

By: Jeff Bloodworth

Ashan loves America. He believes, “America is number one!” The Bangladeshi immigrant came to the U.S. in 2012, and by 2024, he had earned his citizenship and cast his first-ever presidential ballot — for Donald Trump. In 2016, the idea that a Muslim-American immigrant could vote Trump was unthinkable. But by 2025, it’s no longer surprising.

The numbers tell the story. Polls show Trump narrowly winning the Muslim vote over Kamala Harris. But the larger shift is among non-white, working-class men — especially African Americans and Latinos — who moved toward Trump in 2024. In Pennsylvania, Trump secured 42 percent of the Latino vote, up 15 percentage points from 2020. In a close race, that made all the difference. Though there’s limited polling from Erie’s non-white voters, in areas with significant non-white populations like the first and second wards, Harris fell 618 votes short of Biden’s 2020 total, while Trump improved on his by 61 votes. Across Pennsylvania’s non-white districts, these small but crucial shifts helped secure Trump’s narrow victory.

In January, I was in Washington for the inauguration and took a Lyft ride to the airport. Ashan was my driver. As we drove, he praised Hillary Clinton as “good” and called Michelle Obama a “great communicator.” But his primary concern? Immigration. “Biden is too loose on immigration. It’s too easy. Anyone is coming. You don’t know the quality of the person,” he told me in broken English. I didn’t agree with Ashan, but his words stayed with me.

I found that Ashan wasn’t alone in his sentiments. I asked an Erieite and first-generation Mexican American about his vote. “Nico” (who asked that his name be withheld) also voiced frustration about immigration. “Biden’s open borders really pissed me off,” he said. A lifelong Democrat, he and his brothers all voted for Trump.

It’s easy to call out the hypocrisy of naturalized immigrants becoming border hawks. But let’s try to understand Ashan’s perspective. He came to America legally in 2012, waited patient-



In a presidential race that has culminated in this moment in history, immigration was the issue at the forefront of voter’s minds and, surprisingly, immigrants turned out in droves to vote Trump into office. In contributor Jeff Bloodworth’s recent trip to D.C. for the inauguration, he reflects on some conversations he had with immigrants to the U.S. and uncovers their motivations.

ly for 13 years to become a citizen, and watched others gain access to state benefits he was once denied. Now, asylum seekers are eligible for driver’s licenses, work permits, and government support. While I have no problem with this — I’m glad they get it — Ashan and Nico see others receiving what they once couldn’t. *ProPublica* reports that sentiments like theirs are common in immigrant communities.

Immigrants drive America’s economic engine. Nearly half of all Fortune 500 companies are founded by immigrants or their children. Immigrant entrepreneurs are revitalizing cities like Erie. My New American students are generally the hardest working and most driven. Yet, 80 percent of Kamala Harris voters support stronger border enforcement. This could have been easily addressed if Biden and a Democratic Congress had allowed asylum seekers to apply from their home countries instead of making the dangerous trek to the southern border. Democrats could have admitted qualified asylum seekers without the chaos, while also denying Trump a potent issue.

Yes, it’s frustrating that many recent immigrants voted for Trump, even though he wants to reverse birth-right citizenship and has escalated ICE roundups. But liberals need to un-

derstand: real-world politics isn’t *The West Wing*. People are complicated and self-interested. I consume political news the way E.T. does Reese’s Pieces. Meanwhile, regular voters make snap judgments based on their frenemy’s Snapchat. Progressive voters are like Charlie Brown, forever trying to kick the football, but Lucy keeps pulling it away. If liberals want to win, we need to understand why Lucy moves the ball and how that damn Charlie Brown can change his losing ways.

Joe Biden passed significant legislation that benefited working-class Americans: the infrastructure bill, the CHIPS Act, and expanded child tax credits. Yet, Ashan, Nico, and many non-white working-class men still voted for Trump. Will Marshall, founder of the Washington, D.C.-based Progressive Policy Institute, summed it up: “You can’t just appeal to people’s material interests. You must appeal to their moral interests.” In the eyes of voters, individual bills don’t matter if they don’t align with their sense of what’s just and fair.

Donald Trump capitalizes on these resentments, portraying himself as the defender of voters’ moral interests. Yes, Trump probably thinks the “Golden Rule” is advice for bathroom décor, but Trump’s moral failings are

beside the point. The working-class voters who once supported Democrats now feel that the party no longer aligns with their moral values. And here’s the twist: we highly-educated progressives are part of the problem. Although we make up only about 12 percent of Democratic voters, we have an outsized influence in media, politics, and academia. Our views are often far left of the average voter, including non-white, working-class people. This has turned progressive positions into party orthodoxy and opened the door for populist demagogues like Trump.

Ashan and Nico still believe “immigrants get things done,” but this Obama-era vibe seems intangible for today’s progressives. Progressives are the only demographic in America that believes, “success is largely beyond an individual’s control” according to a 2021 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center. But for people like Nico — whose parents crossed the Sonoran Desert, wrapping their ankles in garlic to repel snakes, and sleeping in caves — success is very much something you can control. That’s Nico’s lived experience.

In the past, Democrats were able to connect with working-class voters because they appealed to their moral sensibilities. Harvard historian Liz-

NEED HELP?

DON'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN?

211 connects you to information by:



TEXT

YOUR ZIP + NEED
TO 898-211



DIAL

2-1-1



CHAT

PA211NW.ORG

IF YOU NEED...

- Aging services
- Youth Services
- Counseling
- Education/Training
- Food/Shelter/Clothing
- Health Services
- Parenting
- Support Groups
- Substance Abuse
- and much more!



LEARN MORE!



PA211NW.ORG



UNITED WAY
of Erie County

211

PENNSYLVANIA | NORTHWEST

FIND HELP 24/7

Impression Massage Erie

Trusted, licensed Massage Therapy

Mo welcomes his many former clients to his new studio. Located in the safe, open historic area of downtown Erie... You can now avoid the cost of high-priced chain stores and their rents.



If you don't know him already... Meet Mo.

- A licensed massage therapist with over five years of health care and massage experience.
- Mo has helped hundreds of clients with mobility, pain issues and preventive techniques. He listens to his patients to help fix their problems and explain what he's doing.
- As an award-winning athlete and bodybuilder – He understands the approach needed to help you to feel better and relax.

Introductory rates are located on website or by phone.

Text or Call 814-331-9718 • www.impressionmassageerie.com

ABC's

of Building Better Lives

Mary Lynn Rote, LPC, CADC

Rob Giannamore, LPC

Jillian Rhoades, LCSW

Alen Melik-Adamyam, LCSW

Samantha Marcinko, LPC

Mark Gardner, LPC

Sara Allegretto, LPC

Hannah Proper, LCSW

Jessica Dahlgren, LPC

Henry Krol, LPC, CAADC

COUNSELING SERVICES

Individuals | Couples | Families

Depression | Anxiety | Trauma | EMDR Therapy

Addictions | Fitness Training

Nutrition & Weight Management

CALL US TODAY (814) 825-2930

4320 Dexter Ave. Erie, PA 16504

For more info, visit www.marylynnrote.com



\$2,500
sign-on bonus
for select
positions!

VISIT OUR INDEED PAGE FOR CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Careers that make a difference are happening at Harborcreek Youth Services!

HYS provides state-of-the-art, trauma-focused behavioral health care to kids with a history of complex trauma. If you're looking for more than just a job, we want to work with you!

Working with us will make a difference in your life, too. HYS Staff Members have access to an incredible benefits package including medical, dental, vision, life, and long-term disability insurance with low premiums and deductibles. Take advantage of our retirement savings plan, paid time off, and paid training in the latest evidence-based, trauma-focused treatment modalities that you won't find anywhere else.

We are currently hiring for the following positions:

- Special Education Supervisor
- MST Therapist / Clinical Therapist
- Assistant Program Manager
- Direct Care Staff
- Maintenance Staff

- **AMAZING BENEFITS**
- **PAID TRAINING**
- **RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN**
- **PAID TIME OFF**
- **AND MORE!**



HYS is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applicants must be 21 years of age or older. Current PA Child Abuse, PA Criminal, and FBI fingerprint clearances are required upon hire. Questions? Prefer to send in a resume? Email our Director of HR, Julie Snyder, at jsnyder@hys-erie.org.



beth Cohen called this approach “moral capitalism” — an idea that promises everyone, whether owner or worker, a fair share. This ethos, deeply rooted in American political culture, used to be the glue that bound the Democratic coalition together.

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal was built on this idea, focusing on the “forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.” Social Security, Medicare, and other programs were framed as “earned benefits,” not handouts. That’s the secret: working-class voters want to feel like they earned

their benefits. In 2008, Barack Obama echoed this vision by promising “if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead.” The non-white working class backed him in record numbers, helping him win in key swing states.

If Democrats want to recapture the immigrant and working-class vote, they must reconnect with this moral capitalism. Trump’s vision is not inevitable. Democrats can support immigrants and appeal to working-class voters while staying true to their values. But all of us, the “Charlie Browns”

of the left need to understand the motivations of everyday voters—if we don’t, we’ll keep losing.

As Will Marshall told me, “White non-college-educated Americans are firmly in the Trumpian populist camp, and Black and especially Hispanic working-class voters are drifting to the right as well. They aren’t fixated on government redistribution in the name of equality or social justice; they’re aspirational and want to see a dynamic, growing economy that creates abundant opportunities for good jobs and careers for those who work

hard and play by the rules.”

A Trumpian future is not written in stone. Liberals can find a way to support immigrants and appeal to the working class, but only if we understand the real issues — and stop trying to kick the political football without understanding why it keeps getting pulled away.

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

Wood Announces Campaign for Erie County Executive

ECGRA director aims to return collaboration to county government

By: **Chloe Forbes**

After years of working within and beside local government, Perry Wood wants to lead it. Wood, current executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), announced Tuesday that he is running for Erie County Executive.

As the son of a veteran, Wood explained that he was inspired by service at a young age and became involved in politics during his college career at Mercyhurst University.

“Straight out of college, I worked in Gov. Tom Ridge’s office and then I went to work at the City of Erie, where I put my interest in economic development into action,” Wood said to the crowd gathered at the Blasco Memorial Library. “I had an incredible experience in those younger years, building relationships and putting the ideas to work.”

Wood helped found the Downtown Improvement District before switching gears to spearhead the Technology Council of Northwest Pennsylvania as its CEO. There, he became well-versed in collaboration and learned how to use technology to benefit startups and existing manufacturers. It was then that he decided to take on the leadership role at ECGRA, touting his implementation of accountability and transparency, which he alleges, “ended a period of disorder and litigation.”

Among those accomplishments he listed were:

- Mission Main Street: premier economic strategy in Erie County
- Empower Erie: the driving force of the newest community college in the United States in the past 30 years
- The NWPA Beehive Network: a university-based initiative that helps business owners create successful companies
- Renaissance Block: a program designed to fight blight by investing in homes

Wood said that those partnerships he has forged have resulted in 1,000 jobs created and retained and an investment of over \$88 million in local governments, economic development agencies, and revitalization strategies throughout the county.

During our interview, he said that his first priority in office is to grow economic development in the region with a focus on existing infrastructure.

“The second thing we need to do is shore up the emergency management system by working with township supervisors, borough managers, and volunteer fire departments to make sure that the fire departments and ambulance services have the resources they need,” he said.

“The third thing we need to do is hold the line on taxes,” Wood said. “We have a county executive who has raised taxes — the highest tax increase in a generation. We need to



Perry Wood, currently the executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) announced his intention to run for Erie County Executive on Tuesday, Jan. 28 at the Blasco Memorial Library, challenging incumbent Brenton Davis.

hold the line on that.”

Wood said that the increases have come as the county receives its largest allocation of federal money ever, and declared that spending without bringing new investments into the region needs to stop.

After devoting years working with the community, Wood believes his background has given him the proper tools to listen and respond.

“I think collaboration is the most important thing you could bring to the county executive’s office,” he said, mentioning that he hopes to remain active in the community. “The first thing I’ll do is make sure that the county is working with Infinite Erie, which is a collaboration of the other funders in the community — businesses, corpo-

rate leaders, and civic organizations that are making a difference.” Those partnerships include the Erie Community Foundation, Erie Insurance, and the Jefferson Educational Society.

Wood is endorsed by Erie County Council members Andre Horton, Chris Drexel, and Rock Copeland, who have been at odds with current County Executive Brenton Davis in the past. Wood said he hopes to mend the relationship with council and work together.

Wood currently lives in Millcreek and has two children. For those wishing to learn more about Wood’s campaign, visit voteperrywood.com.

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

Get Your Word's Worth

Revamped Café 7-10 comes with poetry perks

By: Liz Allen

On a blustery January morning, a yellow tape is snipped, doors open, and I step into Café 7-10 to savor the aromas and enjoy the ambience after a year-long renovation of the business. Two weeks following the grand reopening, I'm back, eating an espresso chocolate chip cookie as Mabel Howard explains why her shop does more than sell baked goods; it's also a focal point for Erie's often unseen poetry scene.

I first interviewed Mabel and her mother, Thelma Howard, for an Erie Reader story six years ago, just after their café at 7 W. 10th St. opened on July 10, 2019 (Thelma's birthday). Since then, I've followed their dreams and admired their business instincts — opening Thelma's Tasty Temptations, a snack bar outside Blasco Library; delivering goodies, gratis, to Erie firefighters; collaborating with the Revs. Curtis and Vickie Jones to start the Historical Institute of Culture and the African American Experience at 315 E. Ninth St., in a former church rectory.

At the café, Mabel and her mom are “the sweets team,” she explained. “Mom's the maker and I'm the marketer.” But as her mother is baking signature desserts, including peanut butter banana chocolate chip bread and the new espresso cookies, Mabel is lining up community programming for the café, including poetry events that attract a diverse group of young and old, writers and readers, wordsmiths and novices.

Mabel first fell in love with poetry in 2012 when she heard Keith Moses at an open mic night at the Erie Bookstore, located then at Lovell Place on East 13th Street. Now an educator in New York City, Moses was “ahead of his time,” she said. “He was at a skill level I had never seen” in how he practiced and delivered his poetry.

In 2015, Mabel came up with the concept of blending poetry with soul food at Thelma's Place, her mother's restaurant and banquet hall in the former Danish Club on West Eighth Street. Mabel knew from her own experience that you could have a passion for poetry but be too intimidated to share



X-Pressions poetry-sharing events at Werner Books, organized by Mabel Howard, draw both experienced and novice writers to share their work.

it. “The goal was not to have all eyes on you,” she said, so at Thelma's Place, poets could speak while patrons ate, taking some of the pressure off performing.

Mabel said that it's a unique experience to hear poetry being spoken, especially when someone shares their work for the first time. “It's beautiful,” she said. “You watch someone blossom before your eyes. It touches everyone's hearts differently. Poets are word artists.”

Mabel and others wonder why Erie people don't realize that we have a vibrant poetry community here, even as we extol musicians, stage performances, and visual artists. Poetry might seem too esoteric for everyday tastes, but that's not true, according to those who tout Erie's well-deserved reputation for embracing this art form.

For starters, between 2009 and 2022, Erie County Council funded the Erie County Laureate program, championed by the late Erie County Councilman Joe Giles. All four universities were members of the Poet Laureate committee and for 10 years, Mercyhurst University English Professor Greg Brown, Ph.D., represented his school.

“I thought it was a tremendous program. It rewarded local poets, gave them something to be proud of and maybe leverage for a further career,

and money for a public project,” he said. “And it gave people an outlet for publishing.”

Award-winning literary writer Berwyn Moore Booker, now retired but still an adjunct at Gannon University where she had taught English, published *Dwelling in Possibility: Voices of Erie County* as her project when she was the first Poet Laureate in 2009-2010, he said.

The other laureates were Thomas Forsthoefel, Ron Hayes, Cee Williams, Marisa Moks-Unger, Chuck Joy, and Sean Dougherty.

Williams hosted Poets Hall on East Sixth Street for many years, Brown recalled. “In this little storefront, we'd have 35 people packed in there and they began to learn from each other,” he said. “There was a very broad mix, from all over the city, all walks of life.”

Williams and Brown now publish Poets Hall Press, a monthly magazine with a featured poet and between four and seven contributions from “open mic” poets. The new edition, featuring poet Luke Kuzmish, should be for sale soon, including at Werner Books, he said.

Chuck Joy, M.D., who pitched the idea of a poet laureate to Councilman Giles, served as the laureate from 2018-2021 but his love of poetry goes way back to his time at Cathedral Prep, class of 1969, when he received the

Gold Key in English award.

