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ERIE READER

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THE EERIE EXPERIENCE:

SPOOKY URBAN LEGENDS, FOLKTALES, AND LORE

WOMEN RUNNING FOR ERIE

VOGEL AND DEVLIN AIM FOR LOCAL LEADERSHIP

GLOBAL SUMMIT XVII

STAR-STUDDED LINEUP KICKS OFF

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CONTENTS

October 9, 2025

From the Editors - 4

The call is coming from inside the house

Happy Trails: Erie on Track to Join Great Lakes Project - 5

Erie County shoreline integral to proposed Great Lakes Waterfront Trail

Making a Small City Smaller: The Second Annual Community Harvest Dinner in Perry Square - 8

Building social trust through community events

Bird of the Month: White-crowned Sparrow - 11

“An elegant little species”

Edwina Tries... Eeriebyss - 11

Kick off spooky season with Erie’s own Factory of Terror

The Reader Beat Monthly Recap - 12

Summary of September 2025 council meetings

Take Your Beer for a Walk: Liberty Plaza - 15

A look back at the ghosts of plazas past

Gem City Style: An Interview with Justin Dombrowski - 16

Author of *The Murder of Debbie Gama: Justice and Absolution in Erie*

The Erie Experience: Spooky Urban Legends, Folktales, and Lore - 17

One high school department’s creative way to teach local history, critical thinking

Women Running for Erie - 21

Vogel and Devlin aim for local leadership positions in 2025 election

Global Summit XVII Kicks Off Star-Studded Lineup This Month - 22

Thought leaders from near and far seek to inspire higher thinking

History Inspires: Sisters of St. Joseph, Founding Families, and Erie Polonia - 25

Newest exhibits at Hagen History Center call for a visit

Spotlight on Erie - 26

Rock and roller, cola wars, I can't take it anymore: The Music of Billy Joel! The Elephant Man! Eerie Horror Fest! And more!

Album Reviews - 38

The latest cuts from Geese, El Michels Affair, cataract, and Motion City Soundtrack

Five Films to Look Out For from TIFF 2025 - 39

The 50th Toronto International Film Festival was a great time for any film lover

Local, Original Comics - 40

The latest from Tommy Link, Nick Warren, Anthony Carson, Bryan Toy, and John Bavaro

Crossword Puzzle - 43

The latest stumper from Matt Jones, Jonesin’ Crosswords

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From the Editors

The call is coming from inside the house

You guys, it's Spooky Season! But wait. Hasn't it been Spooky Season for like 10 months already?

These days the idea of ghosts, zombies, werewolves, and killer clowns sounds downright wholesome compared to the fresh hell we meet each day, when we pick up our phones and experience the dread-inducing scroll, the onslaught of opinions from everyone we've ever known on every horrible thing that is happening all the time. A recent act of political violence brought so many folks out of the online woodwork – I had a rude social media awakening.

And it isn't just those with whom I disagree who overwhelmed me – it was the people in my very own, self-curated echo chamber. How has it become an unwritten social contract that everyone needs to share their every little thought and opinion on everything? Is that one meme that you had to hit "share" on really going to change the world? Or even someone's mind? Really? Because, let's face it, everyone has self-curated their own echo chambers. Do we really need to be screaming into them all day every day? Who is this serving? Who is this informing? How is this helping?

What it really seems to be doing is eliminating our humanity and eroding any remaining vestige of

mutual trust, in each other and in information. It's f**king spooky.

While I (obviously) recognize these times are unprecedented in our lived history – I think back even 30 years ago, before the internet was everywhere. Back when we didn't know every little detail of everyone's lives. Back when someone's politics were private (and probably way less extreme). Back when news was based in factual reporting, not on reels from wellness influencers. Back when caring about the welfare of your neighbor didn't depend on what kind of meme they posted that day. Back when you shared thoughts about the world with your family or close friends, not with your dad's retired coworker that you happen to be Facebook friends with. There always were and always will be loud, hateful people, but to have them all sounding off in one place at one time – it's not natural. It's not normal. And it certainly doesn't feel healthy.

So when I heard about a class being offered at a local high school that taught kids about Erie history while also helping them hone their critical thinking, media literacy, and bullshit detecting skills – I felt like it was a story that had to be told. It also happens to be timely, in that the subject matter is all axe murders, haunted bridges, and alien enemies

(the outer-space kind, not the manufactured emergency kind).

Additionally within, there are plenty of stories to read (on actual paper, without a comment section), that focus on our collective well-being – whether that's through attending one or many of the thought-provoking, worldview-expanding Jefferson Educational Society Global Summit events, or when considering the community-focused women on the local ballot next month, or (speaking of mutual trust) by attending a free, locally grown, community harvest meal in Perry Square, side by side, IRL.

What if we all just collectively decided to stop? The memes, the gross comment sections, the oversharing, the hot takes, the weird flexes, the dox culture? What if instead we go back in time? What if we focus our energy on sharing stories over roaring fires, reading articles on paper and thinking our thoughts about them in our own heads, confiding our hopes and fears and frustrations with our present circle of actual human beings, and then physically working to change the world? What if our worldview remained large but our social media reactions to them didn't need to be? Maybe that's just hocus pocus. Or maybe, if we did all just stop, Spooky Season could stay with the ghouls and witches where it belongs.



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October 9, 2025

Happy Trails: Erie on Track to Join Great Lakes Project

Erie County shoreline integral to proposed Great Lakes Waterfront Trail

By: Liz Allen

Dr. Jack Hartig lives and breathes the beauty, serenity, and majesty of the Great Lakes.

He also researches, teaches, writes books, and blogs about the science and ecology of the Great Lakes. He is a champion for strong stewardship of the Great Lakes, the largest freshwater system in the world.

Currently a visiting scholar at the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research in Windsor, Ontario, he's also working with the Midwestern Office of the Council of State Governments, the National Park Service, and Pennsylvania officials on an ambitious yet feasible plan to create the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail in the United States.

The U.S. trail will link to an existing trail, more than 3,600 kilometers long, in Canada. In the eight Great Lakes states, the aim is to increase tourism, boost local economies and promote cross-border travel and common cause with our northern neighbors.

Picture the joys of walking, hiking, or bicycling on these trails, to explore lakes and tributaries, support local coffee shops, restaurants, and bike liveries, visit open-air markets, soak up history and heritage, and strike up conversations with others who treasure the Great Lakes, including members of First Nations.

"That kind of thing is big business," Hartig said in a recent phone interview.

Just as importantly, linking the two Great Lakes trails is a tangible way to build support to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem.

"What a great opportunity to connect people to the Great Lakes," said Hartig. "In general, most of society has lost their connection to nature, and that holds true for the Great Lakes," he said.

"If you don't have any personal relationship with it, you don't have a sense of stewardship with it."

Erie County's shoreline is integral to the trail. That's why five students from the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability, who are studying environmental policy and landscape architecture, are working to engage local people to identify,

map, and build the Erie links.

About 28 percent of the work on Erie's shoreline – approximately 68 miles – has been completed. "So, we have some work to do," Hartig said.

"It's really important at the early stages to raise awareness and build excitement," said Hartig, who gave an Aug. 5 talk at the Jefferson Educational Society, "Working Towards a Binational Great Lakes Waterfront Trail."

Hartig is familiar with Erie. He has lectured at the JES previously and is leading a project with the International Association for Great Lakes Research to discover what has been learned and achieved by restoring Areas of Concern. That would include Presque Isle Bay, which the federal government designated as an Area of Concern in 1991 and delisted in 2013.

Born in Vancouver, Washington, Hartig's family moved to Michigan when he was a kid. "My family loved the outdoors. We grew up in a suburb of Detroit, 10 minutes [away], and we would go down and have picnics at Belle Island on the Detroit River. We would fish along the shoreline; we couldn't afford a boat."

He recalled that in the 1960s, the Detroit River was so polluted that the rocks on shore were coated with oil. "I would ask my dad, 'Why are we allowing this to go on?'"

Hartig pointed out that on Oct. 9, 1969, the Rouge River, which empties into the Detroit River, caught fire. For many Erie residents, a similar galvanizing incident about the horrors of water pollution had already occurred, when the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught fire on June 22, 1969.

Hartig learned early on that bodies of water need not be despoiled like those two rivers when his family ventured beyond the Detroit area for adventures at other rivers and smaller lakes in the Great Lakes region. "We would hike, fish, swim, and canoe," he said. "They were all beautiful, high-quality rivers and lakes, and the contrast between the Detroit River and Rouge River was night and day. I couldn't understand that. It didn't make sense to me."

Majoring in biology and chemis-

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University of Michigan students are working on mapping the Erie County portion of the Great Lakes Waterfront trail. They are, left to right: Roberto Carriedo Ostos, Xiao Chen, Emily Carra, Christine Sit, and Xingyan Chen.

try at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti as an undergrad, Hartig went on to earn his master's in aquatic biology at Eastern Michigan in 1977. He received his Ph.D. in limnology (the study of bodies of freshwater) from the University of Windsor in Ontario in 1985.

Concentrating on aquatic biology and then limnology was a no-brainer. "I already had the bug. Not only did I want to learn about these lakes and the ecology and the limnology, I wanted to make a difference and get involved in the cleanup and stewardship."

His honors and accolades include being named a Fulbright Scholar at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Ontario.

The partnerships to develop the Erie County portion of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail include the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Coastal Resources Management Program, and the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development.

Christine Sit, a master's degree candidate at the University of Michigan studying environmental planning and policy, said she and the other four

student team members could choose among many topics for their capstone graduation project. They decided to work on the Erie portion of the Great Lakes Trail.

"What drew us all to this project was our collective interest in ecological/environmental design and the importance of multi-use trails to their local communities," she said in an email. "Our studies in landscape architecture and environmental policy and planning and our varying experiences from fine art, ecological research, to real estate, have really come together to shape our work."

The students visited Erie in June and will return in November. They enjoyed "learning about unique historical, cultural, and ecological places" here, she said. When their project is completed by April 2026, they will have developed "a starting point, tools and resources for other Great Lake communities as they work on further developing their trail designs," she said.

How realistic is the full development of the trail in this era of tight budgets and polarized politics? Hartig is optimistic. The Indiana portion of the trail, the 60-mile Marquette Greenway, has been completed. Work in Illinois is done, too. Pennsylvania and



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This graphic shows the outline of the proposed Great Lakes Waterfront Trail in the U.S.

Minnesota have been mapped, and Wisconsin, Ohio, and New York are started. Michigan will be done last.

"Maybe the light bulb will go on," Hartig said. "Trails and outdoor conservation is non-partisan. People love it. People love to vacation on and near water. They want to make memories there with their families," he said.

Hartig talked about success stories,

Great Lakes Now, an in-depth reporting project by Detroit PBS. You can also watch his presentation to the Jefferson Educational Society on YouTube, entitled "Working Towards a Binational Great Lakes Waterfront Trail."

While you are savoring autumn days, you can also share ideas on what you'd like to see included Erie's por-

The U.S. [stretch of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail] will link to an existing trail, more than 3,600 kilometers long, in Canada. In the eight Great Lakes states, the aim is to increase tourism, boost local economies and promote cross-border travel and common cause with our northern neighbors.

including the expected opening this fall or in early 2026 of the new Gordie Howe International Bridge connecting Detroit and Windsor. "We lobbied for six years to get a pedestrian and bicycle lane on it. We won that," he said.

He then sketched out potential itineraries for the completed trail. For example, start on a bicycle at Point Pelee National Park in Ontario, then take a ferry to Pelee Island in Lake Erie, then another ferry to Put-in-Bay. Move on to Toledo with its "amazing greenways," then head north again to the Detroit Riverwalk.

You can learn more about Hartig and find links to his work by visiting johnhartig.com. Make sure you click on the link that takes you to his blog, "Great Lakes Moment," which he writes for

tion of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail. "People of Erie and Erie County can let us know what you like in a trail experience and any parks and green-spaces that could connect to the trail," said Sit, the UM student working on the trail. Email ideas to seas-glwt@umich.edu.

Also keep in mind that our country's 250th birthday will be observed in 2026. "Wouldn't it be great if the eight states could create the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail as one of the celebration points of our birthday?" Hartig asked.

Liz Allen is too old for a long-haul bicycle tour from Erie to Canada but eagerly anticipates walks along the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail in her lifetime.

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Making a Small City Smaller: The Second Annual Community Harvest Dinner in Perry Square

Building social trust through community events

By: Dave Tamulonis

Last year, our first-ever End-of-Season Community Harvest Dinner was held in Perry Square, inviting everyone in the community to sit at a large table and enjoy a free meal prepared by friends and neighbors from produce grown right here in Northwestern Pennsylvania. Our original goal was to make this event more than just a meal giveaway. By elevating the dining experience with centerpieces, music, a warm and inviting tent, and expertly prepared food, we aimed to show what was possible when we placed our trust in each other to share our skills and abundance. The turnout was spectacular, and we are very much looking forward to improving and expanding upon the event this year on **Friday, Oct. 24 from 6 – 8 p.m. in Perry Square**. The dinner also celebrates the end of a successful Pay-What-You-Can Market season, another concept built on trust and mutual aid, built by a dedicated and decentralized system of farmers, volunteers, and organizations aiming to make local fresh produce as accessible as possible in the City of Erie.

Trust is a very important concept for small communities. It can be traded and exchanged just like currency. The problem is, we've increasingly replaced opportunities to trade trust with each other with opportunities to exchange money. Gig economy jobs like Uber drivers have replaced the need to ask a friend for a lift somewhere or to take a turn as the designated driver. In Erie, we've replaced opportunities to coexist in public spaces like our beautiful Bayfront with experiences that require cash (and sometimes a lot of it). The smaller and more interconnected a city is, the more it benefits from a strong sense of social trust. Or conversely, the more it suffers from distrust.

The reason I love working in community events planning is that I can design experiences that exist for the sole benefit of building social capital. I can create free experiences that invite the community in to share something together, connect with each other, then part ways a little richer without having to exchange cash. The Erie Downtown Partnership also exists to help build consumer density for our downtown businesses, but I like to think that even those business owners benefit first from the trust they can build by meeting potential customers face to face during our events. Investing in building authentic relationships with customers, especially in a small city, is worth double the energy you're putting into your social media campaign. Trust is the most important thread that can bind a community together. The belief that your neighbor will help you without expecting anything in return is what connects and strengthens social bonds to come out the other side of a natural disaster like a storm or blizzard intact.

This summer we saw a lot of trust built through the Pay-What-You-Can Farmers Market stands, and it was not always easy. Several neighbors would arrive at the stand with a mindset of competition and

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The now annual End-of-Season Community Harvest Dinner invites everyone to share a meal in Perry Square prepared by friends and neighbors, and made using locally grown produce. This meal feeds the community both literally and figuratively – celebrating the season's bounty while helping to build mutual trust.

even outright contempt for others there, seeing their own neighbors as a threat to their ability to get the produce they need. People would argue about line jumping and bicker with each other about what was an appropriate amount to take and what was an appropriate amount to donate in return. We attempted to meet these reactions (to what was admittedly a foreign concept for most) with the same patience, compassion, and set of guidelines: 1. Give what you feel you can give; 2. Take what you feel you need to take; and 3. Don't worry about what anyone else can give or needs to take. By the time we were holding our end-of-season harvest dinner, most repeat market attendees' attitudes had at least cooled a bit and they were more comfortable with the notion that *someone else's* needs were no threat to their own.

This is a very difficult concept to wrap one's head around, especially for working class and impoverished populations who have learned to carefully protect what little they have. It's a natural survival instinct that crops up in times of scarcity, and no one should be blamed for feeling this way. The real threat is a system that runs on a constant manufactured scarcity mindset. Hypercapitalism has led to an environment where exploitative marketing is allowed to manipulate our perception of scarcity to elicit an emotional (and monetary) response. To continue the cycle of constant growth needed to feed a hypercapitalist economy, people must resort to more and more competitive, desperate, and intensifying tactics to squeeze money out of an exhausted population. They legalize vices like sports gambling and drugs as new revenue streams to cre-

ate new sectors, new gold rushes, that might pour just a tiny bit more gasoline onto the dying fire.