His sense of “urgency” to write emerged when he was editing a journal in med school at the University of Pittsburgh and took a tutorial about medicine and literature from a favorite teacher, Dr. Jack Dwyer. When he did his residency in psychiatry, he also edited a publication for the doctors in residence. The first place he shared a poem was during a reading at Penn State Behrend. He remains impressed that all four colleges have “deep commitments and a history of commitments” to poetry.

Another poet with a voice and a devoted following is Thasia Anne Lunger, who founded Women of Word (WOW) at Edinboro University and organized spoken word poetry and conversations about important social justice issues. WOW later moved to the Erie County Library and the Performing Artists Collective Alliance.

Blane Dessy was awed by Erie's poetry scene after he became executive director of the Erie County Library in 2019. “I'm convinced Erie poets need to have a bigger presence in the Erie arts scene,” said Dessy. “Poetry is everywhere in Erie but it's almost invisible.” He calls Joy the “OG” of Erie's poetry community. “He has been so vital in keeping the Erie poetry scene alive,” he said.

Now retired from the library, Dessy's



Mabel Howard (left) with her mother Thelma Blanks, is delighted to feature poetry events at their Café 7-10 — but she has also shared her poetry in a wide variety of other venues, including at Eerie Horror Fest.

role in what he teases might be called the Erie “poetry league” is to compile a bibliography of all the small-press chapbooks (inexpensive booklets collecting poems and other short-form works) with an Erie connection. His list has grown to 24 pages.

You won’t find a chapbook by Dessy on his list. “I am a lover of poetry but I don’t put pen to paper,” he said. “I don’t even attempt to write poetry. When I have tried, it’s such doggerel.”

But you don’t have to write poetry to love it. Like Dessy, Mary Ellen Dahlkemper fell in love with poetry as a college English major. At Mercyhurst, she had the “marvelous” Sister of Mercy Eustace Taylor, who nudged her to read Chaucer in Olde English.

“She said something to me when I was getting ready to graduate. ‘You should read poetry every day and read poetry to your children,’” recalled Dahlkemper, a friend since we were

student journalists in high school. Sure enough, after she married and had children, she’d read Shel Silverstein’s *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and other “wonderful” books of kids’ poetry. “Not just the kids, but you laugh,” she said.

“People get afraid of poetry. They think it’s beyond them or too lofty or whatever. It’s not true. It is a way to hear what other people are thinking about, in different kinds of words,” she said. She and her husband, Ed Lesser, often went to poetry readings in Erie but she didn’t attempt to write her own poetry until she began to lose Ed — to dementia, then death in 2023.

“There is something quite healing about going and listening to and hearing poetry,” she said. She found it cathartic to write poetry — and they aren’t all “weepy,” she said. “One is even kind of funny,” she said. It’s called “I Now Live With Vinyl,” and the first

line refers to the 5,000-album record collection Ed left behind, with no instructions on what to do with them.

Chuck Joy, Mary Ellen’s friend since high school, encouraged her to share her work. “Just come to Mabel’s. Have a coffee and a dessert,” he suggested. And she did.

Working on her Master Gardener certification, she’s also interested in doing a garden project near Poetry Park, 636 E. 22nd St. The late Benedictine Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, also a poet, started the park to create beauty and peace in her neighborhood marred by gun violence.

There’s a “magic” associated with poetry, Erie’s poets say, with Mabel’s name usually said in the same breath. “That’s a little magical, what Mabel maintains, in Erie’s tradition of a weekly poetry site,” said Dr. Joy, retired from his psychiatry practice.

“Poetry is the way we test the magic of words and make sense of the world,” said Dr. Brown, from Mercyhurst.

“Poetry is a place for healing, where we release words and there’s someone in the audience who is supposed to catch the words,” said Mabel.

“Poetry opens doors,” she added. That’s not just figuratively. It’s literally at Café 7-10.

Liz Allen tries to read poetry daily but hasn’t yet written any. You can reach her at lizerie@aol.com.

Learn more

To find poetry events at Café 7-10, visit

Mabel Howard’s Instagram page, Mabeline The Artist. The café features poetry for various audiences, including teens and college students, and an open mic night on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. Call 814-572-0985 to learn more or just drop in at 7 W. 10th Street.

At Thelma’s Tasty Temptations, the snack bar run by Thelma Blanks outside Blasco Library, she and her daughter Mabel Howard will distribute pocket poetry inspired by Black creators and poets during February for Black History Month.

Greg Brown, Ph.D., Mercyhurst professor, runs a poetry workshop at 6 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of the month in the Alumni Board Room (Room 203 in Old Main), on the south side of the second floor. The workshop is free and open to the public. It will alternate between instruction on the poetic art forms and time for participants to share their work. The next one is Feb. 12.

Poetry Park, at 636 E. 22nd St., across from Holy Trinity Catholic Church, is well-maintained and worth a visit, even in winter, to view the metal sculptures with lines from famous poets. The late Benedictine Sister Mary Lou Kownacki led the effort to create the park, which is supported by the Trinity Square Foundation.

Thasia Anne Lunger hosts a monthly live open mic poetry event on Community Access Media. The poetry is “family friendly” and is recorded, so it can be viewed anytime on CAM.

Blane Dessy and other members of Erie’s poetry community plan to launch a website soon. In the meantime, if you know of a local chapbook that should be included in Dessy’s bibliography of Erie poetic works, e-mail him at bdessey@gmail.com.

Gallery Night
February 28th | 5-8 PM
 419 State Street | Erie, PA 16501

ERIE ARTS AND CULTURE
 NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA’S ARTS COUNCIL

IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT
 FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARRETT HESS

Shaking the Legacy of Segregation

How integration can be a tool for economic development

By: **Chloe Forbes**

Location, location, location. When looking at homes, buyers may look at different options — nearby amenities, the caliber of local schools, affordable mortgage rates, neighborhood safety. It hasn't been that way for everyone, though. For generations, racial segregation in the community has prevented minorities from buying houses or renting in certain areas. Practices like restrictive property deeds, banks' use of redlining (the discriminatory practice of denying financial services to neighborhoods based on race, ethnicity, or income) for mortgage decisions, and other governmental mechanisms have culminated in leaving areas of Erie County unofficially redlined to this day, impacting generations of Erie residents.

When looking at how segregation comes about, measures fall into one of two categories: *de jure*, meaning by law and public policy, and *de facto*, which results from private practices. Modern-day racial inequities can be traced back to public policy and private discrimination reinforced by government bodies, largely with housing policy as the faulty foundation for the future.

Currently, Erie County Executive Brenton Davis finds himself at odds with people like Councilman Andre Horton, who believes the city should pay the price for its years of oppression, and has proposed a yearly allocation. For 2025, Davis decided to eliminate funding for Diverse Erie, the county's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commission.

He went as far as to veto council's 4-3 vote in favor of \$2.5 million for Diverse Erie funding. Davis favored using the money for municipality infrastructure projects across the entire county as people like Councilman Charlie Bayle say that most Diverse Erie initiatives are strictly city-based and don't service the entire county. The situation calls into question the role of government in racial equity measures as many initiatives are focused on the city due to historic policy limiting Black residents.

This also comes as President Donald Trump is calling for an end to DEI efforts and recently said there would be consequences for any federal government employees who fail to report colleagues pursuing DEI efforts. Perhaps better understanding the governmental policies and practices that led to the current situation could result in more informed conversations about a solution.

Creation of racial segregation

In the aftermath of World War I, U.S. officials created a homeownership campaign to encourage investments in a capitalist system rather than communism (which was then spreading across Eastern Europe and Asia). That's when a group of brothers from Crawford County ventured into Erie County to



Taking into account the origins and history of racial segregation, especially as it applies to housing, local journalist Chloe Forbes uncovers the roots of redlining, the lasting effects of those segregationist policies in Erie County, and how to fix it, especially within the era of anti-DEI initiatives.

develop land. The Andrews Land Co. is responsible for high-end developments including the Academy District, Glenwood Hills, and State Street Heights.

"Academy District offers advantageous facilities never possessed by an existing district, never to be acquired by any future residence section," reads an excerpt from the Erie Daily Times in May 1920.

All these neighborhoods, hailed in the Erie Daily Times for their proximity to recreation, schools, and job opportunities, had a common clause barring minorities from purchasing properties.

"Party of the second part, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns, agree that they shall not and will not sell or convey the property therein described to any person of Polish, Italian, Austrian, Russian, Hungarian, Slavish, or Negro descent and in the event of any such sale or transfer being made the said property shall revert to party of the first part its successors or assigns," restrictive deeds throughout Erie County state.

With the new policy came a manual for housing guidelines. The manual took into account "ignorant racial habits" of Black citizens and European immigrants and listed 30 items a buyer should look at when purchasing a home.

On the list was "buy partnership in the community. 'Restricted residential districts' may serve as protection against persons with whom your family won't care to associate."

By 1934, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt wanted to bounce back from the Great Depression

and created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which granted 30-year mortgages to ensure more people could afford homes. However, the FHA furthered discrimination by refusing to insure mortgages in and near neighborhoods with African Americans. The practice is known as redlining.

Areas were designated into different classifications based on their "quality" ranging from desirable to hazardous. The areas historically known to house whites were granted the highest classifications. Accompanying documents from the time show "infiltration of Negro" populations is noted in some of the least desirable neighborhoods.

In urban communities like Erie, Black applicants were left out of the homeownership boom. The FHA also subsidized costs for builders who were mass-producing subdivisions for white buyers, under the requirement that none of the homes could be sold to African Americans.

In his 2017 book *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein explained that zoning ordinances likewise established "colored residence districts" because doing so was thought to remove the chances of racial conflict. When racially biased zoning was ruled unconstitutional, states took other measures to evade integration. In Virginia, there was a ban on interracial marriage, so people would be less likely to move into an area full of people of a different race that they could not marry.

Neighborhoods began creating associations with a mission to keep those areas racially segregated. So



The original

meals on wheels erie

since 1971

Are You Having Trouble Getting Out to go Grocery Shopping?

We can help!
Our volunteers shop weekly and deliver groceries right to your door!

*some restrictions apply



Are you interested in volunteering?
We'd love to hear from you!

Find more info at:
mealsonwheelserie.org
814-452-6930

ride-the-e.com

814.456.2299

Please take this short survey to provide feedback about the EMTA. All are encouraged to participate, thank you!

EMTA SERVICES SURVEY



ERIE'S HIDDEN TREASURE

"If we don't have it, You don't need it!"

Hardware • Paint • Plumbing • Propane • Electrical Supplies • Tools
Screen & Window Repair • Equipment Rentals • US Post Office

Over 135 years of service to Erie, PA!



Since 1886

KRAUS

DEPARTMENT STORE

810 Parade St. • 814-453-4314 • www.kraudeptstore.com

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30-5:30 • Saturday 9-1

ERIE EPISCOPAL PRESENTS

LITERATURE AND FAITH OF THE

BLACK

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

TUESDAY EVENINGS IN

FEBRUARY
4-11-18-25

BEGINNING AT

6PM

AT ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

4701 OLD FRENCH RD | ERIE, PA
SAINTMARKSERIE.ORG | 814.452.3779

EXPLORING LITERATURE & FAITH
ACROSS FOUR CULTURAL ERAS:
SLAVERY, RECONSTRUCTION,
CIVIL RIGHTS, AND
BLACK LIVES
MATTER.



Thank You, Erie for naming us Best New Restaurant 2024!

Neapolitan pizza.

Hand stretched cheese, fresh milled flour, natural fermentation, drips and drizzles, premium toppers, specialty & featured pizzas.

22 North Park Row • 508 State St.
Inside the Flagship City Food Hall
Erie, PA 16501 • www.ippapizza.com

Mi amore!

ROMOLO®
CHOCOLATES



 When your **HEART**
Depends on it 

L|E|C|O|M HEALTH



Cardiovascular Care



Matthew C. Becker, M.D.
*Nationally Recognized
Interventional Cardiologist*

LECOMHealth.com

although it was illegal to refuse home ownership to minority residents, developers could make it a condition that the buyer adhere to the neighborhood association's rules.

Other practices — like local governments denying water and sewer access to homes newly purchased by Black citizens or the IRS affording tax breaks to churches that paid fees for whites to take Black residents to court over restrictive deeds — reinforced segregation via government action, Rothstein writes.

Home assessors also undermined tax fairness by overassessing properties in Black neighborhoods and underassessing them in white ones. African American property taxes were often higher relative to market value, which led them to be delinquent in taxes, too.

A 1973 study done by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uncovered a systematic pattern of overassessment in low-income African American neighborhoods with corresponding underassessment in white, middle-class neighborhoods. In some instances, houses were assessed at one-ninth the value of nearby Black residents.

Although many of these practices are no longer in use, they remain ingrained in history. It wasn't until 2023 that Gov. Josh Shapiro signed legislation declaring racially restrictive deeds inactive across the commonwealth.

Most recently, at the end of December, HUD reported that homelessness has surged 18 percent in the past year, with an overrepresentation of Black residents at its forefront.

Effects of historic policy

As America began to move forward following World Wars I and II, Black residents were still at a 400-year disadvantage while the nation continued to build on those hazardous policies, causing further systemic damage.

The GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act), passed in 1944, was designed to help millions of veterans transition from military to civilian life by providing benefits. Those benefits, to be carried out by the Veterans Administration, included loan guarantees for homes and businesses, education and training for jobs, and unemployment pay.

In an essay published by the Jefferson Educational Society in 2022, Parris Baker chronicled, "The enormous prosperity of the 1950s, experienced in the United States after World War II was attributed directly to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, changing the life trajectories of many American veterans. However, the two critical methods for creating generational and intergenerational wealth were denied the majority of African American veterans."

Although the bill did not openly exclude African Americans, not many were granted benefits. In 1947, just two of the more than 3,200 VA-guaranteed home loans in 13 Mississippi cities were granted to Black borrowers. In New York and New Jersey suburbs, fewer than 100 of the 67,000 mortgages insured by the GI Bill supported home purchases by non-whites.

For example, servicemen who were dishonorably discharged were ineligible to receive benefits, and African American soldiers were disproportionately discharged with that status.

According to the National Park Service, World War II began a practice of "blue" discharges or "blue tickets" in the military. Named after the paper they were printed on, the discharges were given to soldiers who had "undesirable habits and traits of character." This included those in the LGBTQIA+ community as well.

In other cases, Black soldiers were dishonorably discharged for protesting segregation in army towns.

From the end of World War II to about 1973, wages in the US grew rapidly, nearly doubling according to government data. However, it wasn't until the 1960s that African Americans became part of that equation and still remained excluded from higher-paying jobs like construction work.

In 1935, Roosevelt signed the National Labor Relations Act, which for the following 30 years protected the bargaining rights of those unions that denied African American admission.

From 1973 to now, wages have become mostly stagnant with the American Enterprise Association stating that hourly compensation for blue-collar work-

"We have revised our textbooks and renamed our holidays to acknowledge the harms of colonization. We have begun the work of removing marble statues and changing street signs in recognition of the horrors of slavery. But do we not act as modern-day segregationists when we mobilize to block an affordable housing complex in our neighborhood?" — Matthew Desmond (*Poverty, By America*, 2023)

ers flatlined in the 1970s in stark contrast to rising incomes at the top.

From 1957 to 1968, Congress adopted civil rights laws prohibiting second-class citizenship in public accommodation and transportation, voting, and employment. Much of the damage was already ingrained within the system, though.

If policy up until that point had given people the tools to build the life they desired, white citizens received a shiny new package of power tools while minorities got a hammer and nails.

In the late 60s and early 70s, the Erie Daily Times called attention to housing inequalities. In the article "Negro Housing Bias Prevails in Erie," Robert S. Schluraff, the president of the Greater Erie Board of Realtors, denied discrimination against Blacks by realtors and real estate agents.

"There is discrimination, but the homeowner does it," he said.

The Rev. Paul Martin, the executive director of the

Opportunities Industrialization Center training and employment program said the realtor or agent does not have to and should not have to tell the seller the race, nationality, or other identifiers of the prospective buyer. Schluraff disagreed and said it was "more practical" to disclose those details and that homeowners are not governed by the state or city because that's their private property.

In 1970, the Erie Daily Times published a series documenting the housing woes of minorities in the city. Headlines included "Unfit for Human Habitation," "The Poison Doesn't Stink But The Dead Rats Do," and "Action Needed Now!"

"The rats are dead in an apartment in this E. 18th Street home ... the maggots crawling from the woodwork will testify to that. Action is needed now to find new, permanent homes for tenants who are forced to exist in homes like this one," an article read.

Since then, the Environmental Protection Agency has issued statements confirming a disproportionate amount of toxins in Black communities nationwide.

The lack of integration can also be seen in school enrollment. The Economic Policy Institute reported that schools are more segregated now than 40 years ago due to segregated neighborhoods.

Other nonhousing programs continue to build on preexisting residential patterns as well. For example, limited transportation funds, like those in the 2024 Pennsylvania budget are afforded to highways rather than public transportation. Those measures isolate city residents and renters more from outlying suburbs.

Where do we go now?

Unlike registering to vote or changing seats on a bus, moving from an urban apartment to a suburban home is more challenging.

Someone's economic status is typically replicated in the next generation, and the value of suburban houses for white working- and middle-class families appreciated over the years, helping to result in vast and multigenerational wealth differences.

Specifically, a reduction of discriminatory barriers has not historically translated to upward mobility for Black Americans. According to the Pew Center, of American children born to parents whose incomes were in the bottom quintile, 43 percent remain trapped there as adults. For African Americans, only 26 percent make it to the middle quintile or higher.

In his 2023 book, *Poverty, By America*, Matthew Desmond examines poverty in the U.S. and possible solutions. The first step? Integration.

"We have revised our textbooks and renamed our holidays to acknowledge the harms of colonization. We have begun the work of removing marble statues and changing street signs in recognition of the horrors of slavery. But do we not act as modern-day segregationists when we mobilize to block an affordable housing complex in our neighborhood?" Desmond asks.

"Yet even the most ambitious antipoverty proposals in wide circulation today, such as a universal basic income, often leave segregation untouched," he

ELECT ANDRE HORTON



County Councilman Andre Horton believes the city should pay the price for its years of racial oppression, and has proposed a yearly allocation. However, for 2025, County Executive Brenton Davis acted to eliminate funding for Diverse Erie, the county's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commission.

writes.

Desmond maintains that if someone is taken out of an impoverished neighborhood and placed into a more affluent one, even if they receive no increased income, the outcome will be better because they have more access to resources, better health care, proper schooling, etc.

He suggests that zoning ordinances nationally should be rewritten to include mandates that developers must set aside a percentage of their units for low-income families, or incentives for developers to promote mixed-income housing.

Similar housing recommendations by sustainability expert Court Gould have gone mostly unaddressed.

"Neighborhoods with quality, affordable, mixed-income housing for all people create value that attracts investment and grows population. This is the formula to break Erie's decades of corrosive segregation and poverty," Gould wrote in a 2022 report published by the Jefferson Educational Society.

He noted that high concentrations of low-income and often minority households still occupy the city's least desirable housing, which highlights the city's racial and social segregation.

That's nearly 50 years after a judge's ruling called for "reverse discrimination" as part of the equation to ensure equity.

In the 1973 court case *Erie Human Relations Commission v. [Mayor Louis] Tullio*, a judge ruled that the City of Erie Police Department must hire additional Black police officers to properly reflect the population of the city. He stated that "reverse discrimination" must be used for equity over equality, as a form of compensation.

"Like the infections in the human body which are cured by injections of the same poison, the antitoxin of reverse discrimination is a recognized judicial remedy for the toxin of discrimination," Judge Gerald Weber wrote in his opinion. "There is a compelling public interest in preventing the perpetuation

of discrimination or undoing the effects of past discrimination. Therefore, the consideration of a racial quota in making appointments to the police department is not a form of invidious discrimination since the goal of this policy is not to promote segregation but rather to achieve integration."

Likewise, in 1985, the city of Erie's administrative code was amended to include an article focused on inclusion in city contracting, but the ordinance was never implemented.

Boots on the ground

Even today, the effects of racial segregation and past policy, especially in housing, impact part of Erie's population. Some organizations pay special attention to those areas, though.

In the old Wayne School neighborhood, redlined and put up against an industrial zone, health has declined so much that Hamot Health Foundation (HHF) has prioritized its rehabilitation. Other organizations like National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Erie's Black Wall Street, Our West Bayfront, United Way of Erie County, Erie City Mission, The Erie Community Foundation, and businesses like Erie Insurance focus on equitable initiatives and research.

Still, measures remain lacking as reports point to ongoing disparities in access to education, health care, housing, and employment for Black residents.

In 2020, Erie County Council adopted and enacted an ordinance declaring racism a health emergency crisis in Erie County. Yet, it persists.

There have been multiple reports within the past decade that point to possible interventions. In 2021, a report addressing public policy reform in Erie identified inclusive jobs for public construction projects as a starting point for the initiative's policy work.

Housing-wise, Gould's 2022 report also outlined recommendations like community action, rental inspection guidelines, inclusionary zoning measures, and shared data across services in his report, which would span across government action to neighborhood associations and organizations. It's something he says is an economic measure just as much as an

ethical one.

"For the economy to grow, all must live in safe/ quality housing, be able to work to their potential, and the city needs to retain its residents while successfully attracting new, particularly highly skilled, high-wage earners. Diverse neighborhoods with authentic character are a magnet for attraction and retention," he writes. "Integration of new economy workers into mixed neighborhoods can help break patterns of segregation and concentrated poverty."

A Penn State Behrend conference in July focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion-based economic gains in Erie. During it, Ken Louie, an associate professor of economics and director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie, said that if the earnings of all workers were raised to the median pay of white men, Erie County's economy would grow by \$765 million.

Both government officials like Davis, who focuses much of his time in office on economic development, and diversity, equity, and inclusion officials agree that economic development is a strength that could benefit the larger community.

Oftentimes though, the debate about economic development turns into one about gentrification, pitting low-income families with stable housing against low-income families who need it, in a battle of limited space that seems further encroached upon.

To talk about gentrification is to miss the point, as creating mixed-income neighborhoods is the principal recommendation for economic prosperity. Instead of further segregating, economic plans must focus on how racial integration can be used as another tool, not a scare tactic.

Since there is little money to go around, Erie County government has chosen this year to divert funding, including for affordable housing through the Redevelopment Authority and a civil rights investigator in the Human Relations Commission, to other areas. The time-old tale about limited funds is one that drives the point home.

"Why do we continue to accept scarcity as given, treating it as the central organizing principle of our economics, policy-making, city planning, and personal ethics?" asks Desmond. "Why do we continue to act like the farmer who, upon learning that his dog is lying on a pile of hay meant for cattle to eat and baring his teeth when the cows come near, chooses to drop their rations, feeding them with what scraps he can snatch from the edge of the pile? Why don't we just move the dog?"

After weathering life's storms, the Black population has patched up and remediated as much as it can, but it's government action that has forced residents to rebuild without the proper resources.

In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

Chloe Forbes is a local journalist, reach her at chloe-forbes14@gmail.com.

CONTRIBUTED



Sustainability expert Court Gould wrote, in a 2022 report published by the Jefferson Educational Society, "Neighborhoods with quality, affordable, mixed-income housing for all people create value that attracts investment and grows population. This is the formula to break Erie's decades of corrosive segregation and poverty."

Something for
Every Taste Pallet!

- ♥ Local Breweries
- ♥ Regional Favorites
- ♥ Ciders & Hard Teas
- ♥ Imports & Domestic

Not sure what to get them...?
We have Gift Cards Available in Any Amount!

Won't You

BEER



MY
VALENTINE



HOUSE OF BEER

Open Everyday at 11am!

Great Food! Awesome Beer!

847 Pittsburgh Ave
Erie, PA
814-454-1989
6packhob.com

OWN
YOUR
FIRST
HOME



GENESIS PROGRAM
OWN A HOME IN 12-36 MONTHS



Benefits

- 1 on 1 support
- Educational Workshops
- Savings Commitment

Qualifications

- Minimum income of \$36,000
- Credit score of 600 and above

CONTACT SSJ NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK
425 W 18th St, Erie PA 16502
814.454.7814

13¢

OFF
PER GALLON
EVERY DAY

STACK
& SAVE

SAVE
10¢ /gal

WHEN YOU PAY WITH
A CITGO® GIFT CARD

SAVE
3¢ /gal

WITH THE CLUB
CITGO® APP



*Unlimited 10¢ savings on CITGO® gift card. 3¢ savings on the Club CITGO® app up to 30 gallons. Offer only available at Country Fair CITGO® locations. Offer available only through the Club CITGO® app. See Club CITGO® app for terms and conditions, including the More Info section of the deal. Message and data rates may apply. Void where prohibited.

Country Fair

Time and Temperature

at Your Fingertips



814
452-6311

Featuring Erie's only team of meteorologists.

YOUR WEATHER AUTHORITY

CRAIG FLINT MORNING NEWS
TOM ATKINS EVENING NEWS
JACOB MATTHEWS WEEKEND NEWS

JET-24 FOX 66 YourErie



Erie, thank you for voting us
**Best Local Business,
Best New Business, and
Best Local Book Store!**



In the Liberty Plaza
3608 Liberty St. • Erie, PA 16508 • www.wernerbooks.com

Proud to be Erie's Community Bookstore

Coventina
DAY & MEDICAL SPA

NOW HIRING

Stylists and Massage Therapists

ERIE READER
Best Spa
11 Years
Running

JOIN THE
BEST
OF THE
BEST
TEAM

SEND RESUME'S TO:

coventinaspa@gmail.com
814-796-9038

We're only 5 Miles South of I-90 on Peach Street!

CHECK OUT OUR BENEFITS

2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024

To resolutions that last...

Happy New Year!
Whether you've got one, or 99, we wish you the drive and resolve to get to a better state™. Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.®
CALL ME TODAY.

State Farm™

1101456.1 State Farm, Home Office, Bloomington, IL

Looking for More Events?

Remember to visit the Erie Reader's Online Calendar at eriereader.com/calendar

- Home to hundreds of listings each month!
- Submit your own events!
- Search by date and category!
- Updated by actual humans living in Erie!

Wabtec US Rail, Inc. seeks Engineering Manager – Electrical Integration in Erie, PA to conduct performance appraisals and participate in salary planning. Telecommuting permitted. Regular domestic travel required to customer and vendor sites up to 5% of the time.

Apply at www.jobpostingtoday.com
Ref #18303

LOCAL VOICES

Edwina Tries...Erie African Arts Gallery

Celebrate Black History Month at this lovely downtown locale

By: Edwina Capozziello

Here's a not-so-secret thing about me: I love earrings. And what I love even more is popping into a locally owned business and making new friends. I got all of that and more when I visited Erie African Arts Gallery at 13 E. 13th St. recently. I was warmly greeted the moment I walked through the door by proprietor Emile Lokole and his sister Francine.

The shop is small but well-appointed and tidy. There are vibrant pieces of handmade jewelry, sculptures, clothing and art covering every wall and table. Displays are well-tended, organized, and a feast for the eyes. I beelined for a rack of stunning beaded earrings, each pair more detailed and colorful than the next. On the wall to my left hung necklaces and collars. Some were of the same bead type as the earrings, others made of different media, and many were so large, impressive, and well-made that one can tell they took hours for loving hands to create.

I picked out a beautiful pair of beaded earrings and a matching multi-colored bracelet and went up front to talk with Emile and Francine. Emile told me about how he looks forward to hosting

future events this spring and summer featuring the shop's wares (and African cuisine prepared by his sister) where he can continue to welcome the community as he has at pop-ups in the past. Emile said that when the shop opened, Benton Bainbridge and FEED Media Art Center helped spread the word and he hopes to keep the buzz going.

Before I left, Emile and I pulled out our phones at the same time, asking one another if we could snap pictures. I left with a smile thinking that we both had selfies of one another, together with Francine, who was wearing a gorgeous African dress. On my way out I promised to return soon and to tell all of my friends to stop by as well.

Celebrate the beautiful diversity Erie has to offer, this month and every month. Stop into the shop and tell them I sent you!

You can find Erie African Arts on Instagram @erieafricanarts or on Facebook.

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



This month, contributor Edwina Capozziello visits the newest gallery on the Erie art scene: Erie African Arts. She meets with proprietor Emile Lokole and his sister Francine, and picks up some handmade jewelry while taking in the beauty of the original art.

THANK YOU, ERIE!
BEST LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS
BEST LOCAL BEER
BEST BREWERY
BEST OF ERIE 2024
ERIE READER
LAVERY BREWING CO

LIVE THEATRE
Produced by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals
2 Across
by Jerry Mayer
Directed by Betsy Butoryak
Starring Linda Kemp & Jeff Rodland
Opening Reception
Friday at 6:30pm
Purchase tickets at paca1505.org
February 14 - 16, 2025
[Fri, Sat] Doors: 7:00pm • Show: 7:30pm
[Sunday Matinee] Doors: 1:30pm • Show: 2:00pm
Performing Artists Collective Alliance
1505 State Street, Erie, PA • (814)616-PACA • paca1505.org
Northwest ECGRA The Erie Community Foundation Erie Insurance ERIE READER

LOCAL VOICES

Bird of the Month: Northern Shrike

A bird of song and a bird of prey

By: **Mary Birdsong**

Take your ordinary backyard bird like a Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay or American Goldfinch and give it a hooked bill that can rip flesh like a raptor and you have a Northern Shrike, sometimes called the “butcher bird” for its feeding behavior.

Winter is the time to find them in our region, having come south from the northern tier of North America where they breed. You should look for a striking gray and white bird offset with a black facemask, wings, and portion of the tail. They are about the size of American Robins and are typically solitary birds. You are most likely to spot them perched up high where they can survey their surroundings for potential prey.

Shrikes belong to the order Passeriformes, which means they are birds that perch, much like the birds mentioned above that many are familiar with. But their hooked beaks lead them to seek out different prey than their fellow Passerines (or songbirds). Rather than

eating plants or insects like the others, Northern Shrikes – especially in winter — prey upon vertebrates like small mammals and other birds.

And, like some other raptors they will cache prey on thorns and barbed-wire fences, or wedged into forks of tree branches for later eating. While their cousins may cache food like nuts and seeds, Northern Shrikes cache birds and mammals.

Although finding dead field mice or sparrows speared on a fence may not feel like a “communing with nature” kind of experience, this caching behavior is a natural part of the Northern Shrike’s survival strategy and a crafty one at that.

You won’t find them in your backyard, though. You’ll have to look for them in places with open ground like empty farm fields or pastures that have a few shrubs or trees. Some suburban areas, like the Fairview Business Park near I-90 and Route 98, regularly host these birds, too. It’s helpful to look for their larders of stored prey. Even if the bird is not

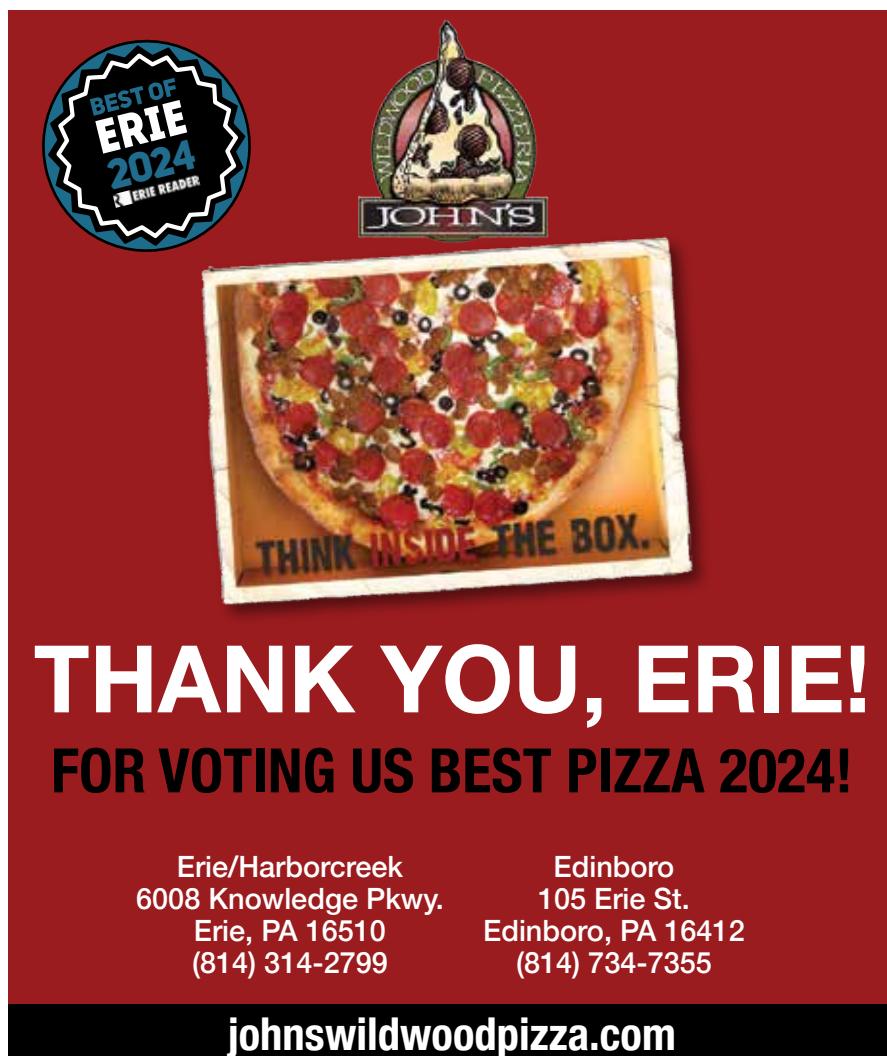


For February’s bird of the month, Erie Bird Observatory shorebird monitor Mary Birdsong presents the Northern Shrike – an unassuming but absolutely brutal predator that can be spotted in open grasslands near areas where they “cache” their impaled prey.

around, the larder is a good sign that a shrike is hunting nearby.