Trust is not just anathema to the system, it's also the antithesis. If we build more trust, we would have no fear of this manufactured scarcity. If we had no fear of scarcity, we might share more. If we share more, we would all trust each other more. It's a cycle that needs to start somewhere. The easiest place to start is by doing something for someone without expecting anything in return. In fact, try to outright refuse anything in return. The more we attempt to squeeze money out of every interaction the more we sacrifice things like trust and create an unwelcoming environment out of our entire city, and that benefits no one except those who seek to divide us.

The Community Harvest Dinner on Friday, Oct. 24 in Perry Square is presented by Erie Downtown Partnership and the Erie Food Policy Advisory Council with support from Build CDC, Hamot Health Foundation, Grow and Glow Urban Collective, Wildfield Urban Farm, Erie Farm to School, the Conscious Food Project at Raintree Farms, and Groundwork Erie. Made possible by Erie Strayer with additional support provided by ErieBank, First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Brian and Linda Graff, Ember and Forge, Monahan and Monahan, Glass Growers Gallery, PA Cyber, and 1020 Collective. Thanks also to our many volunteers!

David Tamulonis is a musician and educator who works at Erie Downtown Partnership managing community events and activities in Downtown Erie. He can be reached at davidtamulonis@gmail.com.

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Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C. is pleased to welcome **Andrew M. Schmidt**, who has joined our Governmental Practice and Litigation groups.

His legal career includes experience in a variety of practice areas, including serving as solicitor to a number of municipalities

and authorities throughout several counties in western Pennsylvania. Andy has practiced in front of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. He is an active member of the Erie County and Pennsylvania Bar Associations and is AV Preeminent® Peer Review Rated (Martindale-Hubbell).

Andy earned his J.D. from Dickinson School of Law (now Penn State Dickinson Law) and a B.A. from the Pennsylvania State University. He lives in Erie and joins a team of more than 40 attorneys that has been providing quality legal services to businesses, families, public entities, and nonprofits for over 65 years.



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Bird of the Month: White-crowned Sparrow

“An elegant little species”

By: Mary Birdsong

Full disclosure: The White-crowned Sparrow is my favorite sparrow, so pardon me while I gush.

This stylish sparrow sports brown on its flanks, tail, and back, with white and rufous highlights on the wings. Its throat and neck are a clean, smooth gray that offsets its most dashing feature, a crisply delineated black and white striped “crown” with a slight crest. The finishing touches are a pinkish bill and legs. It’s quite the looker.

And it stands out even more among other sparrows due to being larger than many at 6½ inches long. Its tiny cousin the Chipping Sparrow measures just over 5 inches.

The White-crowned Sparrow (known as WCSP to bird banders and birders) migrates through our region in both spring and fall, with October being their peak travel season. I hesitate to say from where because their nesting grounds range from Alaska east along the northern tier of North America and down into the U.S. and Canadian Rockies.

Complicating things even more are the five different identified subspecies, which all have varied breeding habitats and locations. Cornell’s Birds of the World website sums it up neatly: “Populations differ remarkably in habitat features of breeding

territories, from boreal forest and tundra in northern Manitoba, to alpine meadows in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and the U.S., to the margins of shopping center parking lots and ferry terminals in British Columbia and Washington.” And to finalize the confusion, one subspecies (*Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*) does not migrate at all.

But we don’t need to worry about those details when watching for them in shrubby backyards and parks as they stop to rest on their journey.

My favorite WCSP memory is sitting on my “thinking stone” in my backyard as dusk was close. A flock of 20 or so flew into the row of arborvitae that lines the back of the property. They were all singing their whistling and buzzy song. As darkness fell, the songs slowed and eventually stopped. I could no longer see them but I knew they were in there, preening or sleeping. It was enchanting.

In 1772, German naturalist J. R. Forster described the WCSP as an “elegant little species.” He was right.

Mary Birdsong is the lead shorebird monitor for Erie Bird Observatory. Learn more at eriebirdobservatory.org. Mary can be reached at mbirdsong@eriereader.com



The White Crowned Sparrow, known as WCSP among birders, is an “elegant little bird” that is currently moving through our area from any number of nesting grounds throughout North America.

Edwina Tries ... Eeriebyss

Kick off spooky season with Erie’s own Factory of Terror

By Edwina Capozziello

When I was younger, I loved rollercoasters and scary movies. Now that I’m a little older, rollercoasters leave me nauseated and a good jump scare has the potential to make me wet my pants. Most of the time I think, “eh, the world is scary enough.” But, spooky season is upon us and I endeavor to step outside my comfort zone and re-

port back to you, dear reader. This month I visited Eeriebyss: Factory of Terror at 1053 W. 12th St.

Eeriebyss is a haunted attraction housed in a 120+ year old factory building. History nerds like me may be interested to know that the building was once the home of Griswold cast iron cookware from 1903 to 1957. It’s a cool and creepy location – there’s a hearse and a black box truck out front. Our party of four was greeted by a scary clown and a security guard at the well-lit entrance. It was Sunday evening and there was no wait to enter.

After buying our tickets, we shuffled along to the start of the attraction where we were advised of all of the conditions of entry by a grandmotherly-type employee. The rules are also posted and I felt good about the fact that there were stiff penalties for not following them, including a \$700 fine for smoking or vaping. My anxiety was high and it felt good to know they were running a tight ship in the interest of safe fun. With one last bit of advice to “smile for a picture when you get to the Eerie Meat Market,” we were let in and directed to a door.

No spoilers, but there were plenty of surprises, twists, and turns and a perfect combination of animatronics and actors that were hard to tell apart in the dark. It was multi-level and took longer to

get through than I anticipated – I felt like they really tried to give us our money’s worth. While the actors were working hard to spook us, I was also impressed by the respect for personal space we were given as well as the overall kindness of the staff. During our trip, part of our group needed to take a couple of breaks and there were employees that came through to check on us and were so courteous – dressed in scary costumes but with hearts of gold.

If you’re looking for something fun to do this fall, check out Eeriebyss: Factory of Terror. I’d recommend it for anyone 12 or older who doesn’t mind a bit of walking. If you’re really lucky you may get a chance to meet Sully the pug while you’re hanging out in the gift shop or checking out your meat market photos.

Open through Nov. 1 // Fridays and Saturdays 7 p.m. to midnight // Sundays 6 to 10 p.m. // Information and tickets at eeriebyss.com

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



Jump scares, gore, and general spookiness in an old, abandoned Erie factory? Edwina tries it! If you’ve never been able to work up the nerve to walk through the Eeriebyss Factory of Terror, let Edwina’s bravery inspire you to give it a try.

The Reader Beat Monthly Recap

Summary of September 2025 council meetings

By: Alana Sabol

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

City Council Sept. 3: During the first city council meeting of the month, constituents addressed both the ongoing investigation of the shooting of Marchello Woodard and the bond covering the renovation of the former Miller Bros. Power Equipment property during public comments. The bond is covered in Council File No. 16,556. Constituent Michelle Dovershaw referenced how the dollar amount for the bond has increased over time, from \$30 million in July to over \$52 million. She encouraged the council to “table the bond moving forward until the public receives all the detailed projections of how much this will actually cost the taxpayers.” The ordinance underwent changes during the meeting. Originally, the ordinance authorized an increase in the non-electoral debt of the City of Erie by authorizing and approving the issuance and sale in the aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$52.35 million in general obligation bonds. General obligation bonds are investments that grant their owners interest payments and are issued by governments to fund public projects. Brzezinski requested that the ordinance be tabled and Titus seconded the motion. Motion to table failed 3-4, Nelson, Witherspoon, Schaaf, and Flores voted no. Motion to request to change the dollar amount and cap it at \$20.5 million was passed 5-2. Titus and Brzezinski voted no.

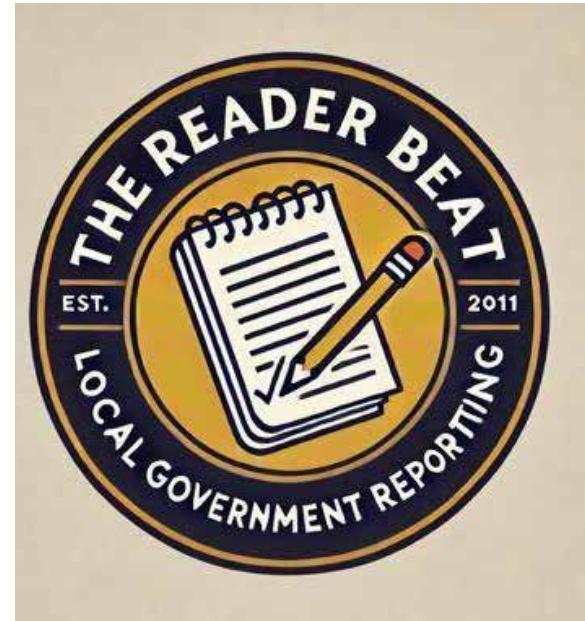
County Council Sept. 10: The first county council meeting of the month included public comments concerning the county’s Greenways Grant and when that money would be received. Mayor of Girard Peter Burton said that the borough applied for the grant one year ago for a \$250,000 park project. “Is that something that’s going to be back on the table soon, or are we going to have to find other sources to finish the project?” Other speakers continued the call for justice for Marchello Woodard. Constituent Chanel Caljean said that it took the DA weeks to make a statement and leadership has not stepped up to lead the community through the tragic event. “Prosecutors should release timely, factual updates to protect both the investigation and public trust. Yet here we are, silence roll[ing] on [while] pressure mount[s],” Caljean said. Horton also stated that he would support providing juvenile and adult probation officers with cameras. “I would suggest that the county executive work with this body. I would ask if he would inject [a section for body cameras] into the budget before he hands it to us, he has the ability to do that. If he puts something in for body cameras, rest assured I will fight for four or five votes to get my colleagues to approve it and I don’t believe

it would be a hard fight,” Horton said. “The least we can do is put a camera on people that wear a gun.”

An ordinance appropriating \$150,000 from the 2025 General Fund Budget and creating a line item for East County EMS for purchase of an ambulance was moved to a second reading with a unanimous vote. The council then voted on the ordinance but it failed to pass with a vote of 2-4. Copeland, Horton, Drexel, and Scutella voted no and explained the reason for their vote. Copeland claimed that it doesn’t make sense to take the money from the general fund since the money was already approved and is still in grant funding. “East County EMS applied for a transformational grant, were approved for that grant, but are not being paid from that grant fund. Instead [the Davis administration] is asking for your property tax dollars to pay for it,” Copeland said. Drexel stated that the council has still not received a balanced budget and therefore doesn’t know how much money is actually available in the general fund. Bayle disagreed, stating that the money in the grant fund is earmarked for scholarships for EMTs. “We talk about providing services, all of those other services don’t mean anything if we don’t provide the most basic, which is life saving services,” Bayle said. Copeland responded, saying Bayle was, “pry to some information that has been given to none of the other councilmembers,” and encouraged Davis to corroborate Bayle’s assertions.

City Council Sept. 17: Constituents continued to show up to speak about justice for Marchello Woodard, as it has been nearly four months since the shooting with no indictments or name released. Constituent Carla Arnone suggested a town hall and resources for trauma-informed therapy for the community. “It’s too easy to feel invisible when you’re a victim of a trauma,” Arnone said. An ordinance appropriating \$8,000 from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania acting through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission from the FFY2023 Certified Local Government Grant passed unanimously.

County Council Sept. 24: During public comments, constituents expressed concern about the resolution covering the shooting of Marchello Woodard that was proposed during the Finance and Personnel meeting on Sept. 18 and said it lacked a clear stance. The proposed resolution was read as follows: “On July 2, Marchello Woodard was shot and killed by a state parole officer. Our society is made of imperfect individuals, collectively striving toward justice. In the absence of divine justice, we must work diligently to overcome our shortcomings through exacting investigation, fact finding, and due process under law. And still, we have a need for some part of divine patience to see us through this arduous process. County Council affirms their deeply held belief



in democratic process and ideals. First among those being the pursuit of liberty and justice for all. County Council oversees the financial and policy aspects of the courthouse where many pursue their justice. We don’t play a participatory role in these proceedings, but it is because of our belief in the potential of the system to serve justice that we serve Erie County. Additionally, County Council remains committed to the pursuit of reforms required to provide relief to our community. Together with the community we advocate for justice.” Andre Horton responded to the public comments concerning the drafted resolution, saying Woodard’s death “was still precedent setting, and there’s things we still need to be mindful of.” The councilman also acknowledged the genocide in Palestine, the war in Ukraine, and the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. “There’s a lot of pain going on in this world,” Horton said.

An ordinance appropriating \$601,724 from the 2025 Planning Fund Budget for Act 13 Greenways Grant Distribution was tabled unanimously by council.

City Council Oct. 1: During public comments, constituent Deonte Cooley proposed a community police review board, asking: “When can we talk to our police and when can the police talk to us?” An ordinance amending and supplementing Article 1301, known as the City of Erie Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), specifically amending Articles I, II, III, IV, and V, which re-defines Major and Minor Subdivisions and revises the review process for SALDO applications in Erie passed unanimously.

What’s coming up this month?:

County Council: Oct. 7 at 6 p.m.

City Council: Oct. 15 at 6:30 p.m.

County Council: Oct. 21 at 6 p.m.

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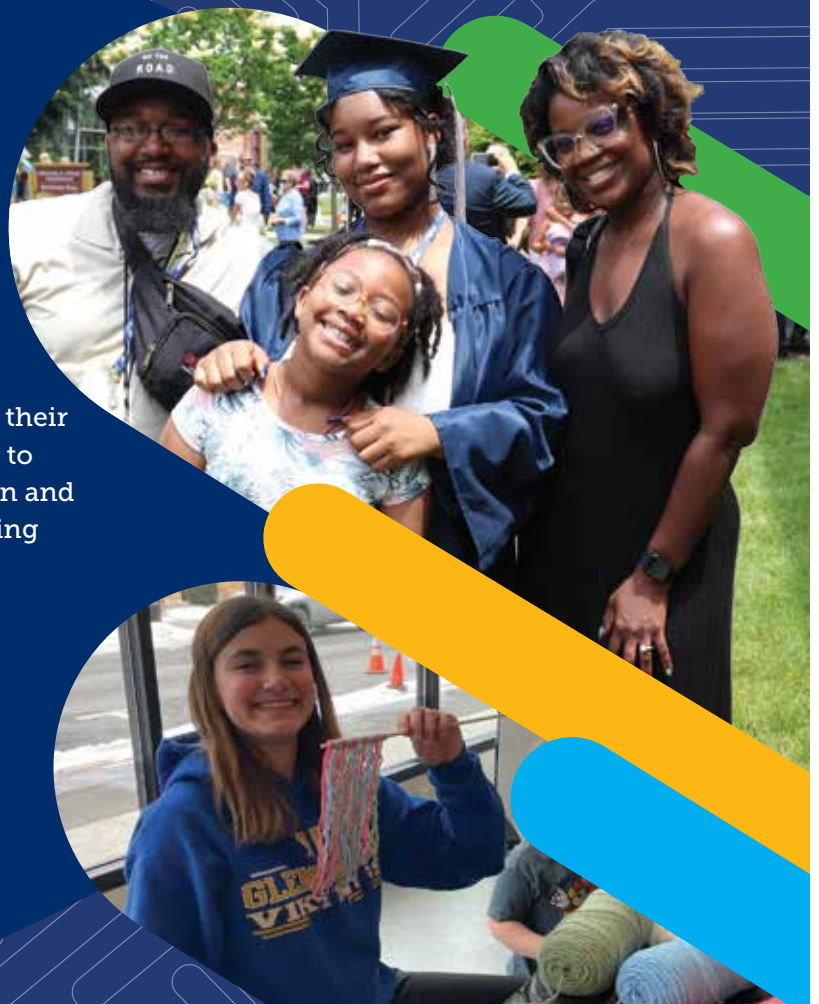
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Take Your Beer for a Walk: Liberty Plaza

A look back at the ghosts of plazas past

By: Jeff McCullor

You know what’s really scary? Going out of business! This month we’re taking a very pointed walk through the Liberty Plaza while gently reminiscing about some of the businesses that were once there and touching on current residents, because who doesn’t love a good nostalgia story?

First, a brief history. The plaza itself spans nearly four city blocks between West 38th and 34th streets, and was originally planned out as an L-shaped building with a walkway bisecting the northwest corner, according to an Erie Times-News article from 1952 when the plans were unveiled to the public. The plaza cost a whopping (for the time) \$2.25 million to build, officially opening in October 1955 as the sparkling “Liberty Shopcenter.”