A drive along some country roads this winter may help you find this fascinating but relatively elusive bird. Be sure to admire its cunning.

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



BEST OF ERIE 2024
ERIE READER



JOHN'S



THINK INSIDE THE BOX.

THANK YOU, ERIE!

FOR VOTING US BEST PIZZA 2024!

Erie/Harborcreek
6008 Knowledge Pkwy.
Erie, PA 16510
(814) 314-2799

Edinboro
105 Erie St.
Edinboro, PA 16412
(814) 734-7355

johnswildwoodpizza.com



AGRESTI
REAL ESTATE



FINDING YOUR HAPPY HOUSE IS WHAT WE DO

BEST OF ERIE 2021
ERIE READER

BEST OF ERIE 2022
ERIE READER

BEST OF ERIE 2023
ERIE READER

BEST OF ERIE 2024
ERIE READER

814.459.9400 | WWW.TRYAGRESTI.COM

**The Erie Cook Book Revisited:
Mrs. Lambing's Boston Brown Bread**

Antique cookbook staple reflects resourcefulness

By: Morgan Yezzi

Mrs. Lambing's Boston Brown Bread lurks in the pages of every turn-of-the-century cookbook. With a legacy that highlights the ingenuity and adaptability of early American cooks, steaming the bread creates a uniquely delicious texture from simple, available ingredients that are also nourishing to the body. Boston brown bread is deeply rooted in practicality and resourcefulness. As Erie has weathered industry booms and busts, harsh winters, and political turmoil, this bread has endured, passed down through generations. It reminds us that resilience isn't just about survival—it's about finding warmth, nourishment, and tradition in the simplest of things.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup of rye flour
- 1 cup of whole wheat flour
- 1 cup of molasses
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk one cup each rye, corn, and whole wheat flour with 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon baking soda. Stir in 2 cups of buttermilk and 1 cup of molasses until smooth. Pour into a greased and floured loaf pan, and steam for 3 hours. To steam: boil a kettle of water. Place the loaf pan inside of a 13x9 pan and cover it with another 13x9 pan or tent it with tin foil and seal. Pour the boiling water into the 13x9 and cover it. Steam the bread in this manner, in the oven for 3 hours. Remove the lid and cook for an additional 15 minutes. Toast a slice of bread on a hot skillet and serve warm with butter.



MORGAN YEZZI

NEW YEAR, NEW CAREER!



WE  **Making Aging Easier.**

Are you **passionate** about helping older adults?
We're hiring for **CLINICAL** and **SUPPORT** positions at our **Manchester Commons campus** in Erie. Ask about our variety of **scheduling options** and **sign-on bonuses** for select positions. Love your work, apply today!

SrCare.org/Careers or call **814.314.1719**



Presbyterian
SeniorCare
NETWORK.

Benedictine Peacemakers Monastic Immersion

June 2025 - June 2026

Do you feel a desire to make the world better but feel unsure where to start?



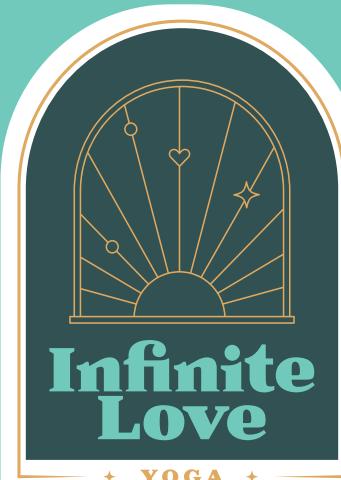
Do you want to learn and grow alongside supportive peers and community?

Do you want to explore and nurture your spiritual life?



Open to women ages 22-30
College degree not required
Live at the monastery for the year
Room, board, and benefits provided

Applications open until Feb 28
mscully@eriebenedictines.org



Infinite Love

YOGA

breathethat transforms

310 E. 10th Street
Erie, Pennsylvania
814.636.0322
InfiniteLove.yoga

EVENTS

All An Act's 15th Year of Christie: *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*

The group's familiar opener in a temporary setting

BEGINNING FRIDAY, FEB. 7

All An Act is back, with its 15th Agatha Christie production (in as many years), *The Mysterious Affair at Styles: A Hercule Poirot Mystery*, under the co-direction of David W. Mitchell (who is also artistic director for the company) and Jess LaFlamme. Not only are they sharing directorial duties for some of their most experienced and amazing Agatha actors, but the duo also wrote the stage adaptation.

"Jess LaFlamme and I work in tandem," explained Mitchell. He reads the book twice and then, "The third read is when I actually start writing. Then I forward it to Jess, who checks spelling and grammar errors, as we go." They both remark how Mitchell is "a terrible typist," with LaFlamme adding, "I will check things against the book and make sure things flow. There's a lot of conversations over several weeks as we write and edit."

All An Act (AAA) audiences who are used to visiting the theater at 17th and Poplar streets must, as it happens, redirect for this performance, to the Station Dinner Theatre. Back in late April 2024, a devastating fire tore through the building where the group is housed. The adjoining homeless shelter was able to resume operations,



Local theater group All An Act continues to work on restoring and repairing their building which was damaged by fire last year, but the show must go on! Catch their season opener, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles: A Hercule Poirot Mystery*, hosted by the Station Dinner Theatre.

but AAA faced extensive damage; the theater company immediately acted to begin restorations but did not have to give up its productions entirely.

"We are so grateful to the owners Paul and Rae Jean Urbanowicz for their generosity in [letting us] use their space," said Mitchell. LaFlamme added, "They offered it to us a while ago and we jumped at the opportunity."

Commenting on the state of the original All An Act theater, Mitchell remarked, "The historic ceiling

had been painstakingly repaired and repainted." And while "it's going to be a while," everyone involved looks to the future. "I echo Dave and his optimism," said LaFlamme. "We are ready when the building is!" — Cara Suppa

Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sundays: 3 p.m. // Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. // \$5-\$18 // For schedule, tickets, and to donate to AAA's GoFundMe, visit: allanact.net

A Match Made on 11th Street: Valentine Dance at BT

Jam-packed OddCity Event is a chance to dress up and get down

SATURDAY, FEB. 8

Looking for a Valentine's event that offers some excitement compared to a quiet night in? How about a punk rock dance? If so, for the second year in a row, OddCity Entertainment has a jam-packed evening lined up at Basement Transmissions. Featuring music from seven local acts, flow prop dancers, photo booths, a corsage/boutonniere station, as well as food and goods from eight different vendors, this might just be the match for you. Whether you want to bring your loved one (or loved ones), or ride solo, guests are encouraged to dress up in formal wear for the evening. Feel free to get creative because there will be a special best dressed contest to boot.

What would a dance be without music? With an eclectic and exciting mix of different genres, live acts include DJ Lone Sav, TayJer, Ducky, Do Not Call

List, Fastfall, Velvet Waves, and Logan B & Dirty Leaf.

Vendors on site will be A Floral Affair, The Ravens Nest Oddities, DW3D, Shadow Knight Curiosities, Morbid Merchandise, Erie Ale Works, Soulful Wraps, and event sponsor, John's Wildwood Pizza.

Cypher Eihwaz (40 Under 40 Class of 2024), one of the event's organizers with OddCity Entertainment, explained that "our yearly Valentine Dance is important to us because it's our way to help raise some of the funds we need to be able to host another year of The Violet Gathering, a weekend festival which raises awareness for domestic violence with proceeds going to the crime victims center of Erie." — Nick Warren

5 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$12 pre-sale, \$20 day of event // All ages, wheelchair accessible // For tickets

and more information, go to OddCityEntertainment.org



Join the folks from OddCity Entertainment as they present an exciting option for your Valentine's season featuring local music from Do Not Call List (pictured), as well as DJ Lone Sav, TayJer, Ducky, Fastfall, Velvet Waves, and Logan B & Dirty Leaf, along with local vendors.

FEED Valentine's Weekend Offerings

Sound and vision meet

BEGINNING FRIDAY, FEB. 14

If you are looking for an all-encompassing art experience for this Valentine's Day, then Erie's most cutting-edge artspace FEED is the place to be. The weekend will kick off with shows by local far-flung artists and the debut of cafeGIANT, a cozy storefront coffee shop with a small stage. Along with various visual art exhibits, there will be a DJ spinning ambient dance music to get you in the right headspace, all curated by FEED founder Benton Bainbridge.

Bainbridge states that cafeGIANT "will be a hub of conversation and culture that will offer coffee and tea, but

large collection of donated flat screen TVs as bas-relief digital paintings in a salon hanging, which goes beyond the screens. Accompanying his latest work will be earlier selections from his catalog. The exhibit is open from 5 to 7 p.m.

Following the opening of Ford's exhibit, cafeGIANT will transform into a rave as DJ Aman Sardana and Yeshuwa Myers will spin some wax for those in attendance. Sardana tells us that after their first official Wax Night, they made some slight changes. Now, the first hour will focus on the ambient, ultra-minimal techno music of Basic Channel, followed by Yeshuwa My-

If you are looking for an all-encompassing art experience for this Valentine's Day, then Erie's most cutting-edge artspace FEED is the place to be. The weekend will kick off with shows by local far-flung artists and the debut of cafeGIANT, a cozy storefront coffee shop with a small stage.

be more about the 'cafe culture,' providing an intimate listening space for sharing ideas." At the cafe performers are invited to play a short set of songs to a small crowd within the storefront. FEED plans on livestreaming the performances online to reach more people.

While getting caffeinated, visitors will be able to enjoy the latest show from mixed media artist Brad Ford titled *Broken Sculptures*, described as "a line between plastic and ethereal art." For this exhibit Ford has repurposed a

ers, who will be spinning the smooth sounds of Free Nationals, who many know as the band that brought us Anderson.Paak. After the professionals take their turn at the tables, there will be an open deck, where patrons can bring their own records to play, but are encouraged to sign up online ahead of time.

Inside of FEED proper, attendees can also experience Pulp! Video Lab, featuring the installation "The Hideout." This is an overgrown rec-room entertainment center with dozens of



FEED and their burgeoning new satellite pop-ups have your Valentine's weekend covered – come by for a show from local artist Brad Ford, an installation from Anthony Carson, a vinyl night at cafeGIANT, and more at Erie's only media art center.

TVs framing the stage where VJs come from across the country to mix visuals for the FEED Sessions. Artist Anthony Carson/Ant's Art House (cartoonist for this publication) will also be opening *Ants Art Pop-Up: The Womb of Creation and Communication*. Anthony mentions that this installation/ pop-up will feature his "newest works, ambient music, projections, a vibrating sound bed, and mood lighting — all to give a womb-like place for visitors to reflect, relax, and com-

mune with one another." Anthony also welcomes visitors to bring their own drawing supplies and hand drums to help enjoy a relaxing evening. He will also be creating on-the-spot Valentine's Day portrait doodles. This exhibit runs from Feb. 14 through March 20. — Larry Wheaton

5 to 11 p.m. // FEED Media Art Center and extensions, 1301/1307/1311 State St. // \$5 to \$10 suggested donation // For more info: feed.art




Monacella Massage
 AND KINESIOLOGY
NEW LOCATION!
 BAYFRONT LANDING 4 Sassafras Pier, Erie, PA
 Schedule Today! MonacellaMassage.com

**ERIE OTTERS
FEBRUARY GAMES!**

MASCOT MANIA! **FAMILY GAME NIGHT**

FEBRUARY 8 | 7PM

OTTERSHOCKEY.COM
SINGLE GAME TICKETS

CHANCE TO WIN AN XBOX!
FEBRUARY 21 | 7PM
OTTERSHOCKEY.COM

SATURDAY
FEB 22 **STAR WARS NIGHT**

7:00 PM VS LDN

OTTERSHOCKEY.COM

MILLCREEK HALL COMPLEX

STAR WARS

A Season of Soaring Tales and Epic Adventures

LECOM STAGE AT THE PLAYHOUSE

Waitress
JAN 24 - FEB 9

Pete the Cat
MAR 7 - 16

The Prince of Egypt
MAR 28 - APR 13

Purchase Tickets

IN PERSON
Box Office • 13 W 10th St.

BY PHONE
814.454.2852 x0

ONLINE
EriePlayhouse.org

EVENTS

PACA Packs a Wide Range of Performances

2 Across, She Kills Monsters, and more to come this theater season

BEGINNING FRIDAY, FEB. 14

Are you tired of the cold and unpredictable weather putting a damper on your plans this winter? Feeling unsure of what to do with your significant other this Valentine's Day? Consider cozying up together for dinner and a show at PACA.

On Feb. 14, the Performing Artists Collective Alliance theatre will be hosting "Valentine's Night Out at PACA," featuring a lovely dinner catered by Waffle Miracle in the Theatre Gallery, followed by a performance of the dramatic comedy, *2 Across*, directed by Betsy Butoryak.

This 90-minute show features an unnamed man and woman, played by Jeff Rodland and Linda Kemp, who board the 4:30 a.m. BART train in San Francisco. Once mere strangers, these two come together in spite of their differences with the aid of a crossword puzzle. Or is it a metaphor for something more?

Already have dinner plans? PACA has provided two additional showtimes during Valentine's weekend for those still wishing to attend. All are welcome, though the show is not recommended for small children due to its dialogue-heavy nature and no intermission.

ommended for small children due to its dialogue-heavy nature and no intermission.

Shifting from reality and romance into fantasy at the end of the month, PACA's youth theatre will put on a production of the dramatic comedy, *She Kills Monsters*. This will mark the directing debut of Sara Little.

Starting Feb. 28, meet Agnes Evans as she leaves her childhood home following the death of her sister, Tilly. Polar opposites in life, Evans discovers Tilly's *Dungeons & Dragons* notebook and is thrown into a world of action-packed adventure. There, she will meet a wide range of unlikely creatures who will aid her in her journey of understanding, grief, and self-discovery.

The show is recommended for those aged 12 and up due to some mature language and themes. — Cassandra Gripp

2 Across plays Friday, Feb. 14 at 6:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 15 at 7:30 and Sunday, Feb. 14 at 2 p.m. // *She Kills Monsters* plays Friday, Feb. 28, and Friday and Saturday, Mar. 7 and 8 at 7 p.m., and Sundays, Mar. 2 and 9 at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$15-\$50 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com



PACA is featuring a month of local productions, beginning with a busy Valentine's weekend and their dinner-and-a-show called Valentine's Night Out. *2 Across* (featuring actors Linda Kemp and Jeff Rodland, pictured) and *She Kills Monsters* will all be happening throughout February at the performing arts venue.

Resistance Through Music: Florence Price

Gannon hosts orchestral production for Black History Month

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 19

During a time when African Americans were few and far between on the classical music scene, Florence

Price struck a chord.

"The occasion was the 1933 World's Fair," explained Carolyn Baugh, event organizer for *Resistance Through Mu-*

sic: Florence Price, a free concert celebrating Black History Month. "There was yearly a competition put on by the Wanamaker company (a former department store) for composers to submit their work for cash prizes."

Price came out on top and became the first African American woman to have her work performed by a major symphony orchestra.

Since the World's Fair took place in Chicago that year, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed her symphony. Like local classical musician Harry T. Burleigh, Price was part of a group of African American composers that made major contributions to classical music. Now, residents have a chance to hear it live.

Michelle Cann, Grammy-award-winning pianist and foremost interpreter of Price's music, will perform Price's Sonata in E minor and her Concerto in D minor, featuring musicians from the Erie Philharmonic Orchestra.

The event is part of Gannon Univer-

sity's Black History Month celebration. Baugh, a professor, noted that Price's life spans many critical periods, having been born right at the end of the Reconstruction Era, living through Jim Crow, and participating in the Great Migration and the Chicago Renaissance movement.

"Florence Price's life is a lesson to me in resilience," Baugh said. "I'm so impressed by someone who could function in the social and political climate that she endured as an African American woman, a single mom, in the first half of the 20th century in the United States. And still could transcend her setting to the extent that she could produce all of this incredible music, which is not just beautiful but technically refined."

—Chloe Forbes

7:30 p.m. // First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, 250 W. 7th St. // Free and open to the public // For more information, visit: tinyurl.com/GUFlorencePrice.



As part of Gannon University's Black History Month celebrations, Michelle Cann, Grammy-award-winning pianist, will perform Florence Price's (pictured) music, featuring accompaniment from the Erie Philharmonic Orchestra

ERIE PHILHARMONIC est. 1913

MAGIC OF THE GUITAR
SATURDAY, MARCH 15 @ 7:30 PM
WARNER THEATRE

featuring classical guitarist
MILOŠ

(814) 455-1375
eriephil.org

STORIES THAT SHAPED ERIE



IDA TARBELL



HARRY KELLER



HARRY T. BURLEIGH



TOM RIDGE

CHRONICLES
SEASON 3

THURSDAYS AT 8:00 PM

WQLN PBS

EVENTS

Winter Wonder — Downtown Winter Carnival 2025

Enjoy one of Erie's best winter offerings to chase away those snowy blues

BEGINNING THURSDAY, FEB. 20

For many, the winter months can seem to drag on — less sunlight and colder temps combined with the snow can often mean fewer events and activities. But the Erie Downtown Partnership's Winter Carnival is back for 2025 and offers a fun-filled weekend that's sure to banish those winter woes.

Taking place Feb. 20 to 23 in Downtown Erie, there will be plenty to see and do throughout the weekend including fire dancing performances, live music, ice skating, live ice sculpting of more than 60 ice art pieces, and more.

Aside from live entertainment, there's more fun that the whole family can get involved in — Saturday and Sunday will see themed days at the ice rink, in which attendees can come dressed in their favorite cosplay (Saturday) or Disney character (Sunday) for free hot cocoa. Sunday will also include a free family screening of *Frozen* at the Masonic Temple at 32 W. Eighth St. with crafts and snacks.

"Winter Carnival has quickly become one of our most asked-about and most popular events," said Dave Tamulonis, events and marketing manager at Erie Downtown Partnership. "Our goal is to embrace Erie's winter weather with this event and give folks an opportunity to enjoy both inside and outside activities while we still have snow and ice." — Ally Kutz

Check out the full schedule of events:

Additions/adjustments may be made to schedule as necessary

THURSDAY, FEB 20

6 - 8 p.m. — Kickoff Party at Flagship City Food Hall with Lifethrumusic
Attendees will be able to see the begin-



February, although the shortest month, can sometimes feel like the longest in Erie. The Erie Downtown Partnership understands this and gives us a reason to get out and enjoy all Erie has to offer during the doldrums of winter with their annual Downtown Winter Carnival featuring ice sculptures, skating, live music, and more.

ning of ice sculpting process in Perry Square

FRIDAY, FEB 21

4 - 6 p.m. — Live ice sculpting in Perry Square

4 - 6 p.m. — Live music at Voodoo Brewery

6 - 7 p.m. — Fire Dancing on the Perry Square stage with Jennifer Dennehy & Fire Friends

SATURDAY, FEB 22

Noon - 4 p.m. — Live ice sculpting in Perry Square

Noon - 8 p.m. — Cosplay Day at the Downtown Skating Rink - dress up as your favorite character for free hot cocoa

Noon - 1 p.m. — Live music at Ember+ Forge

1 - 2 p.m. — Live music at Copper Carriage

2 - 3 p.m. — Live music at The Dollhouse at Pointe Fouré

3 - 4 p.m. — Live music at Glass Growers Gallery

4 - 6 p.m. — Live music at Flagship City Food Hall

6 - 7 p.m. — Fire Dancing on the Perry Square stage with Jennifer Dennehy & Fire Friends

SUNDAY, FEB 23

Noon - 4 p.m. — Disney Day at the Downtown Skating Rink - dress up as your favorite character for free hot cocoa

Noon - 1 p.m. — Live music at Purrista Cat Café

1 - 3 p.m. — Free family screening of *Frozen* at the Masonic Temple with crafts and snacks

1 - 2 p.m. — Live music at City Supply

2 - 3 p.m. — Live music at Primo Tailors

3 - 4 p.m. — Live music at Bespoke Tailoring

Wabtec US Rail, Inc.
dba Wabtec Corporation
seeks Senior Software
Quality Engineer in Erie, PA
to support continuous product
and process improvement
through detailed failure
analysis for non-conformances.
Telecommuting permitted.

Apply at
www.jobpostingtoday.com
Ref #41645



FOR THE LOVE OF CATS!
**THREE YEAR
CATIVERSARY**
FRI, FEBRUARY 14TH @ 9 AM - 7PM
30 W 8TH STREET | ERIE, PENNA
PURRISTACATCAFE.COM

Crowd Pleaser: Naomi Karavani Stands Up at Werner Books

Flagship City Comedy brings headliner and local openers

SATURDAY, FEB. 22

We all know and love Werner Books as a great community gathering space, a book club meet-up spot, and as an award-winning bookstore and cafe (Erie's Best Business and Best Bookstore 2025), but now they can also be known as a stand-up comedy venue.

In February, Werner Books and Coffee will offer an after-hours show as they host Flagship City Comedy's latest headliner, Naomi Karavani. Karavani is a New York City-based comedian and writer whose hilarious debut album *Firecracker* is available to listen on Sirius, Youtube, and Spotify. She wrote and acted for five years on *Redacted Tonight*, a political satire show, and has been working the comedy festival circuit appearing at the New York Comedy Festival, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Bentzen Ball, and more. She's also appeared on Comedy Central's *Night Out*,

NPR, Huffington Post, Las Culturistas, and Time Out NY. And now is your chance to see her in a local, intimate venue.

Organizer Anthony Morelli of Flagship City Comedy will be opening the night along with local act Nicole Benedi. Morelli comments, "Some of my favorite things about producing these shows are that I get to show off valuable small local businesses and locally raised comics to national touring talent, while showcasing to Erie residents the diversity of comics from all over the nation and world."

This event is BYOB (but no glass bottles, please) and it is recommended for 18+ audiences only. — Erin Phillips

7 to 10 p.m. // Werner Books and Coffee, 3608 Liberty St. // \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door // 18+ // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

CONTRIBUTED



Flagship City Comedy presents the hilarious, nationally-touring Naomi Karavani for one night only at Werner Books and Coffee. Local acts will open the show, giving the spotlight to Erie talent alongside Karavani's can't-miss act.

Reminiscent Presents 'Black History Tribute To Motown'

Women-led trio pairs with Breeze Band for night of soulful hits

SATURDAY, FEB. 22

The music of Motown is getting the Erie spotlight this month as Reminiscent presents a "Black History Tribute to Motown" at the Blasco Library. Featuring lead singers Rasia Crockett, Anioia Hobson, and Andrani Foster Samuel alongside members of The Breeze Band, the group will be performing music from 1960s Motown and more in dedication to Black History Month.

"Motown inspired most of the music that we play, and everyone we knew grew up listening to Motown as their heroes and legends in life," Maurice Troop of The Breeze Band explained. "We also come from the same time, so it's special music to us. It's fun music that brings people together; I think that's one of the greatest things it did. It brought people together from all walks of life."

"We really want people to know that Motown was a rich gift in our history of the world. When we do a Motown song, we hear people of all ages singing the same song word for word ... It's still great music."

— Maurice Troop of The Breeze Band

Audiences can expect songs from the Motown icons Diana Ross and The Supremes in addition to the Marvelettes. Hits such as "Baby Love," "Where Did Our Love Go," "Keep Me Hanging On," and "Please Mr. Postman" are part of Reminiscent's repertoire, with many of their other covers spanning Motown's long-established history and discography. "We found out many of these

THE BRAND PHOTOGRAPHY



Join members of Erie's Breeze Band and beyond as the female-led Reminiscent Band performs their "Black History Tribute to Motown" in the Hirt Auditorium at the Blasco Memorial Library.

female groups also covered songs by male artists, so we will do the music of Stevie Wonder and the Jackson Five. They covered other genres as well, including songs by the Beatles. It's wide open what we can do."

For Reminiscent, the concert helps keep the music of Motown alive and gives back to the Erie community. "We really want people to know that Motown was a rich gift in our history of the world," Troop describes. "When we do a Motown song, we hear people of all ages singing the same song word for word ... It's still

great music. If you think about the artists you listen to now, their music has progressed in their careers. Motown was able to transform itself over and over again throughout the years to keep its music alive. We want to keep that music alive and help develop an appreciation of its history." — Thomas Taylor

6 p.m. // H.O. Hirt Auditorium at the Blasco Library, 160 E. Front St. // \$10 // For more info: facebook.com/reminiscent-band



ALL SLOPES OPEN!



PLAN YOUR VISIT AT PKNPK.COM

Roma's ITALIAN KITCHEN



Erie's Best Lasagna

Layers of sweet sausage, creamy ricotta, imported cheeses and Roma's red sauce.

DINE IN OR ORDER TAKEOUT

RESERVATIONS: (814) 651-0900, RomasErie.com or OpenTable App



EVENTS

Erie's Best Coffee Showdown

Sample coffee from multiple local shops and may the best brew win

SUNDAY, FEB. 23

Erie's local coffee shops will soon compete for the title of Erie's Best Coffee in the Erie's Best Coffee Competition hosted by the St. Martin's Center. Taking place at the Zem Zem Shrine Club, the event will feature music, children's activities, gift card raffles, and of course, lots of coffee samples. "We believe and always have striven to have a family-friendly kind of coffee shop atmosphere," CEO of St. Martin's Center David Gonzalez said.

Those who sample the varieties of coffee will have a chance to vote for their favorites in four categories: best specialty coffee, best flavored, best decaf, and best coffee overall. A panel of local-celebrity judges will also cast their vote in a special judge's award category.

Gonzalez, who considers himself an avid coffee drinker, explained that the event gives the community an opportunity to sample the new coffee shops opening in Erie all in one location. "It's also a win-win for the vendors," Gonzalez said. "They get to reach a broader audience."

Last year's event in 2024 brought in over 700 people.

The event also benefits the St. Martin's Center, which provides emergency and long-term assistance for community members in need. "Like most nonprofit organizations, we really need public support and so it is a wonderful opportunity for us to tell our story," Gonzalez said.

Looking ahead to future coffee competitions, Gonzalez said, "We naturally

Erie's local coffee shops will soon compete for the title of Erie's Best Coffee in the Erie's Best Coffee Competition, hosted by the St. Martin's Center and taking place at the Zem Zem Shrine Club.

want to keep having this event and to grow it. Coffee is not going out of style anytime soon." — Alana Sabol

11 a.m. to 2 p.m. // Zem Zem Shrine Club, 2525 W. 38th St. // \$10 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

JESSICA HUNTER



A truly good cup of coffee is a work of art – and Erie gets to celebrate all of our local coffee artists as they go head-to-head in Erie's Best Coffee Competition, an event that benefits the St. Martin's Center of Erie.

A Band Behind Bars: *Soul Incarcerated*

Podcast shines a light on creativity and incarceration

By: Dan Schank

In 1979, something extraordinary occurred at the Powhatan Correctional Center outside of Richmond, Virginia.

In mid-September of that year, a handful of talented inmates came together and recorded an eight-song album in about five hours. Their band was called The Edge of Daybreak, and that single-day recording came to be known as *Eyes of Love*. About a thousand copies of the soul record were pressed, a few lucky Virginians got to hear it on the radio, and it eventually fell into obscurity — at least for people outside of the prison system. End of story, right?

Not so fast. A+E's seven-episode podcast *Soul Incarcerated* tells the full story of The Edge of Daybreak in rich detail. Hosted by Erie native Jamie Pietras, the show examines how the band came together, how they recorded an album while serving prison time, how the record was rediscovered, and how they got the band back together nearly 40 years later.

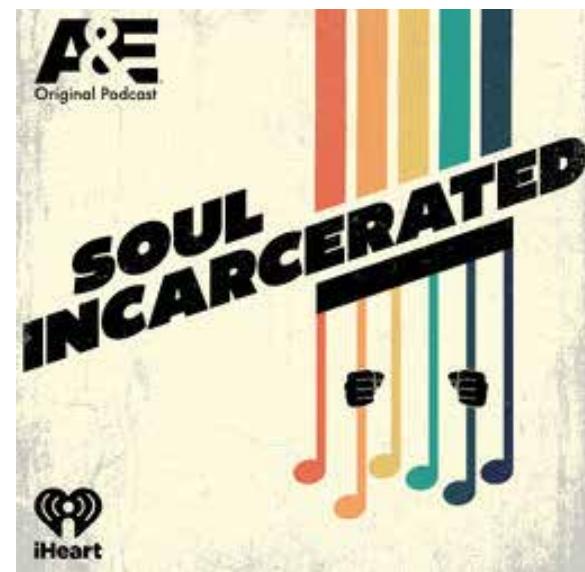
Pietras first heard The Edge of Daybreak when their song "Our Love" ended up in a scene from 2016's Oscar-winning film *Moonlight*. "I vividly remember hearing this song in that film," he says on a Zoom call in late January. "And I made a mental note because it was amazing." About two years later, the seasoned journalist was researching a story about connections between the prison system and hip-hop, hoping to find music written while incarcerated. After "falling down a Google rabbit hole," Pietras discovered The Edge of Daybreak and immediately recognized the song from the movie.

Pietras soon learned that, over the years, *Eyes of Love* had become a beloved obscurity among the "rare

groove" connoisseurs who peruse second-hand shops and thrift stores looking for unsung classics. And for good reason — the record will delight fans of '70s soul icons like the Delfonics or Curtis Mayfield. Buzz about The Edge of Daybreak eventually found its way to the Numero Group, an archival record label that re-releases soul records that are out of print, and a deal was worked out with one of the group's surviving members. After positive press from sources like Pitchfork and *Rolling Stone*, The Edge of Daybreak was back on the radar for a new generation of music lovers. One track from *Eyes of Love* was even sampled on legendary rap duo Black Star's 2022 reunion album, *No Fear of Time*.

Soul Incarcerated tells the story of the band's formation, the logistics that went into the recording of the album, its rediscovery, and — perhaps most importantly — how three of the surviving members chose to make music again decades later. The podcast focuses primarily on that trio of bandmates — the philosophical and eccentric vocalist Jamal Jaha Nubi, the tenacious guitarist Cornelius "Neal" Cade, and the flamboyant, gender-non-conforming singer Cupcake Coleman. It shows how music gave them a sense of purpose while incarcerated and how their performances positively impacted their fellow inmates.

But it's not just a story of the past, either. When Pietras first contacted Nubi through Instagram, it led to a wide-ranging conversation. "Jamal and I talked for literally five hours," he says. "We spent a whole day together. We went to the top of Mill Mountain Park in Roanoke, and he just told me his life story." Realizing he was at the start of something fascinating, Pietras ended up traveling back and forth from Brooklyn to Virginia for seven years to fuel the podcast. He had intimate conversations with the band about grief, ad-



The first episode of the podcast *Soul Incarcerated* is available on all streaming platforms now — listen as Jamie Pietras, an Erie native, tells the story of the band who came together against all odds.

diction, and creativity. He spoke to prison wardens about how recording equipment became available at a correctional center. Through Cupcake Coleman, he heard fascinating first-hand accounts of the drag performance scene in late '60s Virginia. And ultimately he was able to document the making of *New Horizons*, a new four-song EP that The Edge of Daybreak released in late January of this year.

Soul Incarcerated is also punctuated with reflective conversations between Pietras and his main collaborator, DJ and actor Dorian Missick (who you may recognize from TV shows like *Luke Cage*, *Southland*, and *Six Degrees*). Missick helps situate The Edge of Daybreak's music into the larger socio-political landscape of soul, funk, and R&B.

I asked Pietras about what he found most resonant about the story his podcast tells. He said he kept coming back to guitarist Neal Cade, who has been consistently recording music on cassette for about a half century. "Listening to Neal's music on cassette was very moving," says Pietras. "There's something about the rawness and intimacy of someone, whether it was in the prison cell or, years later, in their bedroom with a guitar. I'm not sure it gets more intimate than that. It made me think a lot about — and this may sound cheesy — the nature of expression, art, and creativity. The function that it serves. How we are, or are not, validated. And what defines success."