The plaza served as Erie’s largest shopping center and included such fine retailers as: Adeline Shoppe, Brown-Jones, Grants, Liberty Hardware, Miles Shoes, Nu-Way Markets, Quaker State Finance, Trask’s, Woolworth’s, and Zehe’s Bakery – a really nice mix of stores that would honestly be a perfect fit in its modern-day iteration. Later stores included Peggy’s Restaurant, Crazy Mazeez, Carlisle’s, Blockbuster, D&K, and PNC Bank to name a few. We all rode our bikes to D&K for gum, right? Philip J. Levin, original owner and developer of the plaza, had the right mindset saying, “What better city is there, if handled right!” Say it **louder**, Phil! Cheers to you!

Speaking of cheers, back to the beer. The Liberty Plaza is private property but we’re going to ignore that little detail (or stay on Liberty’s sidewalk) and pour up a pint for our walk. We’ll stroll past some key landmarks along our route. Alright, let’s roll!

First up is Stumpy’s Hatchet House where you can make your own “AXEperience” for large or small groups and is conveniently BYOB – like our walks!

Cheers to you, Stumpy’s!

Next we’ll mosey on down to Werner Books & Coffee. Peek in the window and you’ll probably see owners Kyle or Lauren manning the front desk greeting everyone stopping in for their next Tom Clancy novel (I’m not the only one am I?). They expanded the store two years ago, moving from a few

This month we’re taking a very pointed walk through the Liberty Plaza while gently reminiscing about some of the businesses that were once there and touching on current residents, because who doesn’t love a good nostalgia story?

doors down and now serve as a solid middle-anchor retailer in the plaza. Cheers to you, Werner friends!

Finally we’ll shuffle over to the AMVETS Thrift Store, where you can easily pick out some vinyl records, secondhand clothing, or furniture for your man cave/she shed. One hundred percent of their proceeds directly support a wide range of programs for veterans. Cheers to you, AMVETS!

Thanks for coming on a walk with me. Keep drinking, and walking, local.

Jeff McCullor is the co-owner of Erie Ale Works. He can be reached at jeff@eriealeworks.com



Visit the ghosts of Liberty Plaza past with local brewer Jeff McCullor as he explores the area and digs into its origins and more-recent history, while also offering cheers to the businesses thriving there today.

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Gem City Style: An Interview with Justin Dombrowski

Author of *The Murder of Debbie Gama: Justice and Absolution in Erie*

By: Jessica Hunter

On a summer morning in Aug. 1975, 16-year-old Debbie Gama left her home in Erie and never returned. Days later, her body was discovered in a creek nearly 30 miles away. What unfolded in the aftermath was a case that shook Erie, led to the arrest of her English teacher Raymond Payne, and tested the limits of justice, grief, and forgiveness.

Half a century later, local author and historian Justin Dombrowski revisits the case in his new book *The Murder of Debbie Gama: Justice and Absolution in Erie*. Drawing from newspaper archives, court files, and investigative records that had never been made public, Dombrowski reconstructs the tragedy that scarred Erie while exploring the resilience of a mother who turned unimaginable loss into advocacy.

For our October issue, I sat down with Dombrowski to talk about Erie's dark history, the delicate art of writing true crime, and why stories like Debbie's still matter today.

Born and raised in Erie, Dombrowski is a Central High and Mercyhurst University graduate with a degree in criminal justice. He's published several books that dig into Erie's true crime underbelly, including *Murder & Mayhem in Erie, Pennsylvania*, *Reed's Backyard Strangler*, and *Wicked Erie*, among them. But Debbie's story, he says, felt different.

"This is one of those cases that, if you ask anyone in Erie for their top five most memorable crimes, Debbie's name always comes up," he explains. "What really intrigued me wasn't just the crime itself, but her mother's involvement afterward. Before she passed, Betty Ferguson was a huge advocate for families who had lost children to homicide. And then there was Dan Barber, a local investigator who essentially helped solve the case – and nobody had really focused on his role before."

True crime comes with its challenges: how to tell a gripping story without sensationalizing a victim's life and death, or retraumatizing those still living.

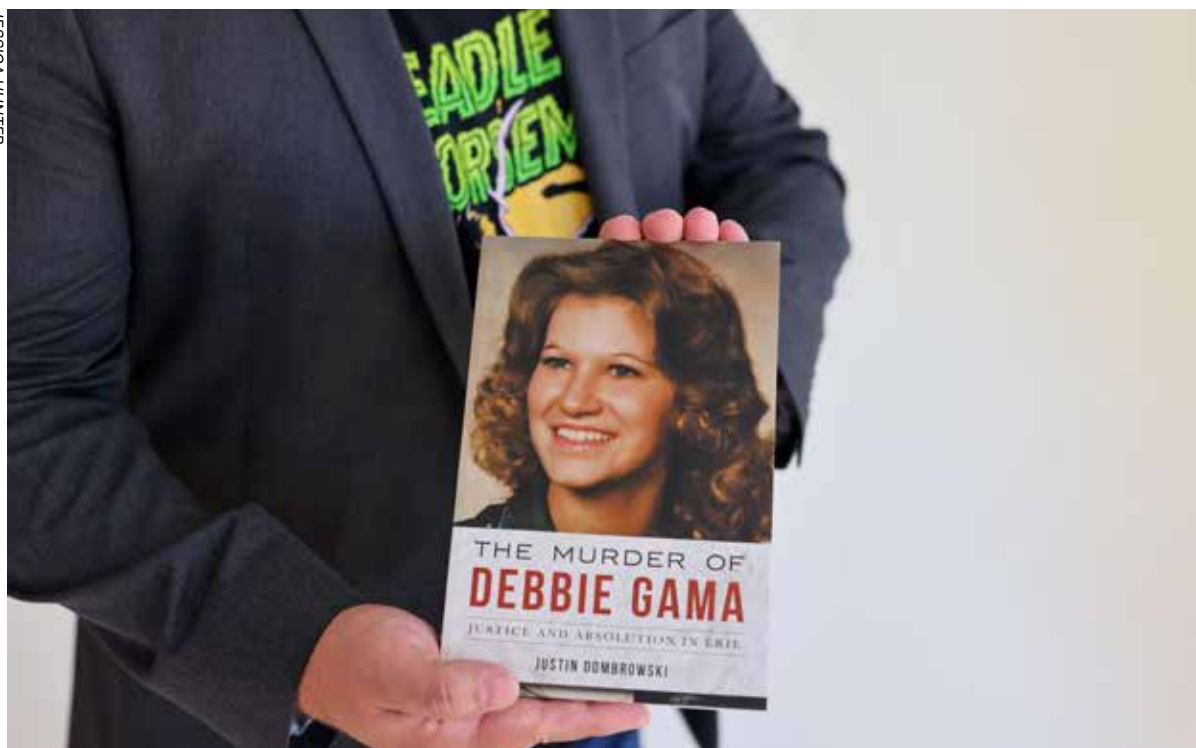
"It can be tricky," Dombrowski admits. "With a case like this, even 50 years later, there are still a lot of open wounds. There's also a lot of rumor and misinformation, especially about Debbie's character. A big part of my work was setting the record straight – showing that she was just a typical teenager who loved life, friends, and family. She didn't 'contribute to her own murder,' as some people falsely suggest. She was simply a victim of someone who took advantage."

The tension between fact and empathy is a thread throughout the book. "You have to walk a fine line," he says. "You want to include what's relevant to the story but leave out details that don't move it forward. You can't lose sight of the human side."

The book's subtitle references two heavy concepts: justice and absolution. Dombrowski sees them as intertwined in the Gama case.

"Justice, in this context, was Raymond Payne's conviction," he explains, "but there are still lingering questions – things DNA testing today could possi-

JESSICA HUNTER



Justin Dombrowski, author of a number of books about local true crime, has just published his latest, *The Murder of Debbie Gama: Justice and Absolution in Erie*. He sat down with Jessica Hunter to talk about his process, Erie's dark histories, and the "tension between fact and empathy" that comes with writing true crime stories.

bly clarify. The absolution side comes from Debbie's mother. Betty famously forgave her daughter's killer. For most of us, that's unthinkable, but it was powerful. It turned her grief into something positive that still resonates."

It's not lost on Dombrowski – or anyone living here – that Erie carries its share of haunting stories. From the Pizza Bomber case to whispered legends of the Gudgeonville Bridge, true crime and folklore mix freely in local lore.

"When I did my first book, someone told me, 'If you ever want to hide a body, you go to Erie,'" he says with a wry laugh. "Of course, that's not true – but it reflects how deeply crime stories have always been part of our history. Even in old newspapers, you'd see graphic photos on the front page. Violence has always been there – the way it's reported just changes."

For October, as readers dive into their usual mix of horror movies and haunted tales, Dombrowski says true crime scratches a different itch. "People are drawn to the mystery, the whodunit element. There's always that fascination with murder and mayhem. And in the spooky season, it fits right in."

For Dombrowski, writing the book wasn't just research, it was personal. "You have to take breaks," he says. "Step outside, do something unrelated. Otherwise, it stays with you. But it's also important work because these stories give perspective to families dealing with loss. They show how people navigate grief, justice, and sometimes forgiveness."

So what does he hope readers take away? "That Debbie was a real person – not just a headline. She was a normal teenager in the 1970s who should have

had her whole life ahead of her. If there's one thing to remember, it's that her story deserves to be told accurately."

And Dombrowski isn't done digging through Erie's archives. He's currently researching Erie County's death penalty cases – a project 15 years in the making – and another book on a 1946 unsolved golf course murder.

"I could talk about this stuff all day," he says with a grin. "Erie has no shortage of haunting stories."

For those looking to pair *The Murder of Debbie Gama* with another chilling read this fall, he recommends James Badal's work on the Cleveland Torso Murders. "It's creepy, it's unsolved, and it's close to home," he says.

Nearly 50 years later, Debbie Gama's story still echoes through Erie. In telling it anew, Justin Dombrowski offers both a record of a crime and a meditation on how justice and forgiveness can shape a community's memory.

His book joins Erie's long line of haunting stories, but it also insists we remember Debbie herself, not just the darkness that took her.

The Murder of Debbie Gama: Justice and Absolution in Erie is available now in local bookstores and online. Visit Dombrowski's Facebook page, *Shadows From the Boulevard* at facebook.com/ErieTrueCrime

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

The Erie Experience: Spooky Urban Legends, Folktales, and Lore

One high school department's creative way to teach local history, critical thinking

By: Erin Phillips

Back in September of 2021, I was obsessed with Axe Murder Hollow. At the time, I was a freelance contributing writer for the Erie Reader, while also full-time momming through a pandemic – I spent every naptime, every evening, every free moment combing through Erie Daily Times digital newspaper archives searching for any mention of murders in southwest Millcreek. As my family tired of my excited daily updates full of researched details and true crime theories, my mind swirled with searchable archival terms: Billy the Butcher, be-headed “gypsies,” axes, axe murders, Thomas Road, Weis Library. And then, as I honed in on a theory, my searches morphed into: William Gack, Brown Brothers Slaughterhouse, Daniel Biebighauser, Mary Lynn Crotty, John Florillo, and Roy Johns. By the time the Oct. 2021 Erie Reader went to press, I had figured out a working theory as to the origin of the Axe Murder Hollow urban legend and finally shared it with our audience.

Axe Murder Hollow is a legendary area “seven-tenths of a mile south of the Thomas/Sterrettania roads intersection in Southwest Millcreek,” where, for generations, bored teenagers pilgrimaged on dark, foggy nights to scare themselves silly. The legend varies, but generally always goes something like: in this area, years ago, a man went berserk and killed his entire family with an axe. The ghosts of the man (and sometimes also his family) remain in the area and cause all kinds of commotion for people who dare to explore. Sometimes the legend involves a disembodied head found at the nearby Weis Library; sometimes it involves scapegoated Romani people (as projecting all violent fears onto marginalized groups of people always seems to fit whatever the narrative is, throughout time).

What I found, in my extensive research, was a potential kernel of truth that may have started a massive game of telephone that eventually worked itself out to be the legend of Axe Murder Hollow as we know it. So, there was this guy back around the turn of the 20th century, William Gack, who lived in the Thomas Road area for a while with his mother. German immigrants, not a lot of education, potential alcoholism – you get the idea. Gack worked as a butcher in a slaughterhouse nearby. Two teenagers broke into his house one winter night and were detained by Gack until police arrived. These teenagers, likely being scared out of their wits, and seeing the tools of the trade for a butcher at a slaughterhouse, probably told a pretty wild story of their adventure once they got out of the reformatory. This is the very short version of the story I told in that Oct. 2021 issue of the Erie Reader (a link to the original story will appear in the online version of this article).

This “kernel of truth” is something that Fairview High School social studies teacher Benjamin “Hank” Barbour tells his students to look out for when think-

ERIN PHILLIPS



After learning all about Fairview High School's Erie Experience class, with a focus on their urban legends unit – Mr. Barbour, Erie Reader Managing Editor Erin Phillips, and a group of his students boarded a bus bound for Gudgeonville Bridge and Axe Murder Hollow to “experience” the generational legends those places hold.

ing critically about any ghost story or urban legend they come across. Barbour is part of a class offered as an elective at Fairview High School called “The Erie Experience.” It is a local history class led by Nicole Neis that focuses on all things Erie – our businesses and entrepreneurs, our maritime, military, and athletic history, our ecology and natural history, economics, transportation, our immigration and indigenous history, and for two class periods in a quarter – our urban legends. Barbour shares, “I was wracking my brain for something interesting that could be educational and compelling. I settled on urban legends, ghost stories, folk tales, and folklore – with the aim of having the students investigate them and discuss them in an academic way.”

Barbour initially reached out to me after the Axe Murder Hollow story was published, telling me about the class, asking to use my story, and inquiring about some of my primary sources. As the class materialized and grew, Barbour reached out to me again and eventually I met up with him, as well as his colleague Nicole Neis, who runs the class overall, and their administrator, Dr. Luke Beall as we discussed the creation of the class, as well as Barbour's role with the urban legends unit.

The first part of Barbour's two-part class is a lecture, where he presents a few different local legends (usually Axe Murder Hollow, Gudgeonville

Bridge, and the UFO sighting on Presque Isle), and displays some archival newspaper articles about the legends, then helps the students search for primary source evidence of an incident that may have been that elusive “kernel of truth” to these stories. They discuss the historic events surrounding the legend (like the Cold War aerial warfare panic that might have influenced the UFO sightings, for instance). The second day, the class goes on a field trip and experiences the locations of these folktales firsthand. It gets the students engaged, excited, maybe a little freaked out, but ultimately, thinking.

“The class was not meant to be sensational or lurid, it was meant to treat these stories as cultural artifacts. As elements of our community's culture, the identity of our community, and trying to understand the sociological aspects and identify a purpose.” Barbour continues, “I really try to challenge the students to make sense of them. What might these stories be satisfying in our community's psyche?” And in getting the students to think about these questions as they look critically at these legends, they serve to teach a larger lesson overall. “It's a way to teach information literacy, to teach archival research, library science, psychology, sociology, history, literature, and critical thinking in general. Reading these old documents lends itself to a multi-disciplinary approach,” Barbour suggests.

ERIN PHILLIPS



Fairview High School social studies teacher Hank Barbour displays some primary sources at the site of Gudgeonville Bridge – in the 1950s a young girl fell from the cliffs to her death. This event may have been the “kernel of truth” that helped form the urban legends of ghostly children haunting the bridge.

Principal Beall comments, “They’re giving students experiences that they’re going to remember forever. Through that, they’re going to remember the lessons that are woven in, which are: understanding primary sources, why it’s important to learn about local history, and the underlying idea of what a credible source is.” Beall continues, “Today, kids especially are getting crushed with information from social media, and the ability to discern what’s truthful and what’s not is such a valuable skill. A skill that wasn’t maybe as valuable even 10 to 15 years ago. And those are the things that I think they’ll remember. The teachers are using the vehicle of these sensational stories and places to teach them some good life skills along the way.”

Dr. Beall and Barbour both credit Nies’ creativity and the entire social studies department (including Jim Brinling, Susan Nelson, and Jessica Quiggle) for driving the success of the class, as they tour spots like Smith’s Provisions and Splash Lagoon, alongside hyper-local trips to the Battles Family properties and the Fairview Alms House, in addition to the spooky spots of legend. The class racked up 19 total field trips last year. Dr. Beall comments, “We’re all products of Erie, we all grew up here, and there’s often that connotation of wanting to get out of Erie. Building connections with the local community and local history will maybe get some of our top people to stay, make a home here, realize all the great things that Erie has to offer, and put down roots.”

After our group meeting, Barbour and I broke off

and prepared to board a school bus with about a dozen students ready to learn some local lore. The bus took us on a roundabout trip through Millcreek and Fairview, often on dirt roads, as we sought out some spots that are the stuff of legends for my generation and those before, but places most of these students have never heard of. Our first stop is the spot of the old Gudgeonville Bridge.

In its heyday, the Gudgeonville bridge was a local (and nationally registered) historic landmark – a covered bridge that was built in 1868 to cross Elk Creek. The covered part of the bridge sadly met its demise in 2008 when it was burned down by arsonists Jeffrey Gleason and Joshua Bell, but the structure itself has been rebuilt and is still in use. The legends surrounding the bridge vary – from the sounds of a haunted mule clopping out a dirge on the wooden slats, to visions of an ethereal young woman hurling her young child from the bridge. As we get out and explore the area, some students open their ghost-detecting apps, while others make clopping noises to scare their friends.

And Mr. Barbour gives us something to think about, a kernel of truth: “Researching the area, we find that there was a tragic accident here. A young girl fell off the cliff there,” Barbour indicates to the high cliffs surrounding Elk Creek as he holds up a laminated newspaper article. “A 15-year-old girl, Ruby Shorts, perished in 1955 ... So, some of the stories of visions involving a child could have emerged from this real-life tragedy. These stories can have a psycho-

logical purpose and aid in processing a community’s grief.”

We reboard the bus and head towards Axe Murder Hollow, but finding a spot to stop and walk around is difficult, as the area is much more developed than it was 30 years ago. On a patch of grass on the corner of Thomas Road and Echo Hill Lane, Barbour recounts the tale of Axe Murder Hollow and explains some of my theory. It becomes very clear that none of the kids have ever heard of this legend. In the concluding paragraph of my 2021 Axe Murder Hollow story, I state, “Since the physical location of Axe Murder Hollow is changing so rapidly, the place we all associate with this legend simply won’t exist for the younger generations. So please, make sure you tell your children and grandchildren some version of this tale while you take them on a spooky drive on Thomas Road some foggy night, so that, hopefully, this long-lived Erie legend will never die.”

Barbour shares, “I really love teaching local history, because I think so often it gets short-changed.

“Today, kids especially are getting crushed with information from social media, and the ability to discern what’s truthful and what’s not is such a valuable skill ... The teachers [of “The Erie Experience”] are using the vehicle of these sensational stories and places to teach them some good life skills along the way.” – Dr. Luke Beall, Fairview High School Principal

Don’t get me wrong, I definitely believe that students need to understand world history and different cultures, but it often comes at the expense of local knowledge. These are the stories that really give us a sense of place and hopefully inculcate some love for our community.”

Barbour, in his efforts, while teaching these students archival research and critical thinking skills, is also doing the important work of passing along these local legends that have helped generations of Erieites define their own sense of place and create core memories that are associated with those places. One goal is for these students to pass along these stories – when they’re driving around some day with their friends or family, to share the spooky stories of Axe Murder Hollow or Gudgeonville Bridge so that these legends continue to contribute to the overall story of Erie.

When not falling down digital newspaper archive true-crime rabbit holes, Erin Phillips can be found at erin@eriereader.com

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Women Running for Erie

Vogel and Devlin aim for local leadership positions in 2025 election

By: Alana Sabol

The November elections are approaching fast and candidates are looking toward their potential years in office. Democratic nominee for county executive Christina Vogel and Democratic nominee for mayor Daria Devlin face different challenges for the last leg of their campaigns, but envision similar goals for Erie as a whole.

Vogel describes her upbringing as challenging, raised by a single father from infancy. Despite that, she speaks fondly of the people that helped her grow into the person she has become: “All of these people kind of stepped in along the way to help me. I had a bus driver that helped, I had teachers, I had people from church, I had my friends’ parents. So that trust in a larger community was really important to me.” Since moving to Erie 12 years ago with her husband and three children, Vogel has intentionally set out to be an active part of the Erie community. She participated in the PTO at Fairview Elementary School for 10 years, became a Girl Scout Troop Leader, opened and operates two Donatos Pizza franchise locations, and is now finishing a six-year term on the Board of Trustees at Erie County Community College. “All of those things were pieces to build a foundation for my kids.”

She decided to run for the county executive office after disagreeing with the way the county was run by Republican incumbent Brenton Davis. “I had spent all my time and money and resources and heart and soul to kind of build this place, and he was, I felt, a direct threat to all of that,” Vogel said. Her opponent has clashed with county council over distributing funds without council’s approval and budget vetoes, which led to lawsuits against Davis in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Vogel says the legal fees

from these lawsuits are “all county tax dollars that are going to the solicitors because they’re fighting each other.” If elected, Vogel plans on creating a quarterly advisory council to ensure that there are no discrepancies in the budget. “Just like you have quarterly earnings in a business,” Vogel explained. “Erie can’t afford four more years of Brenton Davis. Literally.”

Mayoral nominee Daria Devlin also spoke to the power of a proactive economic plan and that working with the county executive can address issues within the city. “My concern with the county’s budget is that the county is the holder of most of the health and human service dollars for the entire county,” Devlin said. “We need to work with the county to make sure that those dollars are being lined up with these efforts. And if they’re having budget problems, then that’s going to hurt our ability to do that.” Devlin said she is prepared and willing to work with the county executive on funding allocation regardless of who takes office in November, but that “the opportunities for collaboration with a county executive like Christina Vogel could really move the community forward.”

The mayoral nominee has even more plans to improve the City of Erie. Devlin was born and raised on the lower east side and sees potential in the city that helped make her who she is. After a career on the board in Erie’s Public Schools as the director of communications and facing the budget crisis in the school district, Devlin saw firsthand how much local and state officials affected the institutions in the city. “When we were fighting for funding, it was our local and state officials that we needed help from. It wasn’t D.C. It wasn’t the federal government. It really opened my eyes to the critical nature of the elections and these elected officials,” Devlin said.

She explained that many of the issues that she and other school officials see among students are consequences of the issues in the Erie community. “These are very bright, very talented kids, but they’re struggling and they need support,” she said. “The schools are a mirror of our community. It’s not that the schools have issues, it’s that we as a community have issues related to poverty and trauma that just roll into our schools and impact the ability of our students to succeed.”

Devlin said she is committed to working with the superintendent and the Chamber of Commerce to address community issues and boost mental and behavioral support for public school children. In light of the death of Marchello Woodard, an unarmed Black man shot and killed by a Pennsylvania state parole officer on July 2 and the mounting political tension nationally, communities are fractured. “It’s important to have open and consistent conversations to bring groups together, whether that’s the police and members of the community, or whether

CHLOE FORBES



Running for county executive against the Republican incumbent Brenton Davis, Christina Vogel hopes to reshape and refine the budgeting process to make it work for Erie County residents. She plans to work cooperatively with council as well as with the incoming mayor to help make Erie a thriving place for the next generation.

it’s disparate groups within the community,” Devlin said. “I think that it’s a leader’s job to have those conversations, and that’s going to be a critical part of my administration.”

Vogel shared similar sentiments, highlighting the divisions between the east side and west side of Erie and how local officials can work to provide dignity and safety to everyone in the county. “With how divided it has been, the escalation, rhetoric, and tension, it does a disservice to all of us,” she said. “I think that you fix that by meeting people where they are, understanding what their challenges are, what their frustrations are, and working with the people who are already in those phases to figure out real solutions.”

Devlin has been invested in understanding community challenges by attending city council meetings regularly and reviewing the city’s budget, preparing to start working with Erie on day one. “I’ve done the work and I’ll continue to do the work. I’ve never done anything halfway. I will give this city everything I have because I love it so much. And I really believe its best days are ahead.”

Oct. 20, 2025 is the last day to register to vote before the Nov. 4 election. Visit pavoterservices.pa.gov to register. To learn more about Christina Vogel’s campaign, visit christinavogel.com. To learn more about Daria Devlin’s campaign, visit dariaforerie.com

Alana Sabol can be reached at alana@eriereader.com

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Madeline's Dining and
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18, Cranesville



Thu 10/16

Hadestown: Teen Edition
@ 7pm / \$15
PACA, 1505 State Street

Featured



**Mystic Mingle a
Halloween Speed
Dating Experience**
@ 8pm / \$7-\$7
King's Rook Club, 1921
Peach Street



Thu 10/23

Golden Hour Photo Club
@ 5:30pm / Free-\$20
Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street,
Edinboro

Featured



**2025 Greater Erie
Awards & Keynote**
@ 6pm / \$25
Erie Center for Arts &
Technology, 650 East Av-
enue



Fri 10/10

Featured



**Headliner Ariel Elias at
Werner Books and
Coffee**
@ 7pm / \$15-\$20
Werner Books and Coffee,
3608 Liberty Street



Hadestown: Teen Edition
@ 7pm / \$15
PACA, 1505 State Street

Sat 10/11

Color Run
@ 9am / \$10-\$10
2549 W 8th St

Life Run
@ 9am / \$30-\$30
7840 Slade Rd, Harborcreek

Into the Woods Six Miler
@ 9am / \$35
4105 Asbury Road

Experience Curling!
@ 6:30pm / \$30
LECOM Sports Park, 8159 Oliver Road

Sun 10/12

Hadestown: Teen Edition
@ 2pm / \$15
PACA, 1505 State Street

**Goodell Gardens & Homestead: Wedding
& Events Expo**
@ 3pm / Free
Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street,
Edinboro

Wed 10/15

Featured



**The Dreadful Place
[FILM 10/20]**
@ 7pm / \$10
The 1020 Collective, 1020
Holland Street



Sat 10/18

**Erie Runners Club Personal Endurance
Classic**
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3101 Clark Rd

Hadestown: Teen Edition
@ 7pm / \$15
PACA, 1505 State Street

Featured



**Gelatin Skeleton,
Souls Collapse,
Shepherd of Rot, and
Inertia**
@ 9pm / \$5-\$7
King's Rook Club, 1921
Peach Street



Mon 10/20

**Comedy Open Mic Night at 10/20
Collective**
@ 7pm / Free
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street

Sat 10/25

Featured



Firefly Tales
@ 3pm / \$10
PACA, 1505 State Street



Wed 10/29

Union [FILM 10/20]
@ 7pm / \$10
The 1020 Collective, 1020 Holland Street

Thu 11/06

Emery 20th Anniversary of the Question
@ 6pm / \$25
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

Calendar information is provided by event organizers.
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Global Summit XVII Kicks Off Star-Studded Lineup This Month

Decorated guests inspire the discourse that drives democracy

By:Chloe Forbes

Billed as its most ambitious lineup to date, the Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit XVII is bringing some heavy-hitters to town this year including Neil deGrasse Tyson, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Mike Pence, among others. This year's event officially began last month, when President Barack Obama spoke to a sold-out crowd at the Erie Insurance Arena on Sept. 16, making the evening officially the largest educational event in Erie history.

The Global Summit, which began in 2009, has grown from five events in two-and-a-half days to this year's 18 events that span over four months.

"Over the years, thanks to the hard work of the JES team, as well as the generous support of community partners and sponsors, we've been able to feed the growing appetite of the community to have a place where people who don't always see eye-to-eye can gather shoulder-to-shoulder to engage productively and respectfully in civic discourse over a span of not days but weeks and months," said Ben Speggen, Jefferson Educational Society (JES) vice president.

From domestic politics and international affairs to the latest discoveries in the universe, the events this year are designed to give attendees a world-class learning opportunity, something at the core of Thomas Jefferson's ideology.

Thomas Jefferson believed that individual liberties and education were the pillars of a functioning democracy – to think critically and learn from others. The JES largely adheres to that mission with its preservation of the past and examination into the key lessons that inform Erie's future. At the JES, the Global Summit is an intentional attempt to foster learning and civic engagement in the Erie area and beyond.

"The intention is never to 'just have an event', or even a 'series of events,' but to really help start or advance conversations at the community level by learning together from leading experts and practitioners," Speggen said. "As a nonpartisan think tank, we're never asking our audience to blindly agree with our presenters; rather, we're asking attendees to come with an open, curious mind ready to learn more so that they may think more deeply about a wide range of topics."

The JES offers year-round programming with lectures at its home base on State Street and at a handful of satellite locations throughout the county, alongside community conversations, educational courses, and a leadership academy. The Global Summit gives folks in the region a taste of what the JES has to offer and looks to cover all interests from space to sports, media, and religion.

It also gives residents a look into how the political world works and how national and international issues can touch down at home.

Speggen noted that these are what some may call "hot" times, and his hope is that, just like they have over the past decade-plus, the JES will show the

community that there still exists a place for civil, civic dialogue where people seek out information and inspiration to pursue a brighter future.

The Global Summit is hosted each year by the JES in cooperation with numerous sponsors, including Erie Insurance, the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, and more. Find tickets and more information for these events at JESerie.org or by calling (814) 459-8000. As in previous years, students will be admitted for free with preregistration through the JES.

2025 Recipient of the Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award

Tuesday, Oct. 14 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

This year's Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas honoree, Dr. Jane Petro, is a distinguished plastic surgeon who used her skills to aid underserved communities in need of care. A graduate of Penn State's College of Medicine, she volunteered at a children's hospital to provide care to cleft lip and palate patients on Medicaid and participated in medical mission trips worldwide. She was also an advocate for HIV-positive patients during the AIDS crisis. She now works as a historian, educator, and writer to spread the stories of unsung women heroes in the early medical community.

You Are Changing the World Whether You Like it or Not

Thursday, Oct. 16 // 7 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St.
Award-winning songwriter, speaker, and writer David LaMotte will expand upon his book *You Are Changing the World: Whether You Like it or Not*, which examines the role each person plays in larger societal changes. He draws on his work from countries all over the world to challenge narratives that keep people immobile in the face of problems that face our communities. This is a Gannon READS event.

From Washington to Trump: The U.S. Presidency and America at 250

Monday, Oct. 20 // 7 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

Dr. Lindsay Chervinsky, executive director of The George Washington Presidential Library at Mount Vernon, and Chris Whipple, best-selling author, acclaimed journalist, documentary filmmaker, and speaker, will discuss the American presidency and its evolution as America approaches its 250th anniversary. Chervinsky draws on her work, including books from the beginning of the presidency, while Whipple adds his expertise from the more modern end, including a recent book about Trump, Biden, and Harris. Both will examine presidents and the people they surrounded themselves with in their cabinets.

A Journey of Perseverance: An Evening with Jim Kelly

Wednesday, Oct. 22 // 7 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

Hear about the strength of perseverance from Jim Kelly, Pro Football Hall of Famer and former Buffalo Bills quarterback. Kelly virtually rewrote the Bills' record book for quarterbacks, leading the team to four consecutive Super Bowls. Despite multiple injuries, surviving cancer, and losing his son, Hunter, to a rare disease, he has persevered, and he is looking to share that strength with others.

Leading Through Turbulent Times: The Importance of Trust, Culture, and Feedback

Thursday, Oct. 23 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

In a politically battered country and fraught time worldwide, Colonel Katie Crombe and General Joseph L. Votel will discuss the material of leadership and how trust, culture, and feedback are woven into it. Crombe is a war plans Army strategist who held posts in the United States and Germany and has degrees in English, political science, international affairs, and national security. Votel is a retired U.S. Army four-star officer where he was the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, responsible for U.S. and coalition military operations in the Middle East, the Levant subregion, and Central and South Asia.

Europe With(out) the U.S.: The Future of NATO and the European Union

Friday, Oct. 24 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

The relationships of the European Union and NATO are critical in maintaining international peace and security, and providing defense, financial aid, and military assistance. The United States' role has historically solidified transatlantic security and economic ties, but now that commitment to European defense is being questioned under the Trump administration. Mark Gitenstein, U.S. representative to the European Union from 2021 to 2025 and former U.S. Senator and ambassador to Romania, will break down Europe's future with or without the U.S.