Episode #1 of A+E's *Soul Incarcerated* premieres on February 4 wherever you get your podcasts. Episodes will then be released on a weekly basis for the remaining six episodes. Visit: omny.fm/shows/soul-incarcerated/soul-incarcerated

The Edge of Daybreak's 1979 album *Eyes of Love* is available to purchase here: numerogroup.com/products/edge-of-day-break-eyes-of-love

The Edge of Daybreak's newest release, *New Horizons*, can be streamed on a variety of platforms, including Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, and YouTube.

Dan Schank can be contacted at danschank@gmail.com



Erie native Jamie Pietras hosts a new podcast produced by A+E called *Soul Incarcerated*, which tells the story of The Edge of Daybreak, a band that was formed by inmates at the Powhatan Correctional Center and who recorded their album *Eyes of Love* while incarcerated. The band has since reunited and recorded a fresh album called *New Horizons*.

NWPAMade Business Program: Regional Brand Launching This Spring

Free entrepreneurial support program with ErieMade Business Academy

By: **Chris Lantinen, Director,**
PennWest Edinboro Beehive

Northwest Pennsylvania's history is rich with homegrown products, ranging from Smith's delicious hot dogs, to Whitethorn's imaginative video game catalog, to CHANNELLOCK's world-renowned pliers and tools. Beyond these abbreviated highlights lies an innovative, diverse, and ever-growing population of NWPA maker-entrepreneurs, a group whose creations can contribute to our regional identity, provide jobs for residents, and fill local storefronts and national shelves. This potential impact drives the launch of NWPAMade, kicking off this spring.

This new initiative from Bridgeway Capital and the PennWest Edinboro Beehive aims to support and highlight exciting maker-entrepreneurs across Erie County and Crawford County through free business assistance and an ambitious regional branding initiative. The program partners have purposefully given maker-entrepreneurs a broad and modern definition for the project, encompassing artists, craftspeople, chefs, brewers, small-batch manufacturers, software developers, and more. Funded by a \$452,000 POWER grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, one critical pillar of NWPAMade will be an annual business accelerator housing 15 maker/creative businesses and held in locations across the region. Amanda Duncan, a member of Erie's 40 Under 40 Class of 2020 and owner of Chiara Consultants, and Katie Schaible, program director for Bridgeway Capital, will lead the accelerator and provide extensive business coaching.

"We have many thriving creative businesses in our region," said Duncan. "Our goal with NWPAMade is to equip these entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to grow their business, generate more revenue, and establish sustainable operations."

The free entrepreneurial support program is built off Bridgeway's successful track record of elevating maker businesses, and it will include sessions on financial planning, marketing, legal, and other business necessities. Participants will also receive grant-like technical assistance stipends (to work further with regional professionals) and will be prepared to pursue additional funding opportunities. Finally, cohort members will be assisted by students at the PennWest Edinboro Beehive in areas such as website development, search engine optimization, and social media strategy. The program is a natural evolution of Bridgeway's ErieMade Business Academy, which ran from 2022 to 2024.

"The cohorts that graduated from ErieMade were rich with talent, so we knew the timing and need was right to launch NWPAMade," said Schaible. "The Beehive has been a pivotal partner over the years and we are confident that this next evolution of programming combined with the Beehive's expertise

CONTRIBUTED



Launching this spring comes the latest initiative from the partnership between Bridgeway Capital and the PennWest Edinboro Beehive called NWPAMade, which helps support maker-entrepreneurs in Erie and Crawford counties. Launching this spring comes the latest initiative from the partnership between Bridgeway Capital and the PennWest Edinboro Beehive called NWPAMade, which helps support maker-entrepreneurs in Erie and Crawford counties. Pictured are the graduates of the 2024 ErieMade Business Academy, which is the predecessor to this program.

will produce next-level business growth for the participating businesses."

The launch of NWPAMade will also coincide with a regional branding initiative that highlights both the products made in Northwest Pennsylvania and the creators. Additionally, it will aim to detail the reasons that NWPA can serve as a great base for a maker

NWPAMade, the new initiative from Bridgeway Capital and the PennWest Edinboro Beehive kicking off this spring, aims to support and highlight exciting maker-entrepreneurs across Erie County and Crawford County through free business assistance and an ambitious regional branding initiative.

business. One of those factors is the affordable cost of living present in both Erie County and Crawford County. According to the Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator, the annual average cost

of living for U.S. counties is \$86,120. Erie County's annual average cost of living is \$82,270 (4.47% below average) and Crawford County's is \$78,576 (9.42% below average). Pair this with the region's public maker spaces, an innovative manufacturing scene (metal fabrication, plastics), and a robust business support network, and you begin to see those advantages.

NWPAMade kicks off with two informational mixers in February. Erie County's mixer will be held at 1020 Collective (1020 Holland Street) on Wednesday, Feb. 12, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. After Bridgeway introduces the program, Chris Norris of Revox Media will talk to the audience about how to successfully incorporate video into their social media strategy. The Crawford County mixer will be held the very next day, on Feb. 13, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at Meadville's Blissful Meads (847 Market St.) The program introduction will be followed by a discussion on marketing strategy, led by Ron Mattocks of Bull Moose Marketing.

NWPAMade applications are now open. They will close on March 10th. Head to bridgewaycapital.org/creative-business-accelerator/nwpamade/ for more information, or email program head Chris Lantinen at clantinen@pennwest.edu.



EAST

810 East 38th Street

459-1145

Mon-Sat 11am - 8pm

Sun 10am - 6pm

WEST

3201 Greengarden Blvd.

864-5322

Mon-Sat 11am - 6pm

Sun 9am - 2pm



HOMEMADE BREAD



PEPPERONI BALLS



RICOTTA KNOTS



CATERING

CALL AHEAD FOR FASTER SERVICE.

VISIT OUR TERESA'S ITALIAN DELI FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS.

FULL MENU LOCATED AT WWW.TDERIE.COM



CHECKING

Brewed just for you

Light on the hassles & heavy on the perks

- **Free Checking** that's really FREE!
- **Mobile & Online banking** with **Contactless Debit Card.**
- **Dividend +Plus Checking** offers a market leading interest rate!
- **Community focused. Invested in Erie. Invested in you!**

eriefcu.org/checking (814) 825-2436

Start Fresh!



Open a checking account online today!

Insured by NCUA

JEFFERSON

OUR WINTER 2025 SCHEDULE IS NOW ONLINE.

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

JOIN US FOR COUNTY-WIDE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES!

SOCIETY

JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

JESERIE.ORG/EVENTS



Gem City Style: February 2025

Nadia Shabanza-Pero: Owner and Founder of BeBe Design House

This month, I sat down with interior designer, entrepreneur, and global traveler Nadia Shabanza-Pero to discuss her story, her inspirations, and the experiences she's had that led to this moment in her life — living out her vision as an interior designer and working toward the future of merging all of her passions.

Jessica Hunter (JH): What inspired you to create BeBe Design House, and what drew you to the world of interior design?

Nadia Shabanza-Pero (NSP): Ever since I was young, I was captivated by design and architecture, especially in the world of hospitality. I dreamed of creating hotels and restaurants that would leave lasting impressions — spaces that people would fall in love with. I knew early on that I wanted to impact lives through design.

Fast forward to my corporate career, during which I co-founded and built a successful multi-million dollar real estate investment and property management company. It was there that I truly saw the need and power of a well-designed property to elevate experiences and increase value. But deep down, I always felt this pull — a desire to merge my passion for real estate with something more personal: the art of design. That passion eventually became impossible to ignore, leading me to pursue the dream I had envisioned all along.

This led me to co-found and own a thriving interior design company, but I reached a point where I knew I needed to chase my own vision. I wanted to create a company that fully reflected my style, my journey, and my dream of helping clients design spaces that inspire and empower them. That's how BeBe Design House and Wanderlust Design Stays came to life.

JH: How do you infuse your personal style or cultural identity into your design projects? Can you share an example of a project that felt especially meaningful?

NSP: I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and started traveling the world at a young age. Travel has been a huge part of my life — it's shaped how I see the world and how I design. I'm a natural explorer, always seeking inspiration in architecture, colors, textures, and cultures. Every place I visit fuels my creativity, which shows up in my work.

A great example is the renovation of my own building on Zuck Road which wasn't just about creating a headquarters for BeBe Design House and Wanderlust Design Stays — it was about showcasing who I am, inside and out. I worked with a contractor who understood my vision. I filled the studio with furniture I love and curated art from local artists in Erie and Cleveland whose stories and journeys moved me. I need to feel something when I look at a piece of art or furniture — whether it inspires me or reminds me of where I've been. And I think I accomplished that.

JH: What unique perspective or values does BeBe Design House bring to interior design projects?

NSP: One thing that really sets BeBe Design House apart is that we want our clients to feel inspired, safe, and free to express their wildest dreams. Erie is a pret-

JESSICA HUNTER



Local entrepreneur Nadia Shabanza-Pero of BeBe Design House sat down with Jessica Hunter this month to talk about the vision behind her design projects and how she merges her passion for soulful and smart design with her experiences in real estate and world travel.

ty traditional city, and I've noticed that people sometimes hesitate to take risks with design. But I'm here to tell them: it's okay! Let's step outside your comfort zone. Let's design something that feels like *you* — or who you want to be.

It's all about trust. We create spaces that are beautiful and functional but also reflect the client's essence. I encourage my clients to embrace the unexpected and not be afraid to show their personality in their homes. We're not just decorators — we're storytellers who help people feel seen and inspired in their own space.

JH: How do you navigate the intersection of being a Black, woman-owned business in the design industry, and what lessons have you learned along the way?

NSP: Honestly, I wish I could be judged solely by my

work and not by my appearance — but that's not always the reality. I'm not your typical designer. I'm an entrepreneur first, which gives me a unique edge. I bring both design vision and business strategy to the table, navigating both the creative and construction sides of a project. Being a Black woman in this industry means I often have to work harder to earn respect, but I don't let that define or limit me. I've learned to stay true to myself and trust that the right clients and opportunities will align with my values and vision.

Over the years, I've built a strong support system of mentors, collaborators, and friends who uplift and encourage me. Representation matters, and I'm proud to be an example.

JH: What future visions do you have for BeBe Design House, and how do you see your work continuing to

shape spaces and inspire others?

NSP: My vision for BeBe Design House is to build it into a brand that's not just known for creating transformative, one-of-a-kind spaces but also for being a hub of collaboration and opportunity for designers. I see BeBe operating much like a real estate firm — where multiple designers, both in our region and beyond, can work under the brand, bringing our signature approach to clients in different markets. This would allow us to service a wide range of areas while fostering a supportive, creative community of design professionals.

I also want to focus on mentorship and education, offering design retreats and workshops to share the knowledge and strategies that have helped me succeed. It's important to inspire the next generation of designers to push boundaries and embrace their unique vision. On a broader scale, I want BeBe to continue investing in communities by revitalizing neighborhoods, using design as a tool to drive growth, beauty, and connection. The ultimate goal is to empower both clients and designers to live boldly through the spaces we create together.

JH: If you could design a dream space for yourself —

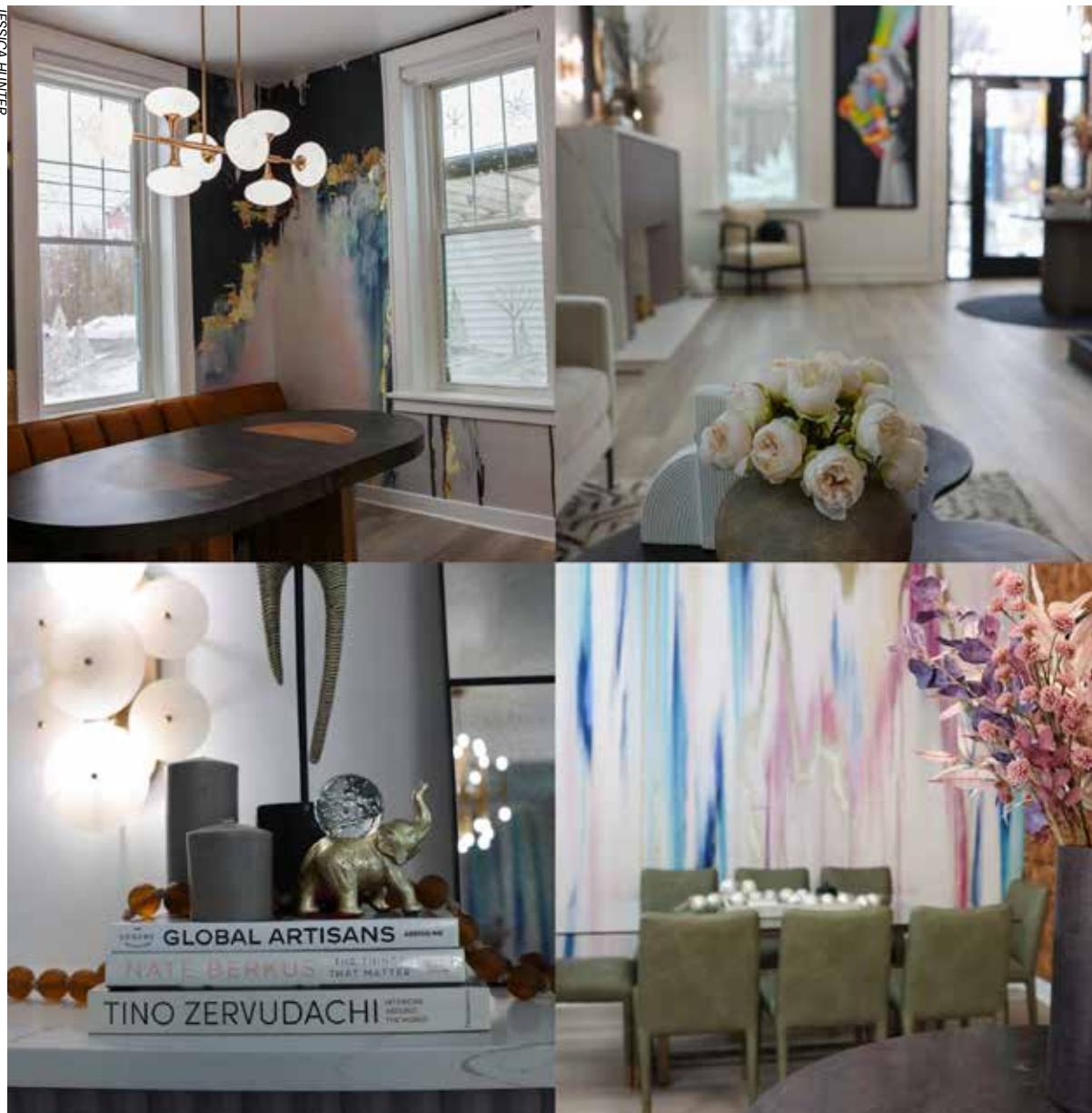
no budget or limits — what would it look like, and what's the one must-have feature?

NSP: Whew! For someone like me — a traveler who can make any place feel like home — this is a tough one. But I think my dream space would be a global sanctuary where I could hop between different rooms designed with influences from my favorite places. Think a Parisian-inspired living room, a Moroccan courtyard for afternoon tea, and a beachfront space that invites the ocean breeze in. I love it all.

The must-have feature? Definitely a traveler's haven — an ever-evolving room where I can display souvenirs, art, and stories from around the world. It would be my space to reflect, recharge, and be inspired. Basically, a home that travels with me and feeds my soul wherever life takes me.

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

BeBe Design House can be found at bebedesignhouse.com



The headquarters of BeBe Design at 4528 Zuck Rd. embodies who Shabanza-Pero is, inside and out. Filled with art from local and regional artists and imbued with inspiration from world travels – she finds her creative vision through architecture, colors, textiles, and cultures.

Paws 'n Claws PlayCare & Styling S'paw

We offer the following great services for your dog

- Grooming
- Lodging
- Dog Daycare
- Pet Food
- Pet Treats
- Pet Toys

BEST OF ERIE 2024
ERIE READER

Thank you, Erie, for the win!

Located in the plaza at 1530 West 26 Street
814.456.7297 • www.PawsNClawsPlaycare.com

Looking for More Events?

Remember to visit the Erie Reader's Online Calendar at eriereader.com/calendar

- Home to hundreds of listings each month!
- Submit your own events!
- Search by date and category!
- Updated by actual humans living in Erie!