The Future of College Athletics and Sports Media: Where They Are Now, Where They Are Headed

Monday, Oct. 27 // 7 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

After a career as an award-winning ESPN Senior NBA insider, Adrian "Woj" Wojnarowski was named the first-ever general manager for St. Bonaventure men's basketball in 2024, in a move that the Bonnies' head coach said was critical to navigate the new landscape of college basketball. Woj will draw upon his media background and sports expertise to talk about this

COLLAGE BY CHELSEA OLIVER



The Jefferson Education Society has designed an ambitious slate of events for their 17th Global Summit, which officially kicked off last month when Erie welcomed President Barack Obama. Events continue through October, featuring names like Neil deGrasse Tyson, Dr. Jane Petro, Jim Kelly, and Mike Pence with subject matter spanning politics, science, medicine, sports, climate, and more.

new landscape and where the future of college athletics is headed.

This Just In: Latest Discoveries in the Universe

Wednesday, Oct. 29 // 7 p.m. // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafra Pier

In an event out of this world, renowned astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson will do what he does best and popularize science. Leader of the Hayden Planetarium, deGrasse Tyson has researched star formation, dwarf galaxies, the structure of the Milky Way, and everything beyond then used TV, radio, and books to share that information with others. He will talk about the latest discoveries in the universe at a time when space tourism and technology is booming.

American Progress From the Front Lines: Examining Local-Level Action, Innovation, and Solutions to Cities' Challenges in Chaotic Times

Monday, Nov. 3 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

Sometimes, local communities have to take action when state and federal governments don't step in. That's why the JES has converged a panel of former mayors – Richard Berry (Albuquerque, New Mexico), Greg Fischer (Louisville, Kentucky), and William Peduto (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). Drawing on na-

tional and local-level trends as well as personal experience, the mayors will examine how local-level action and initiatives can address major problems in tumultuous times and propel America forward.

Faith, Religion, and American Politics: A Conversation with Vice President Mike Pence and Paul McNulty

Wednesday, Nov. 5 // 7 p.m. // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafra Pier

Vice President Mike Pence's conservative philosophy has served him throughout his career as a lawyer, congressman, governor, vice president, and founder of Advancing American Freedom. He continues to advocate for faith, family, and liberty as foundational American values. He will be joined by Paul McNulty. McNulty is a recent past president of Grove City College and has served in different high-ranking Department of Justice positions where he was a leader in our nation's response to terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. The two will have an intimate conversation about faith, religion, and American politics.

Autocrats vs. Democrats: China, Russia, America, and the New Global Disorder

Thursday, Nov. 6 // 7 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

Hot off the presses, Michael McFaul will discuss his new book *Autocrats vs. Democrats: China, Russia,*

America, and the New Global Disorder, as the rise of China, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the reelection of President Donald Trump has ushered in a new global order. McFaul takes a bold look at how autocracies are challenging global order and how democracies like America must continue to confront that threat.

All Too Clear: Exploring Invasive Species Beneath the Surface of the Great Lakes

Friday, Nov. 7 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

Ever wondered what lurks below the waters of the Great Lakes? Yvonne Drebert and Zach Melnick are looking to provide a clearer picture with their new documentary *All Too Clear*. The film draws on footage from cutting-edge underwater drones and features work of researchers to explore how an invasive mussel species is re-engineering the Great Lakes ecosystem. After the screening, there will be a panel discussion including the two award-winning filmmakers and co-founders of Inspired Planet Productions.

Carson the Magnificent: A Look at the Iconic TV Host and His Impact on Comedy Today

Monday, Nov. 10 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

Going on three decades as a Chicago-based journalist and author, Mike Thomas has long enjoyed

the world of comedy and its implications on society. When he was given the opportunity to finish writing his late mentor Bill Zehme's book *Carson the Magnificent*, a biography of Johnny Carson, it was quickly launched onto the New York Times best-seller list. He will talk about that book and how Carson redefined late-night television and American culture through accounts of his career and complex personal life. Thomas will be joined by Journey Gunderson, executive director of the National Comedy Center, who was instrumental in bringing the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum in Jamestown to life.

Humanity 2050: The Future of Our World, Our Universe, and Ourselves

Tuesday, Nov. 11 // 7 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.
Although we're only a quarter of the way through this century, Charles Liu is interested in what the year 2050 will look like – the halfway marker. A distinguished Taiwanese-born American astronomer, educator, author, and science communicator, Liu will look at how science fiction might help predict the future as technology grows and could be applied to commercial industries like medicine.

New Prize for These Eyes: The Rise of America's Second Civil Rights Movement

Thursday, Nov. 13 // 7 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.
In 1987, journalist Juan Williams helped illuminate the

Civil Rights Movement with *Eyes on the Prize*, a book that brought history to life. Now, from Obama's election to Charlottesville and January 6th, Williams is tracing the arc of a new civil rights era. He will be speaking about that new era as told in his newest book *New Prize for These Eyes: The Rise of America's Second Civil Rights Movement*.

From domestic politics and international affairs to the latest discoveries in the universe, the events at this year's Global Summit are designed to give attendees a world-class learning opportunity, something at the core of Thomas Jefferson's ideology.

The Medium is the Message: Media's Impact on National Politics

Friday, Nov. 14 // 7 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

Join New York Times bestselling author, four-time Emmy winner, and top political analyst Dr. Larry Sabato as he takes a trip down memory lane and looks at how media and politics have intertwined. He has earned the title of the No. 1 political predictor from Pew Charitable Trust as head of Sabato's Crystal Ball, showing that he truly knows how media can impact outcomes. From the first TV ad to the 24-hour newscast, he'll discuss how issues have entered and stayed in the news cycle and how it has influenced national politics.

An Evening 'Discovering Your Roots' with Henry Louis Gates Jr.

Thursday, Dec. 4 // 7 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St.
Known as the man who connects celebrities with their heritage, Henry Louis Gates Jr. will be stopping by Erie for an evening of genealogy. Gates is a distinguished filmmaker, literary scholar, and institution builder, publishing numerous books and producing an array of films about Black history. He is the host of *Finding Your Roots*, which connects people with their undiscovered past, and has a strong background in academics, including being former chair of the Pulitzer Prize board.

For more information on these events and to purchase tickets, visit jeserie.org/global-summit-XVII.
Reach Chloe Forbes at chloeforbes14@gmail.com. Reach Ben Speggen at speggen@jeserie.org.

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Newest exhibits at Hagen History Center call for a visit

By: Jonathan Burdick

If you have never been to the Hagen History Center, it's fair to predict that you *will* be blown away on your first visit. The West Sixth Street campus, just a few blocks west of Perry Square, includes the Watson-Curtze Mansion, Wood-Morrison House, Carriage House Visitor Center and Gift Shop, as well as the New Exhibit Building, which opened to the public in 2021. Researching some local history? There is also the 10,000-square-foot King-Mertens Archive Building, which is home to over 800 unique collections within their research library and a professional staff eager to assist.

If you have passed through the Hagen History Center before, you already know that the permanent exhibits are so well done that they are worth revisiting throughout the year. This includes their Griswold Ironware Exhibit, Weschler Gallery of Military Service, the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit, and, "The Story of Us," a comprehensive and interactive look at the settling and development of Erie that, for a moment, might make you forget that you're *not* in a Smithsonian. Of course, a trip here wouldn't be complete without a chilling glimpse at the kettle in which Mad Anthony Wayne's body was boiled to recover his bones.

Plus, there is always something new among their rotating exhibits. Just this past year, these exhibits included "Triggering History: Legacy of Erie Firearms," "Generations of Impact: 165 Years of the YMCA of Greater Erie," and a guest exhibit curated by

the Fort LeBoeuf Historical Society.

New to the Watson-Curtze Mansion this fall season is the Sisters of St. Joseph exhibit which celebrates their 165th year serving the Erie community. After arriving in Erie to teach, the sisters soon began caring for Erie's sick and those in need and were instrumental in the establishment of St. Vincent Hospital, St. Mary's Home of Erie, St. Patrick's Haven, the Villa Maria schools, and much more. Across the hallway for the next few months will be another new exhibit specifically highlighting the history of St. Vincent Hospital which opened up with a mere 12 beds in Sept. 1875. This room was curated by staff and volunteers from the hospital and shares its 150-year old history along with the nursing school. It also highlights doctors and many of the landmark surgeries that took place there over the years.

The Erie's Founding Families exhibit recently opened on the second floor of the mansion. This highlights the contributions of the Colts, Sanfords, and Spencers in the early years of Erie. As the museum points out, their contributions to Erie's earliest years "cannot be overstated." Laura G. Sanford, for instance, is often credited as Erie's first historian, having published *The History of Erie County, Pennsylvania* in 1862.

Next door on the second floor of the Wood-Morrison House is "The Story of Us, Erie Polonia," which opened to the public on Oct. 1 and can be viewed until the end of January

CONTRIBUTED



This historic photo of the interior of Holy Trinity Church is part of a new exhibit on the Hagen History Center campus inside the Wood-Morrison House entitled "The Story of Us, Erie Polonia."

2026. As the Hagen History Center describes it: "This compelling exhibit traces the early history of Erie's Polish-American community – known as Polonia – through its deep ties to faith and neighborhood identity. Polish immigrants, strongly rooted in Catholic tradition, built churches as the heart of their communities."

Its opening corresponds with Polish American Heritage Month which is celebrated in October. It includes histories of St. Stanislaus, Holy Trinity, St. Hedwig, St. Casimir, and the Polish National Catholic Church while also intertwining the unique Polish neighborhoods that grew around them. It's a passion project curated by local historian Bobby J. Sulecki, winner of Hagen History Center's Public History Award in 2024, who also operates an online website Erie Polonia History and was featured in an Erie Reader story written by Liz Alen in 2023 for his work on Erie's Polish history.

This past summer, the Hagen History Center also released the second issue of *The Triangle*, their new yearly magazine released every July, which replaced their previous publication *Journal of Erie Studies*. Members receive a copy in their mailbox each summer, but they can also be purchased for \$10 at the Carriage House Gift Shop. This 56-page edition includes a deep dive into the history of the Boston Store written by Dr. Pam Lenz, an exploration of our region's iconic and magical drive-in movie theaters written by Dr. Tiggy McLaughlin, and a story about the architects be-

hind Erie's most iconic buildings and homes written by yours truly.

As winter approaches, you may want to stay in and be cozy, but the Hagen History Center still has you covered. This would be a perfect time to catch up on their website's deep archive of blog posts. Among hundreds of other blog posts, you can find archivist Steven Mooradian writing about local variety singer Shirley Gersims Sapper, Dr. Pamela Lenz discussing the rules at the old Waldameer Beach, KayAnn Warner sharing snippets from their Bliley Electric Company collection, and Jeff Sherry recounting the delicious tale of John S. Hicks' 19th century ice cream business.

Also available online is their community history project "African Americans in Erie County: A Trail of Shared Heritage," which includes historical profiles, timelines, and oral history interviews. Their project has a printable driving and walking tour brochure and a digital copy of the out-of-print book *Journey From Jerusalem* by Sarah Thompson, an exceptional and essential resource for those interested in Erie history.

The Hagen History Center campus is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Admissions is free for members, \$12 for adults, \$10 for veterans, and \$7.50 for students. Children six and under are free.

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



A new display within the Watson-Curtze Mansion features the Sisters of St. Joseph exhibit, which celebrates their 165th year serving the Erie community through the establishment of schools and hospitals.

CONTRIBUTED

To Hell and Back

Hadestown heads to the PACA Footlights stage

BEGINNING THURSDAY, OCT. 9

A story of love and loss, Anaïs Mitchell's award-winning musical *Hadestown* transports us back to ancient times on the Footlights Theatre stage. With popular songs such as "Way Down Hadestown" and "Wait for Me," the show combines the somber tones of vintage New Orleans jazz with upbeat American folk music to create an unforgettable experience for audiences worldwide.

Hadestown follows two of the most memorable love stories of Greek mythology: Hades and Persephone, and Orpheus and Eurydice. In this reimagined tale, we are thrown into an impoverished underworld and industrialized

underworld – each realm presenting their own challenges for these characters whose worlds are about to intertwine.

Operating within the Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA) building, Footlights Theatre showcases young talent in the Erie community through their mission, "To ignite creativity and nurture talent through high-quality theatre experiences that uplift, challenge, and connect."

In addition to offering full-scale stage productions, Footlights prides themselves on "making theatre that matters," offering age-appropriate workshops in acting, voice, and movement, as well as a specialized outreach ensemble.

Although intended to be performed as

a "teen edition" of the musical, Director KC McCloskey expressed that the storyline has remained mostly the same, with the only real changes being to accommodate younger voices and a larger casting.

A long-time lover of mythology, she believes that the show offers something to resonate for everyone with its beautiful score and immersive storytelling.

McCloskey also noted that *Hadestown* has been widely requested by her students. "When it became available, we knew we had to make it happen. It's so important to me that they have a voice in what shows are available to them," she said. – Cassandra Gripp

RICK KLEIN



Following two stories from Greek mythology – Hades and Persephone and Orpheus and Eurydice – the Footlights Youth Theatre program presents *Hadestown: Teen Edition*, a reimagining of these tales that parallels the original *Hadestown* script closely.

Weekends, Oct. 9 through Oct. 19 at 7 p.m. // Thursdays, Oct. 9 and Oct. 16 at 7 p.m. and Sundays, Oct. 12 and Oct. 19 at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$15 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Eerie Horror Fest 2025 Scares Up a Ghoulish Time

Film screenings, celebrity meet-and-greets, and family tricks and treats

BEGINNING FRIDAY, OCT. 10

If you live in Erie, October means two things: absolutely bipolar fall weather, and the Eerie Horror Fest (EHF) once again filling the downtown Warner Theatre with otherworldly moans and groans. According to Press Relations Coordinator Aaron "Madman" Mook (who is also a longtime contributor to the Erie Reader), "Each year, the Eerie Horror Fest features unique and exciting programming along with new and returning vendors," and this year guests can look forward to merchants such as Mother Heffer Leatherworks and the Raven's Nest Oddities and Curiosities, and food trucks such as Mom and Pop Taters and Underdog BBQ (a full accounting of the selection of food and goods vendors can be found on EHF's social media pages).

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper Fest without spooky special guests. This year's lineup includes filmmaker and actor Josh Ruben with a screening of his film *Heart Eyes* on Oct. 10, as well as actress Adrienne Barbeau, star of 1980's *The Fog*, which will be shown on Oct. 11. "Both guests will have meet-and-greet availability and will have photos, signatures, and more for sale," Mook said.

There is one major change at the Horror Fest this year, though – the EHF recently announced it would be mov-

ing film screenings from the Warner Theatre's auditorium to its gorgeous Rehearsal Hall (in addition to the second floor annex space). The venue switch-up will limit the total seating to 300, though the EHF team feels "confident that this necessary pivot will seat any attendees that wish to see the films being screened, in addition to helping us deflect inflation and reduced arts funding," Mook told us. Film play times can run anywhere from two minutes to two hours and will be shown in themed blocks throughout each day.

Thrills and Chills on Friday, Oct. 10

Friday's EHF kicks off with a 2:15 p.m. WQLN block in the Rehearsal Space, and continues throughout the day with themes like "Click, Slash, Repeat," "Red Flags and Body Bags," and "Hell Hath No Fury." At 7 p.m., special guest Josh Ruben will take center stage with a live Q&A, as well as a screening of his 2025 film *Heart Eyes* in the Rehearsal Space. After that, themed blocks will continue through 10 p.m., then at 10:15 the Fest will show *Wormtown*, followed by *Rats: Night of Terror* at midnight, with the movie's novelization author Brad Carter on hand afterward.

What's Shrieking on Saturday, Oct. 11

The Eerie Horror Fest will get things started on its second day at 10 a.m.

ERIN PHILLIPS



The Eerie Horror Fest returns to the Warner Theatre this October for a two-day celebration of the horror film genre. Featuring film screenings (ranging from the family-friendly *Haunted Mansion* to John Carpenter's cult classic *The Fog*), celebrity guests, vendors, food, and more.

by making it a family affair, with its annual Morning Shrieks with Trick or Treat, sponsored by First Student. "Tickets for that are just \$15 per adult and allow them to arrive with two children under 14, in costume, to trick or treat through the halls of the Warner," Mook explained. It also includes a spooky story time with Maggie Ignasiak (sponsored by Werner Books), a haunted house photoshoot, and a special screening of Disney's *The Haunted Mansion* (2003).

Then the film blocks begin at 12:30 p.m., with themes like Killer Cartoons, Slashstick Comedy, a special Awards Ceremony block at 3 p.m., featuring the winners of the EHF 2025

International Film Competition. At 7:30 p.m., vintage horror film-lovers can gather in the Rehearsal Space for the second special guest, Adrienne Barbeau, and a screening of her 1980 John Carpenter-directed movie *The Fog*. And the EHF comes to a close after the 11:45 p.m. viewing of *The Threshold*. – Cara Suppa

Friday, 2:15 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // All Access Pass: \$45, Friday Day Pass: \$25, Saturday Day Pass: \$30, Saturday Morning Half-Day Pass: \$15 // For more info or to purchase passes, please visit eeriehorrorfest.com // A full schedule is available ahead of the Fest, by subscribing to EHF's newsletter at eeriehorrorfest.com/subscribe

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For details on grant opportunities, visit our website — erieartsandculture.org

Eerie Stories, Legends, and Lore

Join the eerily wonderful tour this fall

CONTINUING FRIDAY, OCT. 10

Are you interested in bloody battles, haunted mansions, and ghosts galore? Then you're in luck, because Tour Erie has brought back their wildly popular Eerie Stories, Legends, and Lore walking tour for a second year.

Taking place downtown, the tour is 90 minutes of spine-tingling stories of Erie's past – guests will hear tales like that of the city's first execution, the tragedy that befell Misery Bay, and of the ghost said to linger over Presque Isle Bay.

Packed to the brim with Erie lore, the tour is perfect for locals and tourists alike. "We work a lot of history into the tour, and I love when many lifetime Erieites say, 'I never knew that,'" said Heather Cass, who operates Tour Erie and hosts the tours with her daughter, Lauren. "I love having visitors on the tour as well, as

they are not familiar with many of the stories."

The tour routes throughout the downtown area – stops include Perry Square, the Boston Store, Sassafras and Sixth streets, and the former Victoria Inn building. The walk is suited for most guests, with a slow pace and frequent stops that often include places to sit to rest if needed.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their own stories of Erie's lore to the tour: "Every time we do this tour, it gets better because we learn from our guests and are able to work that info into the tour," said Cass. "In the future, we may offer a whole different tour as there are plenty of ghost stories to be found in Erie." – Ally Kutz

Thursday through Saturday evenings in October, 5:30 p.m. Special afternoon tours Oct. 11 & 12 at 1 p.m. // For more info and tickets: toureriepa.com



Join the folks from TourErie as they embark on a slate of public walking tours, leading spooky treks around the downtown area, focusing on spaces and places that contain historic lore.

Offbeat Laughs Taking the Stage in October

Another line-up of fresh voices and bold experiments from Flagship City Comedy

BEGINNING FRIDAY, OCT. 10

This October, Flagship City Comedy (FCC) continues to bring its signature mix of headliners and unique comedy events to Erie's stand-up scene. Whether you're interested in seeing someone like Ariel Elias, who has performed on numerous late night television programs, or trying your hand at an open mic night, there's no shortage of opportunities for laughs this month.

At the heart of FCC's programming is a philosophy of experimentation, support, and giving stage time to voices both seasoned and new. This becomes particularly evident when you consider the premise of Inked Comedy at Andromeda Studios, where comics will be tattooed live while delivering a stand-up set. If that's not quite your tempo, Anthony Morelli, founder of FCC, tells me he's got the secret to hosting successful open mic nights (which happens monthly at a minimum): "Comics that continually write and bring their ideas to stage and new ears in the crowd that help comics gauge if their joke lands outside the comic arena," Morelli says, before adding, "It's easy to have fun at a comedy open mic."



Catch one of a slate of comedy events presented by Flagship City Comedy this October, including headliner Ariel Elias at Werner Books and Coffee, Inked Comedy at Andromeda Studios, or an open mic night at the 1020 Collective.

With the right attitude and the right combination of local and traveling talent to support Erie's stand-up scene, FCC continues to offer a variety of avenues for comedians to test new material, share their voices, and build onstage experience in front of supportive audiences. Whether you're a regular onstage or just looking for some laughs, FCC's October offerings are sure to deliver many much-needed moments of joy and surprise. – Aaron Mook

Ariel Elias at Werner Books and Coffee // Oct. 10 // 7 p.m.

Inked Comedy at Andromeda Studios // Oct. 11 // 7 p.m.

Comedy Open Mic Night at 10/20 Collective // Oct. 20 // 7 p.m.

For tickets and info visit: tickets.eriereader.com

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EVENTS

Full of Dreams: The Playhouse's *Elephant Man*

Theatrical production grapples with compassion in the face of bitter assumption

PREMIERING FRIDAY, OCT. 10

“He has seen enough of daily evil to be thankful for small goods that come his way,” wagers Francis Carr-Gomm, administrator of the London Hospital, speaking of resident Joseph Merrick. Known to the world as the eponymous Elephant Man, Merrick was born in 1862 with an unknown physical abnormality causing him to be severely disfigured. Though doctors nearly a century after his death would link his affliction to Proteus syndrome, what is known is the transformative impact he made.

Brought to life by with the lush language of playwright Bernard Pomerance, the Tony-Award-winning *Elephant Man* was first staged in 1977 in London. The play tells the real-life story of Merrick (called John in the play), who is discovered in a freak show and subsequently moved for study to the Royal London Hospital. Despite being disguised by a sack-cloth or hidden away in his room, Merrick manages to build a deep bond with nearly everyone he meets. As he methodically constructs a model of St. Philip’s Church, Merrick connects with actresses, orderlies, and aristocrats alike.

Audiences who are only familiar with historical photographs or the 1980 David Lynch film of the same name will immediately note that the stage play presents Merrick free of any prosthetics. From the introduction of the script itself, Pomerance concludes that “Merrick’s face was so deformed he could not express any emotion at all. His speech was very difficult to understand without practice.” He continued that “any attempt to reproduce his appearance and his speech naturalistically – if it were possible – would seem to me not only counterproductive, but, the more remarkably successful, the more distracting from the play. [To give the audience an idea of] how he appeared, [we’ll] let slide projections suffice.”

“This is the kind of role that actors dream about,” admitted Zach Flock, who will be portraying Merrick. “It’s mentally and physically complex. In addition to normal things like memorization and character development, it requires complete commitment and

Based on the life story of Joseph Merrick born in 1862 and written as a story for the stage in 1977, *Elephant Man* will come to the Erie Playhouse this October. The mentally and physically complex role of Merrick as played by Playhouse Executive Director Zach Flock is sure to move audiences.

even physical training unlike anything I’ve done, probably since college.” Also serving as the executive director of the Erie Playhouse, Flock reasoned that “I’m drawn to a challenge, and I love doing the work.”

Joining Flock will be Howard Lang – the PACA and Dramashop actor/playwright making his Playhouse debut as surgeon Frederick Treves. Jim Nash also graces the Playhouse stage for the first time as Carr-Gomm, with Nick Iacobucci, Kim Overton, Karen Schelinski, Char Newport, Ed Moss, and Bryson Berkowitz (debuting as well). The scenes are accompanied by the haunting score of a single cello (Dan Bainbridge).

“There’s a lot of humor and so much heart to this story,” Flock added. “If people are expecting something dark and scary, this isn’t *Frankenstein*. It’s a really beautiful piece of theater told by a dedicated team of artists. I hope audiences find joy and connection in the story.” –Nick Warren

Oct. 10–26, Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. // 13 W. 10th St. // \$20.40 to \$30.40 // For tickets and more information, call (814) 454-2852 or visit erieplayhouse.org

Erie’s Funniest: The Comedy Competition

Kellar’s looks to pull the region’s next great comedic talent out of its hat
BEGINNING FRIDAY, OCT. 17

Erie-born Harry Kellar (1849-1922), aka “The Dean of American Magicians” and the real-life inspiration for L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz*, was revered for his ability to captivate an audience and command the room.

At its best, stand-up comedy is its own bit of wizardry – tugging on the common but invisible threads that connect disparate individuals and uniting them in laughter, all within the teeniest-tiniest sliver of time-space.

Kellar’s, A Modern Magic & Comedy Club hopes to reveal the region’s biggest talents as it hosts Erie’s Funniest: The Comedy Competition. This multi-round showcase will feature dozens of contestants from the tri-state area competing for a \$500 cash prize, an iHeart Radio spot, and the opportunity to open for headliner Tammy Pescatelli on Dec. 5 and 6.

Kellar’s owner Bobby Borgia shares the inspiration: “We wanted to create an event that gives up-and-coming comedians a professional platform

while offering audiences a fun, interactive night of entertainment. Comedy competitions have a tradition of discovering breakout talent, and this one is designed to do just that right here in Erie.”

The two-night kickoff event commences on Friday, Oct. 17 and continues Saturday, with each pres-tidigitator of wit allotted five minutes on stage to work their magic. Comedians will be scored by both a panel of judges and audience response. The judging panel includes nationally touring comedian Pescatelli, popular local weatherman John Stehlin (Erie News Now), and radio personality Allan “AC” Carpenter (Rocket 105). Columbus’s Funniest finalist and club favorite Lisa Chimenti (“Lisa Ann the Glam Ham”) will host, with Edinboro University alum Joe Hengle handling emcee duties.

Judges will evaluate originality, stage presence, timing, and overall performance. Crowd engagement will also play a key role in deciding the winner. Kellar’s owner Bobby Borgia



Erie’s own Kellar’s: A Modern Magic and Comedy Club will host a local version of *Last Comic Standing* as they present their inaugural Erie’s Funniest: The Comedy Competition, which will feature dozens of local and regional comedic talents vying for a win.

outlines the keys to success: “We’re looking for comedians who bring originality, strong writing, and undeniable stage presence. The best acts are the ones that not only get big laughs, but also leave a lasting impression on both the judges and the audience.”

Those demonstrating that potential during the kickoff will go head-to-head in a series of Wednesday night elimination rounds starting on Oct. 22, with finalists decided by audience vote. It all culminates with

the grand finale on Thanksgiving Eve (Wednesday, Nov. 26), with the full judging panel again on hand.

Whose act will the crowd gobble up, and who will be left over? With a smorgasbord of comedic voices and styles on display, it’s all a matter of taste – and, of course – presentation. Harry wouldn’t have it any other way. – Matt Swanseger

Friday and Saturday, 7 p.m. // Kellar’s, 1402 State St. // \$15 // kellarismagic.com

BLUEPRINT Live at Centennial Hall

Columbus hip-hop artist circles back to Erie in support of new album
SATURDAY, OCT. 18

The versatile hip-hop artist BLUEPRINT is making a stop at Centennial Hall, as part of his 40-date North American tour. The Columbus, Ohio-based musician has been re-releasing albums for over 20 years, and after a seven year hiatus, he returned in July of this year with *Vessel*.

This won’t be the first time BLUEPRINT has been to Erie – he’s played here several times, including one of his first out of town performances in the year 2000, telling me, “It was the first time someone reached out and booked me and my crew Greenhouse Effect after we released our first tape. And what’s really great is that the same guy is bringing me out there to perform again this year, 25 years later.” The “guy” to which BLUEPRINT refers is Iggy Imig of 2189 Presents, a local musician and promoter who recently moved back to the area and plans to continue bringing shows to Erie.

Being a veteran in the scene,

BLUEPRINT has seen many advances in music recording and has grown lyrically into the artist he is today. “Production-wise, I think the biggest change in my sound over the years is that I used to be 100 percent dependent on samples for the beats I use, but now I’m really good at making beats that sound like they’ve got samples in them but really don’t.” BLUEPRINT continues, “It took a lot of trial and error to get to this point as a producer but it’s made me much more flexible.”

While talking about growing as a lyricist, he expressed, “I understand the power of words and the responsibility that comes along with it much more than ever. This helps me write songs that have longevity.” BLUEPRINT went on to explain how he finds inspiration for his songs in life. “The good and bad situations I see all around me have helped me become a better songwriter because (they) make me try to find the lessons in them, which helps my understanding.”

For his live performances,



Catch nationally touring hip-hop artist BLUEPRINT as he makes a stop in Erie at Centennial Hall as part of his 40-date North American tour. Local and regional openers include Sanz, Moemaw Naedon, and Vices.

BLUEPRINT is accompanied by DJ Detox on turntables and drum machine, while BLUEPRINT himself plays keyboard and horns. BLUEPRINT is heavily influenced by hip-hop from the late ‘80s and early ‘90s (KRS-ONE, Public Enemy, NAS, Tribe Called Quest, and Pharcyde), and while listeners can hear the influences, he clearly presents his own unique style.

Also on the bill will be Erie’s own Sanz, Pittsburgh’s Moemaw Naedon, and Erie indie-punk outfit Vices. DJ Natask will fill in between sets and close out the evening with ‘90s-themed hits. – Larry Wheaton

7 p.m. // Centennial Hall, 145 W. 11th St. // \$15 pre-sale, \$20 day of show // For tickets and info: eventbrite.com



SACRED PATHWAYS

art exhibit

Explore our October Theme,
Releasing into Grace, with the
work of local artists, Toni Kelly
& Anne Cameron Cutri.

Art Open Weekdays
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At the Cathedral of St. Paul
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cathedralofstpaul.org



EVENTS

Masquerade at the Museum

Erie Art Museum's annual fundraiser party returns for a third year

SATURDAY, OCT. 18

Erie Art Museum is a great place for a party and this month they are bringing back their biggest celebration, Masquerade at the Museum. "Masquerade is our largest fundraising event," explains Eric Dye, the museum's marketing director. "The proceeds help us sustain education initiatives, exhibitions, the permanent collection, and programming."

The event is described as "a world of masked elegance, live performances, and immersive experiences amid the museum's iconic galleries. Whether you're coming for the fashion, the flair, or the fine art, Masquerade at the Museum offers a rare opportunity to experience culture in a new and unforgettable light." The museum website states, "There is no formal dress code, but attendees are encouraged to embrace the splendor of the eve-

ning with their attire. Whether it's a timeless gown, cocktail dress, or a dashing suit, let your personal style shine." Decorative masks are encouraged but not required.

There will be live entertainment including Erie's own V Band, playing on the Holstein Gallery stage, dance performances by Erie Dance Theater, tarot card readers, and an illusionist to add to the magical feel of the night. Dye also promises "a few surprises that you'll only experience in person." The museum website hints at pop-up entertainment throughout the gallery. There will also be food and drink.

Dye, who came to Erie in 2010 to attend Penn State Behrend and became the museum's marketing director in 2021, has been working on digitizing the museum's collection. It's a big job and one he says this fundraiser will help to get done. He adds, "It's a great night to explore the mu-

DIAG IT DAVE SCHROEDER



Join the folks from the Erie Art Museum for one of their biggest fundraisers of the year – the annual Masquerade at the Museum. Enjoy live music, dance performances, tarot card readings, and an illusionist as you explore the galleries.

seum while showing your support." –
Edwina Capozziello

7 to 11 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5th
St. // \$100 per person // For tickets and
info: tickets.eriereader.com

Preservation Erie's 2025 Greater Erie Awards

Recognizing local achievements in historic preservation

THURSDAY, OCT. 23

The volunteers from the grassroots local historic preservation group Preservation Erie hope that you'll join them for their annual Greater Erie Awards (GEA), taking place at the adaptively reused (and previous GEA winner) Erie Center For Arts and Technology, housed in the former Wayne School building. Successful local preservation projects, both big and small, are recognized by the group in this annual ceremony which will include before-and-after photos and information about the awarded projects, as well as a keynote address.

This year's keynote speaker is Rick Reinhard, who will be traveling to Erie from the Washington D.C. area for the event. Reinhard works for the Niagara Consulting Group, and focuses his efforts on house-of-worship reuse and redevelopment. He will be speaking about the need to reimagine the purposes of holy structures in order to maintain the built history of a city.

"In hot real-estate markets developers often circle emptying houses of worship like buzzards, waiting for it to close, so they can swoop in and rede-

velop the properties into, say, luxury condos," Reinhard shares. "In communities like Erie and my old hometowns of Syracuse and Buffalo, the challenge is more complex. For example, the Roman Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo just announced the closing of 70 churches in the eight-county Western New York region. How can the community possibly create new uses for 70 Roman Catholic churches all at once?"