The 2025 Academy Awards Proves Surprising and Disappointing

The times, they are a-changin’

By: Forest Taylor

The year 2025 has already proven to be disastrous. With the worst wildfires in generations raging through the American West and the American government slipping into the final stages of oligarchy, we need some lighthearted fluff to ease our hearts and minds. Fortunately, next month a bunch of actors and technicians will compete for a little gold bald man. It’s Oscar season and the Academy has given us a cornucopia of pleasant surprises and predictable disappointments. So, let’s get to the big awards:

Best Picture

This is a race between an over 3-hour epic that nobody has seen yet (*The Brutalist*), a crowd-pleasing epic that everybody has seen (*Wicked*), and a convoluted epic that has seemed to enrage everyone in the world (*Emilia Perez*). The Academy has spent these last few years giving the big prize to something that hits with audiences and that means good things for *Wicked*, but is it enough to win? *Wicked* was... a perfectly fine film (please don’t beat me up, *Wicked* fans) but giving it Best Picture seems a little hyperbolic. *The Brutalist* feels more like the Oscars’ cup of tea, but it’s not a film that gets anyone outside of cinephilia excited. And then there’s *Emilia Perez*; the head-scratching crime drama/gender-bending musical that has become the internet’s public enemy. It is easily the worst film nominated but that has never stopped the Academy. I also must give a shout-out to *The Substance*. A campy horror/comedy with gross-out effects worthy of Frank Henenlotter nominated for Best Picture? I do believe in miracles! It won’t win, but even a nomination is cause for celebration among the freaks out there. Anyway, the Academy loves to stir controversy so I say it goes to *Emilia Perez*.

Best Director

Picture and Director usually go hand-in-hand so it’s a good guess that this one will go to Jacques Audiard for his dime-store impression of (Spanish director and filmmaker) Pedro



Last year, film reviewer Forest Taylor correctly predicted seven out of 11 Oscars categories correctly. See how he fares this year, as the awards start rolling in during the 97th annual Oscars on March 2 at 7 p.m. on ABC.

Almodovar in *Emilia Perez*. But this could be where the Academy shows its love for *The Brutalist* and gives it to Brady Corbet. Sean Baker (*Anora*) and Coralie Fargeat (*The Substance*) would be more enjoyable picks, but I think Corbet is going to get it.

Best Actor

This one feels like it’s been Adrian Brody’s to lose for months. His performance in *The Brutalist* has been getting raves since the film was first seen by critics. By this point, it’s all but guaranteed. Timothee Chalamet (*A Complete Unknown*) might have an outside chance and I’m happy that Colman Domingo got in for *Sing Sing*. But Brody has it in the bag already.

Best Actress

I thought this would be a two-person race between Cynthia Erivo (*Wicked*) and Karla Sophia Gascon (*Emilia Perez*) but then Demi Moore did the impossible and got an Oscar nomination for a horror film! Her Golden Globe win makes her a frontrunner, but is *The Substance* too weird for the notoriously stuffy Academy? Of course, Mikey Madison should absolutely win for her performance in *Anora*, but at this point she’s an underdog. But I’ve always loved the underdog, so I’m voting for her anyway. Mikey’s got this!

Best Supporting Actor

This one could go a lot of different ways but I’m standing by Kieran Culkin

in *A Real Pain*. His performance elevated the entire film. Of course, the same can be said for Edward Norton (*A Complete Unknown*) and Guy Pearce (*The Brutalist*) and I’m just giddy that Yuri Borisov got in for *Anora*. Any one of them has a good chance at winning, but I’m sticking with Culkin.

Best Supporting Actress

This one is definitely between Ariana Grande for *Wicked* and Zoe Saldana for *Emilia Perez* and at this point, I think Saldana has it. She was a clear highlight who did the most she could in a very ridiculous film and even though this is another instance of category fraud (Saldana is clearly the

lead for much of the film), there's no way she's losing this race.

Best Screenplay

The five nominees for Best Original Screenplay are all strong contenders, and at this point I don't see any of them as a clear favorite. This might be the hardest to predict so I'm going with Sean Baker for *Anora*. Why? Because *Anora* was my favorite film of the nominees so I'm picking it out of loyalty. As for Best Adapted Screenplay, I think that *Conclave* is the obvious frontrunner here. I would love to see *Nickel Boys* or *Sing Sing* get a surprise win, but I don't think that's going to happen. It's going to *Conclave*.

Best International Feature

This is the category that will break my heart because it's going to *Emilia Perez*. There are some acclaimed and even popular films in the running this time like *Flow*, *I'm Still Here* and *Seed of the Sacred Fig* but it doesn't matter. *Emilia Perez* will win and an air of apathetic predictability will fill the room.

Best Animated Feature

I thought this would be between *Inside Out 2* and *The Wild Robot*, and it is — but *Flow* has a definite shot at winning as well. It would be great to see

spheric cinematography getting a nomination. Jeers for the energetic, experimental camerawork of *Nickel Boys* being unrecognized. In the end, it's going to *The Brutalist* though.

Best Makeup and Hairstyling

If *The Substance* doesn't win, we riot.

Forest's Predictions

- Best Picture:** *Emilia Perez*
- Best Director:** Brady Corbet for *The Brutalist*
- Best Actor:** Adrien Brody in *The Brutalist*
- Best Actress:** Mikey Madison in *Anora*
- Best Supporting Actor:** Kieran Culkin in *A Real Pain*
- Best Supporting Actress:** Zoe Saldana in *Emilia Perez*
- Best Original Screenplay:** Sean Baker for *Anora*
- Best Adapted Screenplay:** Peter Straughn for *Conclave*
- Best International Feature:** *Emilia Perez* (France)
- Best Animated Feature:** *Flow*
- Best Cinematography:** *The Brutalist*
- Best Original Song:** "El Mal" from *Emilia Perez*
- Best Makeup and Hairstyling:** *The Substance*

With the worst wildfires in generations raging through the American West and the American government slipping into the final stages of oligarchy, we need some lighthearted fluff to ease our hearts and minds. Fortunately, next month a bunch of actors and technicians will compete for a little gold bald man at the 2025 Oscars.

Memoir of a Snail pull off a surprise win, but this category always goes to children's films — so that's not happening. I'm voting for *Flow*.

Best Cinematography

Cheers for *Nosferatu's* moody, atmo-

Best Original Song

I can't believe Trent Reznor's incredible "Compress/Repress" from *Challengers* gets nothing but we get TWO of the laughably bad songs from *Emilia Perez*! Oh, wait. Yes I can. It's the Oscars after all. Anyway, it will go to "El Mal."

THE **EXTRAORDINARY**
WAY TO SAY
"I Love you"

PANACHE
salon • spa
GIFT CARD

PANACHE SALON AND SPA 814.838.3333

Best of Erie 2023



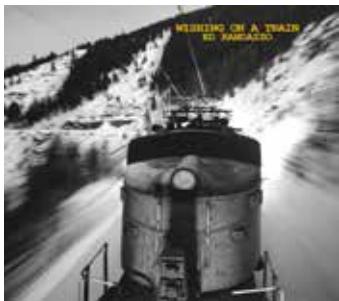
Mac Miller
Balloonerism
 Warner Records

★★★★★

Seven years after his passing, Mac Miller’s musical genius continues to excite. Pittsburgh native Mac Miller passed away in 2018, leaving behind a collection of critically and commercially acclaimed albums and mixtapes. However, this output was not the only music the late artist left in his wake.

Originally recorded in 2014, *Balloonerism* was shelved by Mac’s label for being far too experimental (in their view). While the musician would go on to make other projects, the unreleased album achieved mythical status among his fanbase. Snippets of the record leaked through bootlegs; however, no complete edition of *Balloonerism* was ever made available — that was until last month, when Miller’s estate officially released the project (along with a short companion film via Amazon Prime).

In line with Mac Miller’s sound during the mid-2010s, *Balloonerism* is woozy and psychedelic, with the musician’s casual delivery of poetic passages. However, what separates this project is the overt avant garde nature of its sound. The sounds of tingly keys and accordion arrangements play through the listener’s ears. Each track flows into one another, creating an almost uninterrupted listening experience. Production from the likes of Rick Rubin and Thundercat, along with vocals from then-unknown singer SZA, assist in this effect. All these folks work together to build the insular wall of sound called *Balloonerism*. —Nathaniel Clark



Ed Randazzo
Wishing On A Train
 ReservED Music

★★★★★

This is the first full length album release by Northeastern Pennsylvania singer-songwriter Ed Randazzo since 2015’s *If You Don’t Bring Me Joy*. The folk troubadour revisited his hometown of Scranton to record *Wishing On A Train* with some of his longtime friends. The album opens with a howl that grabs the listener’s attention and transitions into a traditional blues groove, with the help of an organ and trumpet, on “Stone-Cold Envy Blues.” The songs progress into Americana hitting on the topics of love in “I’ve Been Heavy,” loss in “Black Boys On Mopeds,” and the American railways in “Give Me Central 209.”

The cover of the traditional spiritual “Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down” is on par with modern covers by Robert Plant and Uncle Tupelo, while “Saint Cecilia” carries a Dylan-esque vibe as a love song to the patron saint of music and musicians. The album’s penultimate song “Wishing On A Train” is the heaviest on the album and will have you stomping your feet and wanting more. The album ends on the song “Fix Me A Pallet,” which sounds like it’s being played on an old acoustic slide blues guitar, proving that Ed Randazzo has as much songwriting chops and blues guitar prowess as any seasoned professional. — Larry Wheaton



The Weather Station
Humanhood
 Fat Possum Records

★★★★★

Alluring and complex, this follow up to The Weather Station’s 2021 landmark album *Ignorance* illustrates a rich new chapter in the band’s story. Led by the singer and multi-instrumentalist Tamara Lindeman, this Toronto-based group is currently composed of five other musicians. Kieran Adams, Ben Boye, Philippe Melanson, Karen Ng, and Ben Whitely, along with Lindeman recorded *Humanhood* by live improvising in two takes. It’s a rather surprising fact considering the feeling of orchestration and structuring. Perfect for fans of Cassandra Jenkins, the band creates a flooding atmosphere awash with beauty and a relegated sadness. This 45-minute journey is decidedly more downtempo than their last offering, though not purposefully languid, especially in early tracks like “Neon Signs” and “Window.” Artful and intelligent, with unique instrumentation that blends electronic and analog synths and percussion with beautiful saxophone and flute, this is an album to meditate on and savor. As if perceived in a dreamlike cloud, each track wafts into the next beautifully. It’s at once both relaxing, cathartic, and painful. — Nick Warren



BLUNT GUTS
Ogre Toes
 Basement Transmissions Records

★★★★★

Robert Jensen is back again with a fresh rip of BLUNT GUTS. The founder of Basement Transmissions (and former member of Pegasus Unicorn and The Jargonauts) sends us on a new experimental adventure and brings some friends along for the ride. “I tried to push myself to try new things vocally and with my gear this time around,” Jensen explained. “I also worked with several other artists on this album that were fearless with their experimentation. It was an honor to work with them” he says of collaborating with local talents like Nary, Nasty Taxi, Andrew DeSanctis, and Anthony Pytlarz. It’s a crunchy blend of electronic fuzz, distant echoes, spacing, and witchcraft. An album that the listener can find themselves getting lost in almost immediately, *Ogre Toes* is one to be breathed in, exhaled, and repeated. It’s also an album born out of a difficult time for the artist who personally dealt with an illness in the family that rightfully left an indelible impression. Jensen then did what comes naturally to him, create. Transferring grief and pain into its own unique art piece, BLUNT GUTS remains one of Erie’s most creative — and ahead of their time — recording artists. — Nick Warren

GALLERY NIGHT FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28TH

Erie Art Museum

FOR A FULL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS, PLEASE VISIT:
ERIEARTMUSEUM.ORG/GALLERY-NIGHT

BACKGROUND IMAGE: FROM A DISTANCE, QIAN LI

MOXI
HAIR SALON

Thanks, Erie!

BEST OF ERIE 2024
ERIE READER

BEST BEAUTY SALON 2024

TWO LOCATIONS:
 1722 W. 8th St., Erie, PA 16505 • (814) 835-6765
 1335 W 38th St., Erie, PA 16508 • (814) 881-6797
moxihair.com

How long should your pet live?
 Help your pet live a longer, healthier life.

Nickel Plate Mills
 1932 Parade St, Erie, PA 16503
www.nickelplatemills.net
 Like us on facebook

★ **FIRST AMENDMENT TEES CO. INC.** ★
 FOR ALL OF YOUR APPAREL DECORATING NEEDS
 217 W 11TH ST, ERIE, PA 16501
 (814) 520-8163

T-SHIRTS, HOODIES, HATS, POLOS, JACKETS
 UNIFORMS, JERSEYS, STICKERS, SIGN VINYL
 PHONE CASES, PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS.

- GARMENT PRINTING
- SILK SCREENING
- EMBROIDERY
- SUBLIMATION
- VINYL TRANSFERS
- VINYL STICKERS
- HEAT TRANSFERS
- TEAM UNIFORMS
- BUSINESS WEAR
- BUSINESS CARDS

• AND MORE...

★ **FAT-TEE.COM** ★

ECTIC Community Resilience CONFERENCE

Back to Basics: Moving Policy and Practice Forward
 The 4th Annual Gathering of Community Members, Providers, Educators, and Difference Makers

BE A DIFFERENCE MAKER IN OUR COMMUNITY. TRAUMAINFORMEDERIE.ORG

Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) Offered!

Register Today!

FEB 19

FREE AND VIRTUAL!

CALENDAR

The best place to promote your events online and in print.



powered by *event*

Zem Zem Shrine Club, 2525 West 38th Street

Featured



Erie's Best Coffee
@ 11am / \$10
Zem Zem Shrine Club,
2525 West 38th Street

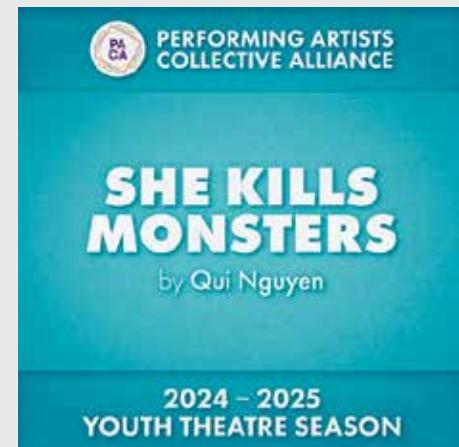


Designer Purse Bingo

@ 12pm
Rainbow Gardens at Waldameer Park, 220 Waldameer
Park Road

Fri 2/28

Featured



She Kills Monsters
@ 7pm / \$15
PACA, 1505 State Street



GLOW PARTY!! Ft. PUPPY And VOTO (Happy Birthday Ji)

@ 9pm / \$7
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

Sun 3/02

She Kills Monsters
@ 2pm / \$15
PACA, 1505 State Street

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.

powered by *event*

Featured



Headliner Chris Higgins at Calamari's
@ 7pm / \$15-\$20
Calamari's Squid Row,
1317 State Street



Sat 2/15

2 Across
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street

Sun 2/16

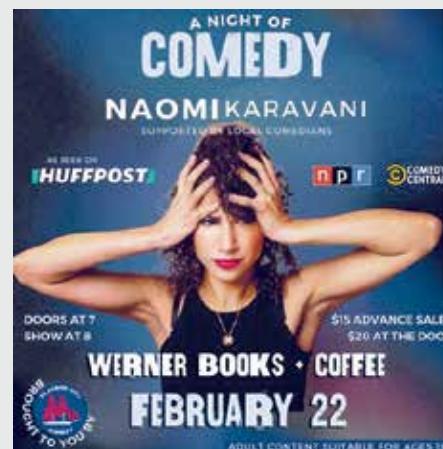
Winter Fun Run 4 Miler
@ 1pm / \$35
5774 Sterrettania Road, Brown's Farm Barn, Fairview

Thu 2/20

A Taste of Italy at the Watson-Curtze Mansion
@ 6:30pm / \$90
Watson-Curtze Mansion, 356 West 6th Street

Sat 2/22

Featured



Headliner Naomi Karavani at Werner Books and Coffee
@ 7pm / \$15-\$20
Werner Books and Coffee,
3608 Liberty Street



Sun 2/23

Erie's Best Coffee
@ 11am / \$10

Fri 2/14

Featured



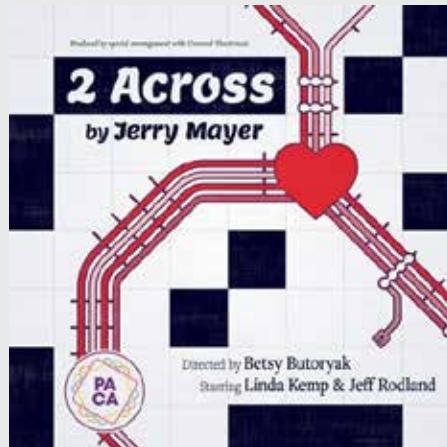
Brad Ford: Broken Sculpture
@ 5pm / Free
cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street



Works from the FEED Collection

@ 5pm / Free
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Featured



Annual Valentines Day Night Out
@ 6:30pm / \$50
PACA, 1505 State Street



Ants Art House: The Womb of Creation and Communion

@ 7pm / Free
FEED TOO, 1301 State Street

Wax Nights 002

@ 8pm / Free
Listen to records and meet fellow music fans in Erie's newest cafe and event space. Sign up to share your own vinyl! cafeGIANT, 1311 State Street

Fri 2/07

Featured



LADIES NIGHT!! Karaoke/Open Mic HOSTED BY DJ JAY! A JenJen birthday special!
@ 9pm / \$2
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Sat 2/08

Featured



STIM CITY : CLUB RESISTANCE
@ 10pm / \$10
Feb 8th - Feb 9th
FEED Media Art Center,
1307 State Street



Sun 2/09

ERC Valentine Prediction Run

@ 10am / \$20
8271 Barker Rd, Girard

The best place to promote your events online and in print. Visit us @ <https://www.eriereader.com/tickets>

Recent Romance Reads Just in Time for Valentine's Day

A roundup of some recent releases from the genre

By: Ally Kutz

Love is all around us — and so are some great new titles in the romance genre. Check out our roundup of recent additions sure to put you in the loving spirit this Valentine's Day.