"In the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe, houses of worship have been redeveloped into just about everything: housing, retail, office, arts and culture, you name it. The key is what makes sense for an individual church at a specific location in a particular time," Reinhard comments. His keynote speech will center around what Erie can do with its increasing stock of churches that no longer serve their purpose as houses of worship, and how municipal-level incentives can help the process along so that the built history that helps define our region is preserved.

There will be five awards given at the event which celebrate local preservation success in the categories of

ERIN PHILLIPS



Celebrate local historic preservation success stories with the board of grassroots volunteer organization Preservation Erie as they recognize local projects, and learn from keynote speaker Rick Reinhard as he speaks about adaptive reuse options of abandoned historic churches.

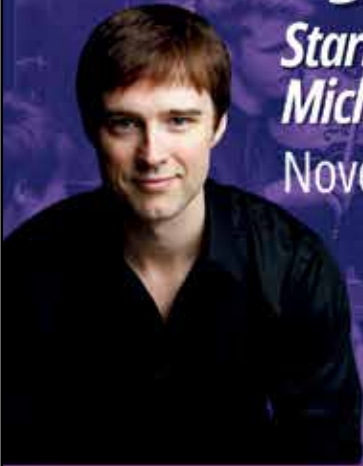
Preservation Excellence and Adaptive Reuse. Join in celebration with the board and friends of Preservation Erie, alongside the award recipients, to learn more about their projects, to learn from Richard Reinhard about working to reuse Erie's sacred spaces, and enjoy hors d'oeuvres and drinks from Cali's West. – Erin Phillips (Secretary of the Board of Preservation Erie)

For more information on event details and award recipients, visit preservationerie.org

6 p.m. // ECAT's Ada Lawrence Room,
650 East Ave. // \$25 // For tickets and
info: tickets.eriereader.com

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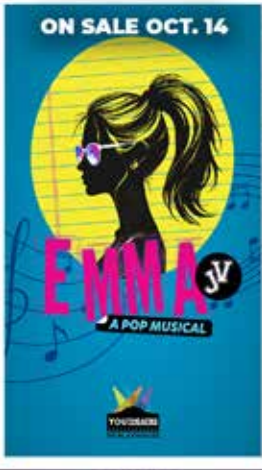
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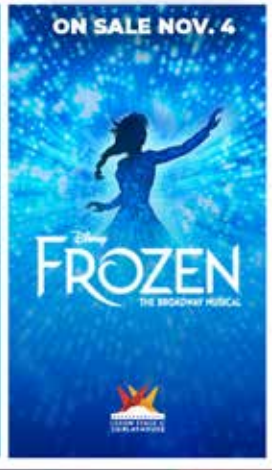
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[Sunday Matinee] Doors: 1:30pm • Show: 2:00pm

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Beethoven, Brahms, and Billy Joel with the Erie Philharmonic

Symphonic Series and Pops Series present back to back masterpieces

SATURDAY, OCT. 25
and **SATURDAY, NOV. 1**

The Erie Philharmonic Symphonic Series premiere will feature the Romantic era with the Erie Philharmonic Chorus, opening with Brahms' *Nänie*. Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster David McCarroll serves as featured soloist on Beethoven's Violin Concerto, finishing with Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2. Additionally, the

Pops Series brings rock and roll to the Warner Theatre in November with "The Music of Billy Joel Starring Michael Cavanaugh."

"This program was developed before I got here, but it is one of the highlights of the season," Erie Philharmonic Executive Director Bobby Pape said. The first piece of the 2025-2026 Symphonic Series is Brahms' *Nänie*, with lyrics by German playwright Friedrich Schiller. "This is a little bit unconventional for us his-

torically, to feature the chorus like this at the top of the season on a smaller work. We typically feature the chorus in a masterwork at the end of the year."

Pape explained that even though the piece is serious for a Symphonic Season opening, Meyer's choice of composition lifts the bar for a strong season, "We're not afraid of tackling big emotion when it comes to our orchestral programming. The exploration of death, the breadth of emotion, and luminosity in the orchestration make it such a fitting companion to the Rachmaninov Symphony and the Beethoven Violin Concerto. I think this is why Daniel chose to weave these things together and open in a spot that would traditionally be reserved for an overture. It's incredibly experimental for the audience, but it is also a great way to set the table for a season full of diversity and depth."

Billy Joel's background in classical music laid the foundation for his solo career, lending itself well to symphonic orchestrations. "He's so thoughtful about these anthemic melodies and harmonies that blend so naturally with the orchestra. Billy Joel is basically one of the 20th century bards of our country," Pape said. "From a musicology standpoint, it's great and a lot of fun."

Michael Cavanaugh, who originated the role of the Piano Man in the 2002 Broadway musical *Movin' Out* and who will be performing Joel's music with the Erie Philharmonic, was handpicked by Joel for the jukebox musical. "He's not doing an impression; he's embodying the spirit in the way Joel thinks and performs. It's not like hearing a cover band so much as it's hearing this ultimate orchestral realization of Billy Joel's music."

As a lifelong fan of Joel, Pape connects the experience of seeing Michael Cavanaugh perform Joel's songbook to his own concert experiences and memories of audiences at the Warner Theatre. "I have such fond memories of seeing Billy Joel live. For those who have seen him, it's a more wraparound experience with surrounding sound in a way a rock band can't produce. It puts the power of the music front and center." – Thomas Taylor

Brahms, Beethoven, and Rachmaninoff, Saturday, Oct. 25 // 7:30 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$17-\$63 // Tickets and info: eriephil.org

The Music of Billy Joel Starring Michael Cavanaugh, Nov. 1 and 2 // Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$17-\$63 // Tickets and info: eriephil.org



The Erie Philharmonic offers up performances for both their Symphonic and Pops series in the coming weeks – a celebration of Brahms, Beethoven, and Rachmaninoff leading into a sing-along night featuring the music of Billy Joel starring Michael Cavanaugh.

Basement of Terror 2025

No clowning around

SUNDAY, OCT. 25

The lights may have gone out on Basement Transmissions as we know it, but its spirit is alive at the fourth annual Basement of Terror at Centennial Hall. This year OddCity Entertainment is bringing the Big Top to the small stage with a Dark Carnival theme – those with coulrophobia (fear of clowns) beware. There will be plenty of music to rattle your bones, along with a costume contest, vendors, games, circus acts, horror characters, and magic for all the little tricksters.

Halloween and metal music go together like apples and razor blades,

and the music featured on this hal- lowed eve is particularly heavy. Returning to headline this year's event will be northeastern Ohio metalcore band Dead Cassette, whose heavy riffs have gained them a solid local fan base. Awakened from their slumber are Akron, Ohio's 6Deep and Slugs, who are oozing all the way from Bristol, Connecticut. Representing Eerie on the bill are post-hardcore fiends Fastfall, garage punk ghouls Cheap, and straight from the Vampire Crypt in the Erie Cemetery, experimental post-hardcore band Cryptic Shock.

Vendors will be on hand to get that

little monster in your life a special treat including: Oddities and Curiosities, Raven's Nest, and Made by a Weirdo. For those who are looking to lift their spirits, Lavery Brewery Company will be there to quench your thirst. Additional sponsors for the event are John's Wildwood Pizza, BTW Wrestling, and Werner Books and Coffee. So grab your face paint, pack as many people you can into a small car, and head to the Dark Carnival. – Larry Wheaton

5 p.m. to midnight // Centennial Hall, 145 W. 11th St. // \$20 at door, \$15 pre-sale // 18+ unless accompanied by an adult



Centennial Hall will turn into a horrifying dark carnival for the annual Basement of Terror festival. Experience local and regional metal music alongside a host of local spooky vendors.

Festival of Trees

A CELEBRATION OF THE SEASON

Enjoy Santa's Castle, over 80 professionally decorated trees, live reindeer, local entertainment and more.

Bayfront Convention Center
Friday, Nov. 28 | 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 29 | 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 30 | 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Festival Admission:
Adults, \$10 | Children under 12, \$8

More details:
supportahn.org/festival



Scan here for event details!

The 2025 Festival of Trees will support the Talent Attraction Program and Children's Miracle Network at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital.

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AHN SAINT VINCENT

Children's
Miracle Network
Hospitals



Festival after dark

Join us for a holiday event to benefit the Nursing Education Fund at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital.

Bayfront Convention Center
Saturday, Nov. 29 | 7 p.m. – 11 p.m.

- Adult train rides
- Tastings of local brews and spirits
- Hors d'oeuvres and libations
- Live music by the Cleveland Keys and dancing in the Gallery of Trees



Scan here for event details!

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EVENTS

Erie Reader Book Club: October 2025

Weyward by Emilia Hart

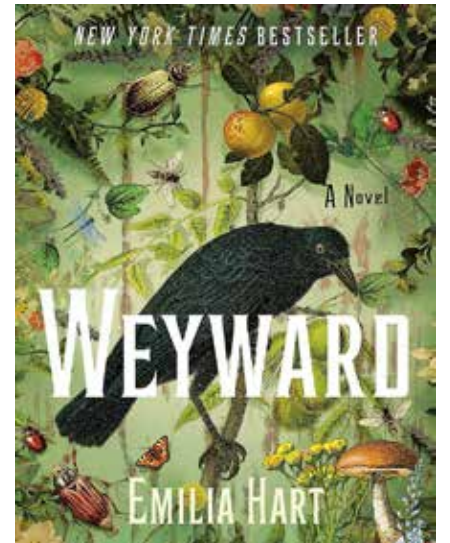
SUNDAY, OCT. 26

The Erie Reader Book Club will be reading and discussing the novel *Weyward* by Emilia Hart in correspondence with the Halloween Erie Reader issue.

Halloween is the best time of the year for all things mystical and magical. Sometimes spooky, sometimes fantastical, but always a time of wonder – it's the perfect holiday to imagine beyond the realm of realism. They do call it the Season of the Witch, after all.

In her debut novel, Emilia Hart delves into three women's stories throughout time. In 1919, Kate flees London for Weyward Cottage, left to her by a great aunt she barely remembers. In 1619, Altha is on trial for the murder of a local farmer stampeded to death by his herd. In 1942, Violet is trapped in her family's crumbling estate as World War II rages on.

Each woman finds herself looking for an escape – from an abusive partner, from a wrongful accusation, and



from societal conventions – and finds strength in the powers their family holds. Deep within the bones of Weyward Cottage, a secret exists that will intertwine each of these women's stories across the centuries, proving their resilience and the power of the natural world. – Ally Kutz

1 p.m. // Werner Books and Coffee, 2608 Liberty St. // Free to join, cost of book not included // For more info: wernerbooks.com

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ERIE OTTERS

DIGITAL PROGRAM

2025 - 2026



Geese

Getting Killed

Partisan Records

★★★★★

Geese prove they're far from one-trick ponies on their third studio album. Since the release of *3D Country* in June 2023, Brooklyn rock group Geese have been relentlessly touring. Whether at festivals, as openers, or headliners, the band's live gospel has been preached far and wide. During this almost two-year stint, band members Emily Green and frontman Cameron Winter both released solo efforts. Winter's solo debut, *Heavy Metal*, received rapturous acclaim. Still, the band continued playing their *3D Country* set-list. The first hint of something new was in June 2025 when the band first performed "Trinidad." This explosive (no pun intended) track sets the tone and opens their new album, *Getting Killed*. Compared to previous records, *Getting Killed* shows major growth in both artistry and lyrical depth. On *3D Country*, each track painted a different musical portrait. While thematic elements and motifs appeared, the album felt like a collection of standalone tracks. With *Getting Killed*, the album presents itself with borderline-perfect pacing: songs like "100 Horses," "Taxes," and "Long Island Here I Come" are these wonderfully sprawling epics – exploring uncharted territory within the Geese canon. Lyrically, Winter channels the introspective, narrative-rich style of his solo works. Drawing influence from Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, and Tom Waits, he adopts a laid-back, spoken-word approach that lends the album a distinct edge. Geese are not one-trick ponies. They are multi-talented equestrians, ready to blow you away with their sheer command of the stage. Now bow down accordingly. – Nathaniel Clark

El Michels Affair

24 Hr Sports

Big Crown Records

★★★★★



On their fifth studio album release (not counting two Wu-Tang Clan and an Issac Hayes tribute albums) El Michels Affair presents, in peak coolness, the best cinematic soul album of the last decade. Bandleader Leon Michels plays most of the instruments on *24 Hr Sports* with some help from a wide array of musicians. Michels has produced records for Norah Jones and Chicano Batman, as well as performed as a member of Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, Menahan Street Band, and The Arcs (with Dan Auerbach from the Black Keys). *24 Hr Sports* plays like much of his other works, with a few short interludes reminiscent of early hip-hop records, intermingled with songs that feature up-and-coming artists as well as some veterans, including Brazilian singer-songwriter Roge on "Magica," Ghanaian singer Florence Adooni on "Say Goodbye," and legendary jazz saxophonist Rahsaan Roland Kirk on "Take My Hand." Other songs like "Clean The Line" and "Shining" showcase a hip-hop beat with a smoothness perfect for relaxing on a beach. This is a fantastic party album – upbeat, yet subtle, for fans ranging from Bob James to Childish Gambino. – Larry Wheaton

cataract

junk drawer ep

Self-released

★★★★★



There's something about a certain kind of indie rock or shoegaze that can hit you on a deeper level. The sound reverb and fuzz intermingling and cascading over each other in overtones can be arresting at first, but more often than not, it feels like a warming blanket, a hand-me-down knitted throw that you can peek your eyes through. What also doesn't hurt is that this is precisely the right time of the year where I want to hear music like the *junk drawer EP* by cataract, a local project spearheaded by singer and guitarist Jake Swan. It's that liminal space where fall morphs into winter and you're caught without the right jacket. For well-worn fans of the genre, too, there can be nostalgia in the sound. Whether you discovered music like this from alt-rockers Sonic Youth or Dinosaur Jr. back in the day, next gen bands like Yuck, or nugazers all under heaven decades later, there's a link. That secret handshake (or at least an acknowledging nod) when something rings authentic. While the opening track "shine" may be the biggest winner of the bunch, acoustic transitions like "you not me" deliver feelings slightly different and totally welcome. At five tracks and 12 minutes, its biggest fault is that there isn't enough of it. – Nick Warren

Motion City Soundtrack

The Same Old Wasted Wonderful World

Epitaph Records

★★★★★



It's been 10 years since we last heard from beloved power-pop/emo underdogs Motion City Soundtrack, and quite frankly, many of us thought it was unlikely that we'd hear from them again. Despite a number of successful anniversary tours, band members had moved away from each other, started families, and faced mounting health problems. Of course, you might not know that just from listening to *The Same Old Wasted Wonderful Word*, an album that expertly walks a tightrope between the sound Motion City Soundtrack is known for and the kind of thoughtful maturity that can only come with years of reflection. The term "career-spanning" would indicate an album that touches on every sound they've experimented with before, and while that's technically true, there's also several bold and exciting moves for a band to bust out on their reunion album. Tucked into the album's back half is the one-two punch of "Mi Corazón" and "Bloodline," the former dabbling in brooding, bass-heavy post-punk while the latter embraces chaotic, Foo Fighters-adjacent alt-rock. Cliche as it may be, Motion City Soundtrack has delivered yet another knock-out slice of pop-rock that truly offers something for everyone; perhaps we shouldn't be so quick to doubt them in the future. – Aaron Mook

Five Films to Look Out For from TIFF 2025

The 50th Toronto International Film Festival was a great time for any film lover

By: Forest Taylor

The 50th annual Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) was held in September, and I was lucky enough to attend this celebration of cinema. To usher in their half-century, TIFF offered a treasure trove of events for film lovers of all kinds. Located on King Street in the middle of Downtown Toronto, TIFF provided live music and great food for the attendees (I recommend a visit to Cibo Wine Bar for some of the best pizza I've ever had), as well as various seminars and classes for aspiring filmmakers.

They also provided free screenings of classic films in David Pecaut Square at 10 p.m. every night (I caught a screening of *Before Sunrise* for its 30th anniversary), and best of all, the Criterion Mobile Closet was parked outside of Lightbox Theater, giving fans an opportunity to explore their collection of classic and obscure films (the lines were insane but the experience was unforgettable). Festival Street was alive with activity before fans even had a chance to watch the films.