Is She Really Going Out with Him?

By Sophie Cousens

Columnist Anna Appleby has given up on love: after a painful divorce, she feels that her two children, cat, and writing position are enough for her. Besides, she'd much rather be single than go through the agony of online dating. But when a rival at the office begins vying for her column, she finds herself pitching a unique storyline to secure her spot: seven dates, all found offline, all picked by her kids. From the mailman to waiters and even her celebrity crush, Anna finds herself awash with awkward encounters and unexpected connections, with one in particular making her reconsider her stance on another chance at love.

Wedding Dashers

By Heather McBreen

When Ada finds herself stuck in London trying to get to her little sister's wedding, she thinks things can't get much worse. The once close sisters have been in a year-long fight, the wedding is in Ireland, and Ada can barely afford the airfare — and now the airline just canceled her connection. At the bar,

she finds herself spilling all the details to a handsome, also stranded stranger: the quick engagement, the over-the-top celebration, and the best man she's dreading meeting due to his reputation as a womanizer. The situation gets clumsier, though — this stranger turns out to be the best man, Jack. Now the two must band together and try to make it to Belfast before the ceremony — will the immediate attraction between the two turn into real feelings, or will the mishaps along the way spell disaster for any relationship they may have had?

P.S.: I Hate You

By Lauren Connolly

When Maddie's brother Josh dies of cancer at 29, he leaves in his will one request of her: scatter his ashes over eight destinations that he never had the chance to visit. There's one catch, though — Dominic, his lifelong best friend and the man who broke her heart years ago, must accompany her. Begrudgingly, she embarks on a farewell trip with Dom spanning thousands of miles and shared history, exploring new places and revisiting their complicated past. When a snowstorm leads to forced proximity, she wonders if her brother is somehow playing matchmaker from the grave. But the grief they feel over Josh's death also opens old wounds between the two, forcing Maddie to confront what has happened and how she could ever trust Dom again.



If you're looking for something to read ranging from heartwarming and charming to steamy and fantastical, Ally Kutz has some great suggestions for your Valentine's reading list.

First-Time Caller

By B.K. Borison

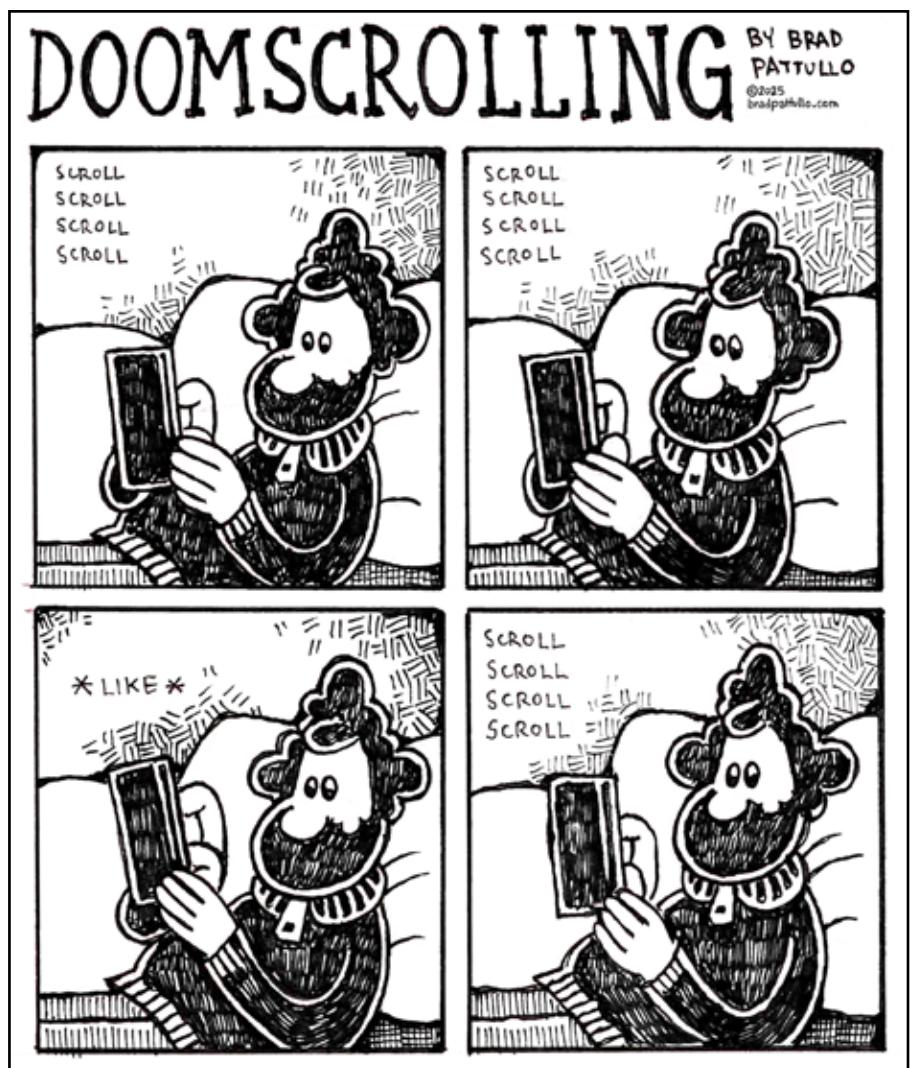
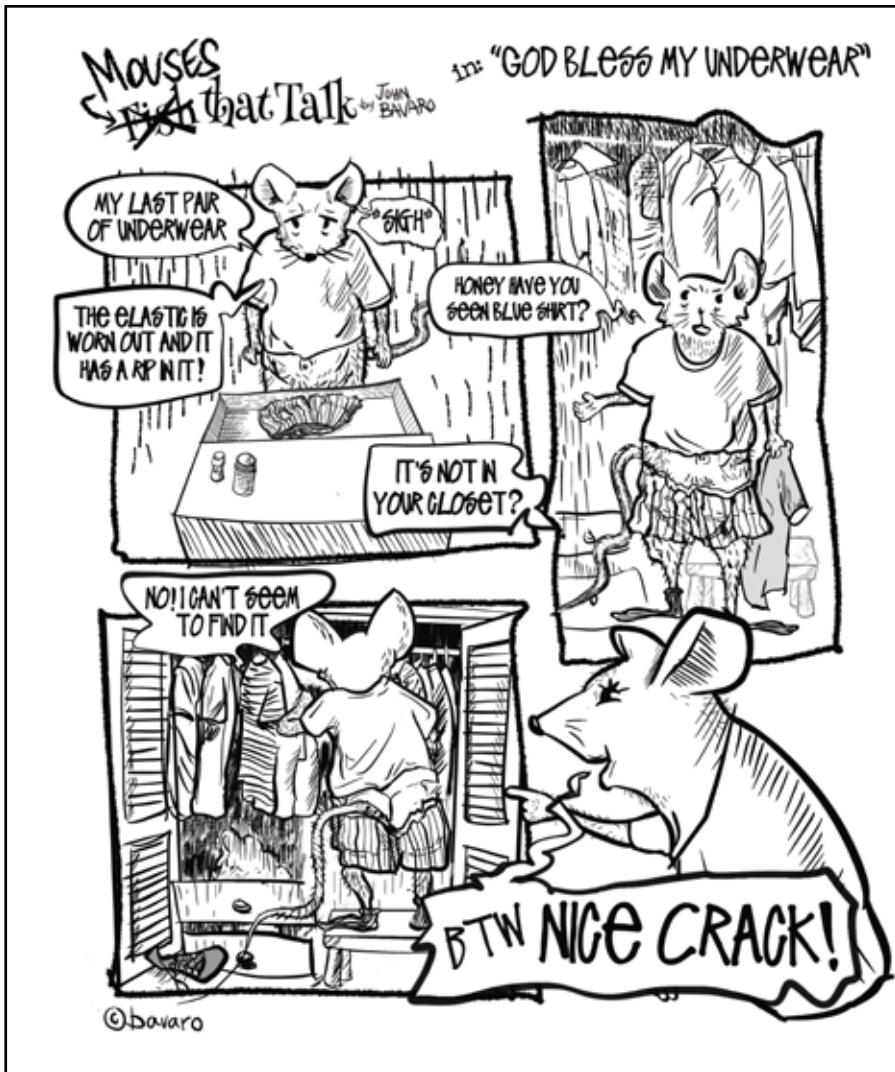
As the host of Baltimore's romance hotline *Heartstrings*, it would only make sense that Aiden Valentine was head over heels in love. But in reality, he's keeping a secret: he's fallen out of love with love. After a young girl calls in asking for dating advice for her mom, Lucie, the interview goes viral and puts them all in the limelight. With all of Baltimore scrutinizing her love life (or lack thereof) and wanting her to find a happy ending, Lucie decides some romance in her life wouldn't be the worst thing. With Aiden calling the shots, Lucie finds herself in the studio trying to find Mr. Right, with all of Baltimore hanging on by a thread. But when sparks begin to fly behind the scenes, Lucie has to decide between the radio-sponsored happily ever after or the man behind the microphone.

Definitely Better Now

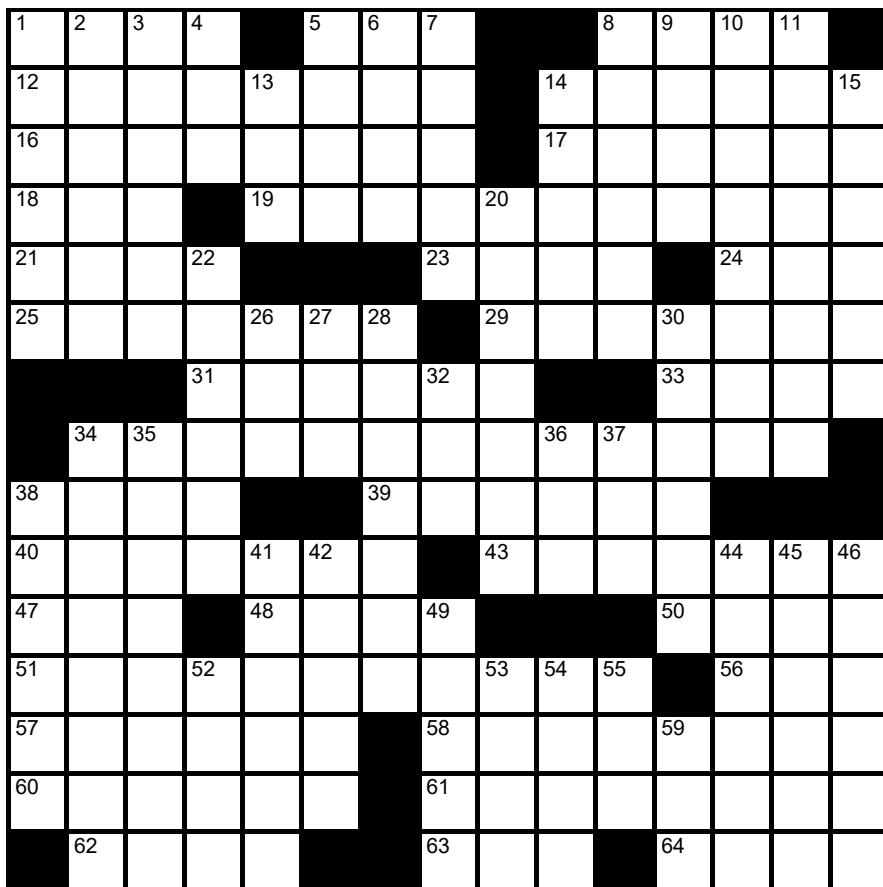
By Ava Robinson

As a recovering alcoholic, Emma has spent the last year sober — focusing on her office job, group meetings, and avoiding bad decisions. She's also taken that year off from dating and decides it's time she puts herself back out there — except life starts coming at her fast: her mother's choice to move in with a new boyfriend, her responsibility to plan the office holiday party, and the reappearance of her estranged father all take a toll on Emma, who is just trying to navigate life. Then comes Ben, the charming IT guy, who seems to understand Emma more than most. Through opening up to Ben and confronting difficult past relationships, Emma navigates her sobriety and finds that taking things one day at a time may be the best option for her chaotic, perfectly imperfect life.





CROSSWORD



Across

1. Sioux Falls st.
5. Buddy
8. Sailboat pole
12. Winery city in California's Inland Empire
14. Scottish inlets
16. *"Yeah, that makes sense"
17. Cat or goat breed
18. "Children of the Albatorross" author AnaÛs
19. *Officially kick off, like a host country's leader at the Olympics
21. Lump of goo
23. The E of QED
24. ___ XING (road sign)
25. In a grave manner, on sheet music
29. False pretense
31. 2024 character that got Ariana Grande her first Oscar nomination
33. "By gosh!"
34. *"2001" subtitle
38. Queue before V
39. "Oh, come on!"
40. Actor Ricci of "28 Days Later" and "Vendetta"
43. Flaky Viennese pastry
47. Ram's mate
48. Bird's bill
50. On the level
51. *Portable storage

Down

1. Wasp wounds
2. Corrupt
3. "F, r Elise" key signature
4. Beer barrel
5. Not watered-down
6. Actor Guinness
7. Big spoon
8. Former Secretary of Transportation Norman
9. 2012 Ben Affleck film
10. Obstruction
11. Like some weekends
13. Bovine mouthful
14. Somali-born Olympic gold medalist track athlete Mo
15. Made smooth, in a

way

20. Places to play pinball
22. Rapper whose post-humous final album was 2000's "Yeeeah Baby"
26. Suffix after Motor or pay
27. [Not my mistake]
28. Low film rating
30. Close once more
32. Play-___ (modeling clay)
34. Comprehensively
35. Crumbly topping
36. "You ain't seen nothin' ___"
37. Kazakhstan, once
38. "Gone With the Wind" character Butler and "Good Mythical Morning" cohost McLaughlin, for two
41. Former Brooklyn field
42. Rough Riders nickname
44. Some Tony nominees
45. "I did it!"
46. Second-rate
49. Fuzzy fruits
52. Subservient
53. Bud holder
54. New York canal
55. "___ Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band"
59. "Hamlet" division



Answers to last puzzle





SUBSCRIBE TO the Erie Reader!



Since 2010, The Erie Reader has been Erie's only local, free, independent source for news, arts, and culture. Our small but tenacious team of writers, editors, artists, and photographers is supported by contributions from members of the Erie Reader community.

While the Erie Reader is and always will be free to read, we would love to give our readers more by offering a monthly membership. With a contribution of \$15 (or more) a month, our members receive:

- An exclusive, super cool, members-only newsletter
- Early access to the monthly issue PDF two days prior to public distribution
- Discounts on Erie Reader events
- Exclusive giveaways like community sports and theater event tickets with our sponsorship partners
- The Erie Reader print edition delivered to your door
- And other perks!