But of course, the real draw for TIFF is the films themselves, and this year provided plenty of anticipated premieres and obscure curiosities from all over the world. Fans could attempt to get tickets early or try their luck in rush lines (waiting in a rush line during one of their nightly Midnight Madness screenings is simply something one has to experience). I attended multiple screenings per day, and while I wasn't able to see everything I wanted, there were plenty of great films at TIFF. I focused on the lesser-known titles that (with one exception) don't yet have release dates rather than the highly anticipated premieres hitting theaters in the next few months.

With those caveats in place, here are five films to look for that premiered at TIFF 50!



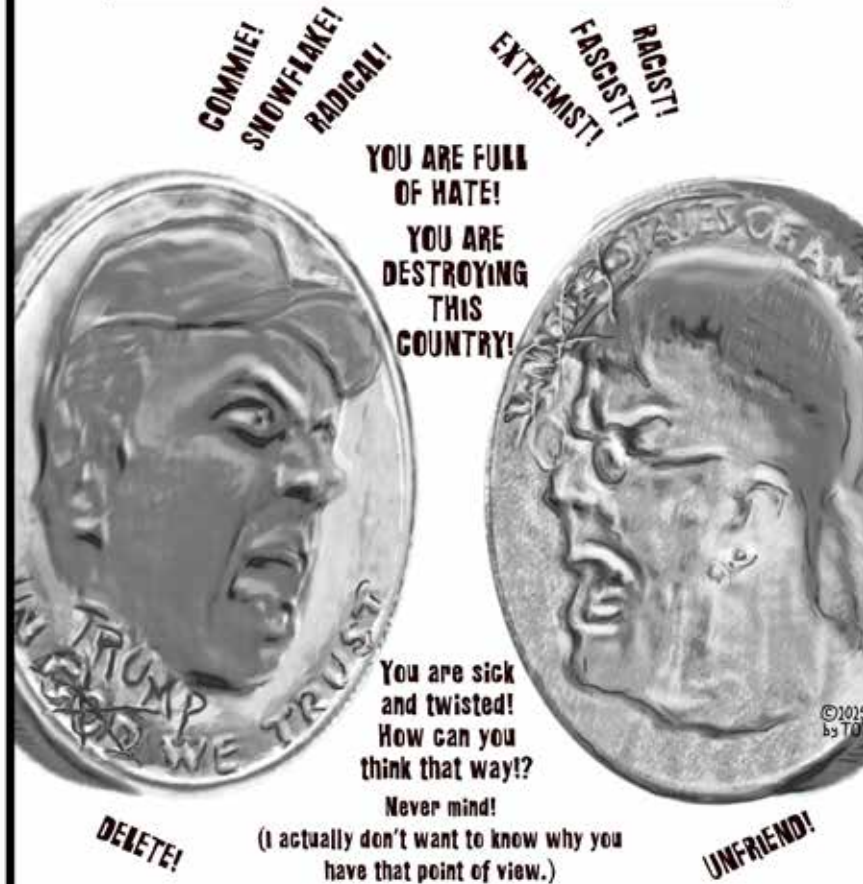
NEGATIVE WORLDS

"HOLIDAYS AND MONTHS BY THE GENRE" BY NICK WARREN



JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN



Fish that Talk by JOHN BRAWO in: Pennsylvucky



Bad Apples

Jonathan Etzler's pitch black comedy about a teacher's worst nightmare is my pick for the most gleefully entertaining film at TIFF. The story of a young primary school teacher (Saoirse Ronan) whose unorthodox method of dealing with a violent and chaotic student (Eddie Waller) is a darkly funny satire about the horrors (both physical and bureaucratic) that can be found when working in children's education, as well as a bleak statement about how modern society often treats troubled children.

Etzler does an excellent job playing with audiences' sympathies, and Ronan gives such a lived-in performance that even when the film takes some ridiculous turns, viewers are still on board. Full of witty dialogue, a cynical sense of humor, and so many twists and character reversals that audiences will never expect what comes next, *Bad Apples* was a sadistic delight from beginning to end. Recommended for anyone who has worked in childhood education.

The Currents

I went to see this muted drama from Milagros Mumenthaler without any expectations, and found it to be one of the most emotionally profound films at the festival. The story of a fashion designer (Isabel Aime Gonzalez Sola) who jumps off a bridge right after receiving an award for her work, and the aftermath of her seemingly impulsive act, says much about the quiet desperation that many people live with through subtle gestures, ethereal cinematography, and smart use of sound.

Mumenthaler expertly captures the loneliness of depression and the uncertainty when everything else in life seems fine. It is all told in such an intimate way and is held together by an incredible performance from its lead actress. The film doesn't have any real answers for the existential questions it asks, but the questions raised about the need for purpose in life and the inevitable nothingness that follows are fascinating enough.

The Ugly

Director Yeon Sang-ho hit the international film world with two kinetic and entertaining zombie movies (*Train to Busan* and *Peninsula*), but this bleak character study is a stark departure from his most popular works. In the middle of making a documentary about his blind father's (Kwon Hae-ho) seal-engraving business, authorities find the remains of a man's (Park Jeong-min) mother, who disappeared when he was a baby. This discovery leads him to uncover the truth of her disappearance, only to learn

The real draw for the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) is the films themselves, and this year provided plenty of anticipated premieres and obscure curiosities from all over the world ... while I wasn't able to see everything I wanted, there were plenty of great films at TIFF.

that the people in her life simply remember her as "ugly." The film is a dark look into the toxic beauty standards in Korea, but also a bleak commentary on how easy it is to make "undesirable" people disappear.

Presented Rashomon-style through a series of interviews, the film is a misanthropic journey into the way society treats its perceived "inferiors," all lead-

ing up to an emotionally devastating final shot. *The Ugly* opened in select theaters on Sept. 26.

Normal

One of the most delightfully amusing films at TIFF. The story follows Ulysses (unexpected action star Bob Odenkirk), the itinerant sheriff in the small town of Normal, Minnesota. Everything seems peaceful and boring in this quiet hamlet, but after a botched bank robbery, Ulysses accidentally discovers the town's dark secret and suddenly finds himself in a gun fight with the townspeople while a massive snowstorm rages outside. This film is essentially an extended action scene for half its runtime, but what an action scene it is! Combining elements of *High Noon*, *Hot Fuzz*, *Assault on Precinct 13*, the Coens, and John Woo, it is a deft mixture of comedy and action, all held together by Odenkirk's likable everyman role. This is the kind of old-fashioned action movie that isn't seen too often in theaters anymore, and based on audience reactions, it's exactly what people are looking for.

The Furious

And now to end the festival with a bang with this adrenaline-pumping martial arts action movie from stunt choreographer Kenji Tanigaki. After his daughter is kidnapped by human traffickers, mute tradesman Wang Wei (Miao Xie) teams up with a journalist (Frank Taslim) looking for his missing wife, and they fight their way through an army of criminals to get their loved ones back. The story is threadbare, and the English dubbing is atrocious, but we know why we watch these kinds of movies. It's for the action, and this film has plenty to offer! Probably the most brutal, bone-crunching, blood-spewing fight scenes since *The Raid* films, all culminating in an amazing five-way brawl that left TIFF audiences cheering from beginning to end. In terms of pure action spectacle, this film is one of the best in years. See it with the biggest crowd you can find!



10/8* CLOUD

An ambitious, yet directionless Tokyo factory worker who side hustles in the murky realm of black market e-commerce, cheating buyers and sellers alike, begins to suspect his former victims could be plotting the ultimate revenge. Director Kiyoshi Kurosawa (*Curse*, *Pulse*) examines themes of technology being a haunting force, humanity's capacity for greed, and the quiet ways the internet can further mutate those diseases in us. 2025. Horror/Action. Rated R. Nikkatsu/Janus Films.



10/15* THE DREADFUL PLACE

FILM ERIE SPOTLIGHT Nearing the anniversary of her father's tragic death, Willow finds herself trapped in a twisted nightmare she can't wake up from. Filmmakers Cole and Brittany Hills will be in attendance for an audience Q&A following the film. 2025. Horror. Not rated.



OCTOBER

filmErie

PRESENTS

FILM

10 | 20



40 ACRES 10/22*

After plagues and wars devastate society, a Canadian family of farmers defend their home from those seeking their resources. A former soldier (Danielle Deadwyler) and her partner (Michael Greyeyes) fled the collapse with their children, training them to survive, but their eldest son's love for someone outside their fence puts the family at risk. Director R.T. Thorne tackles food insecurity, land sovereignty, and colonial trauma. 2025. Action thriller. Rated R.



UNION 10/29*

Chronicle the extraordinary efforts of an unlikely group of warehouse workers, a grassroots union campaign is launched at an Amazon fulfillment center in Staten Island. Led by the charismatic but underestimated Chris Smalls, the diverse band of workers embark on a journey against one of the largest and most powerful companies in the world. 2024. Documentary. Not rated.

10/20 Collective at 1020 Holland St., Erie PA
5 PM Doors 7 PM Feature Presentation
*Includes 5 PM Secret Film Screening

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- Across
1. Sideways sidler

5. "The Bubble" director Apatow

9. Destroy, as a contract

14. "Black Swan" actress Kunis

15. Three-level snack

16. "___ a customer"

17. "Moneytalks" band

18. "Jeepers!"

19. Shapewear brand

20. Instruction on liquid medicine or salad dressing

23. Steamed bun on a Chinese menu

24. Slugging Giant Mel

25. Brand-new, like film footage

34. Legendary Olympian Jesse

35. Moisturizer brand

36. 2022's Super Bowl

37. Sort

38. Per ___ (yearly)

39. Per ___ (daily)

40. Shiba ___ (Japanese dog)

41. Fast pitch?

42. Sloop in a Beach Boys song

43. Door holder's quip

46. "So ___ heard"

47. Across, poetically

48. Villainous "Superman II" demand (RIP Terence Stamp)
56. Vegan brand made with mycoprotein

57. Proctor's handout

58. Word almost 1 minute into "Bohemian Rhapsody"

59. Pick out

60. Run-down tavern

61. "Love ___ Elevator" (Aerosmith song)

62. Chicago ex-mayor Richard

63. One of four on the New Zealand flag

64. TV's "Warrior Princess"
- Down
1. Nashville-based awards show, familiarly

2. Rolling in it

3. "M*A*S*H" Emmy winner

4. Acrobatic show of agility

5. Briggs who hosts "The Last Drive-in"

6. Prod along

7. Like the staff of Gallaudet, predominantly

8. Extinct bird

9. Brew made from petals

10. Ports behind the TV, perhaps

11. Fried rice ingredients

12. ___ Reader (quarterly magazine founded in 1984)

13. Chicken ___

21. Piercing places

22. "Air Music" compos-
- er Ned

25. Phone maker from Finland

26. "Dallas" surname

27. Convention locale

28. Cinematic scorer Morricone

29. The ___ things in life

30. Botanical seed-to-be

31. 1912 Peace Nobelist Root

32. Major happening

33. "Anywhere but here" acronym

38. Late fashion icon Iris in the 2014 Albert Maysles documentary "Iris"

39. Alter the soundtrack, maybe?

41. Speed limit in some states

42. Express ridicule

44. "The Devil's Dictionary" author Ambrose

45. One who's just OK?

48. 1990s Britpop psychedelic rock band ___ Shaker

49. Christmas, in Montreal

50. Hotel fixtures

51. Maze goal

52. Bean mentioned by Hannibal Lecter

53. "Titanic" actor Billy

54. Sultanate near Yemen

55. Garth's portrayer in "Wayne's World"

56. Proof letters

FUN TIME

AMERICA: What does not belong?

APPLE PIE	INVADING US CITIES	BASEBALL	KINGS
STATUE OF LIBERTY	STATUE OF LIBERTY WITH HITLER MOUSTACHE	THE RIGHT TO VOTE	BOOT STOMPING ON HUMAN FACE FOREVER
COMEDIANS MAKING FUN OF PRESIDENT	PRESIDENT FIRING COMEDIANS	HOT DOGS	KING EATING ALL THE HOT DOGS AND APPLE PIES

SORENSEN

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Answers to last puzzle

A	S	K			P	L	U	M		F	A	B	L	E
C	H	E	T		R	U	B	E		O	N	E	A	L
T	I	E	S	C	O	R	E	S		R	E	L	I	C
S	P	L	O	O	T	C	R	A	T	E		I	N	A
					M	E	H			A	S	L	E	E
				C	O	P	E	S		P	A	R	T	I
S	P	L	I	T	T	E	R	B	A	S	K	E	T	S
T	A	B	S				K	O	I			E	D	I
S	P	L	A	S	H	E	X	T	E	N	S	I	O	N
				U	N	E	A	S	Y		M	O	O	N
C	A	E	S	A	R				A	O	L			
A	T	E			S	P	L	I	N	T	T	R	A	P
S	A	Y	H	I					I	N	D	I	E	C
C	R	E	E	D					A	F	R	O		A
A	I	S	L	E					M	O	E	N		B



THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY PRESENTS: GLOBAL SUMMIT XVII

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4



TICKETS & INFO!



A Conversation with President Barack Obama

Tuesday, September 16 | 6:30p.m.

Erie Insurance Arena

Featuring: President Barack Obama



The Power of Saying 'Yes': A Journey of Performing Surgeries on All Seven Continents

Tuesday, October 14 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Dr. Jane Arbuckle Petro

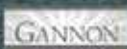


'You Are Changing the World Whether You Like It or Not'

Thursday, October 16 | 7:00p.m.

Warner Theatre

Featuring: David LaMotte



From Washington to Trump: The US Presidency and America at 250

Monday, October 20 | 7:00p.m.

Gannon University Yehl Room

Featuring: Chris Whipple & Lindsay Chervinsky

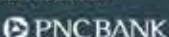


'A Journey of Perseverance': An Evening with Jim Kelly

Wednesday, October 22 | 7:00p.m.

Gannon University Yehl Room

Featuring: Jim Kelly

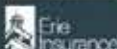


Leading Through Listening - The Importance of Communication and Feedback

Thursday, October 23 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Gen. Joe Votel, Ret. & Col. Katie Crombe



Europe With(out) the U.S. - The Future of NATO and the European Union

Friday, October 24 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Mark Gitenstein



The Future of College Athletics and Sports Media: Where They Are Now, Where They Are Headed

Monday, October 27 | 7:00p.m.

Gannon University Yehl Room

Featuring: Adrian "Woj" Wojnarowski

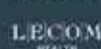
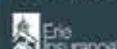


This Just In: Latest Discoveries in the Universe

Wednesday, October 29 | 7:00p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center

Featuring: Neil deGrasse Tyson



American Progress from the Front Lines: Examining Local-Level Action, Innovation, and Solutions to Cities Challenges in Chaotic Times

Monday, November 3 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Richard Berry, Greg Fischer, and William Peduto

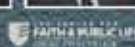


Faith, Religion, and American Politics: A Conversation with Vice President Mike Pence and Paul McNulty

Wednesday, November 5 | 7:00p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center

Featuring: Vice President Mike Pence and Paul McNulty



'Autocrats vs. Democrats: China, Russia, America, and the New Global Disorder'

Thursday, November 6 | 7:00p.m.

Gannon University Yehl Room

Featuring: Michael McFaul



'All Too Clear' - Exploring Invasive Species Beneath the Surface of the Great Lakes

Friday, November 7 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Zach Melnick and Yvonne Drebert



'Carson the Magnificent' - A Look at the Iconic TV Host and His Impact on Comedy Today

Monday, November 10 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Mike Thomas and Journey Gunderson



Humanity 2050: The Future of Our World, Our Universe, and Ourselves

Tuesday, November 11 | 7:00p.m.

Gannon University Yehl Room

Featuring: Charles Liu



'New Prize for These Eyes: The Rise of America's Second Civil Rights Movement'

Thursday, November 13 | 7:00p.m.

Gannon University Yehl Room

Featuring: Juan Williams



The Medium is the Message: Media's Impact on National Politics

Friday, November 14 | 7:00p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Larry Sabato



An Evening 'Exploring Your Roots' with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Thursday, December 4 | 7:00p.m.

Warner Theatre

Featuring: Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

