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**ERIE READER**

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# WHAT'S NEXT AFTER GRADUATION?

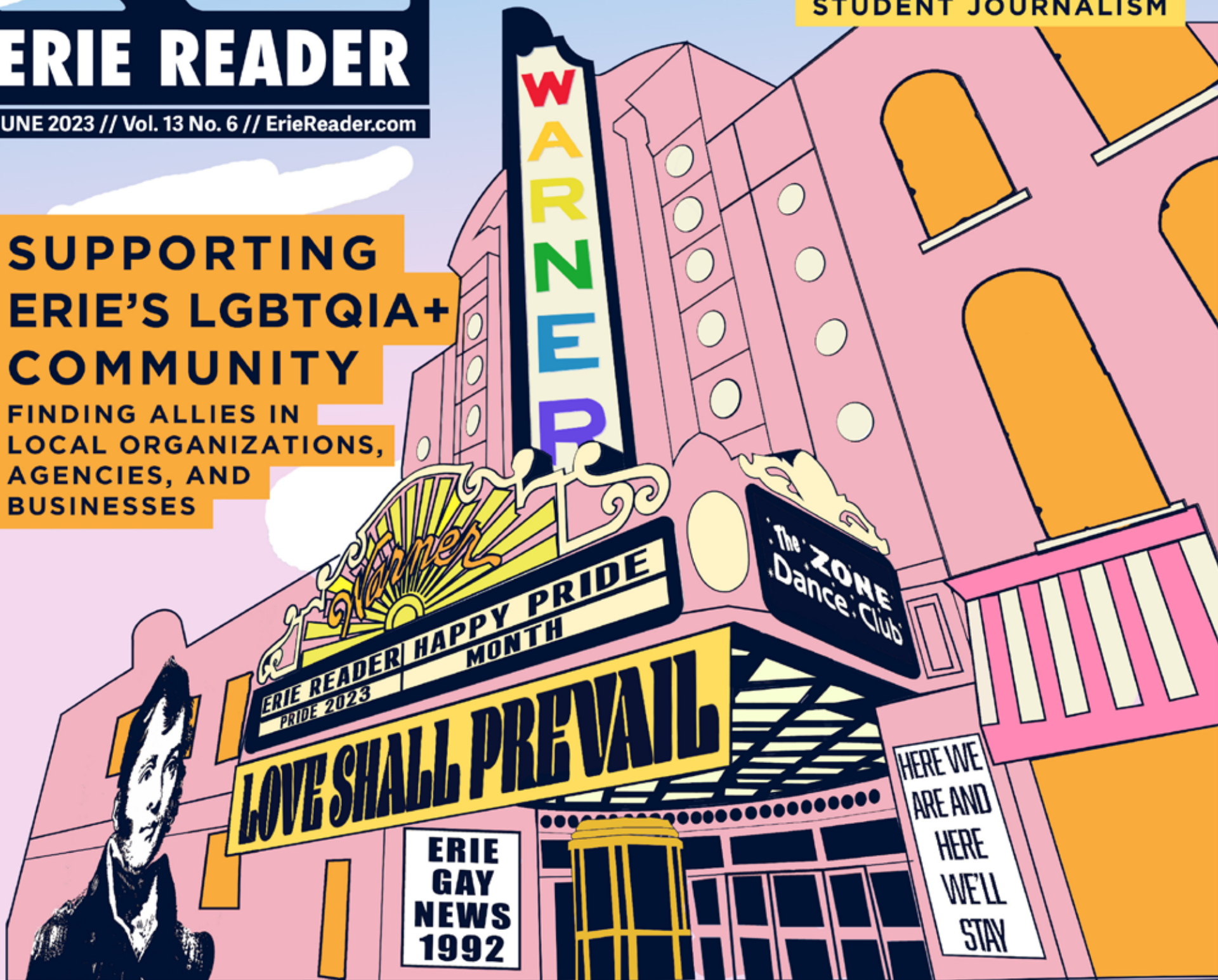
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND REAL HUMANS OFFER THEIR ADVICE

# PRESSING AHEAD

WHY WE NEED ROBUST STUDENT JOURNALISM

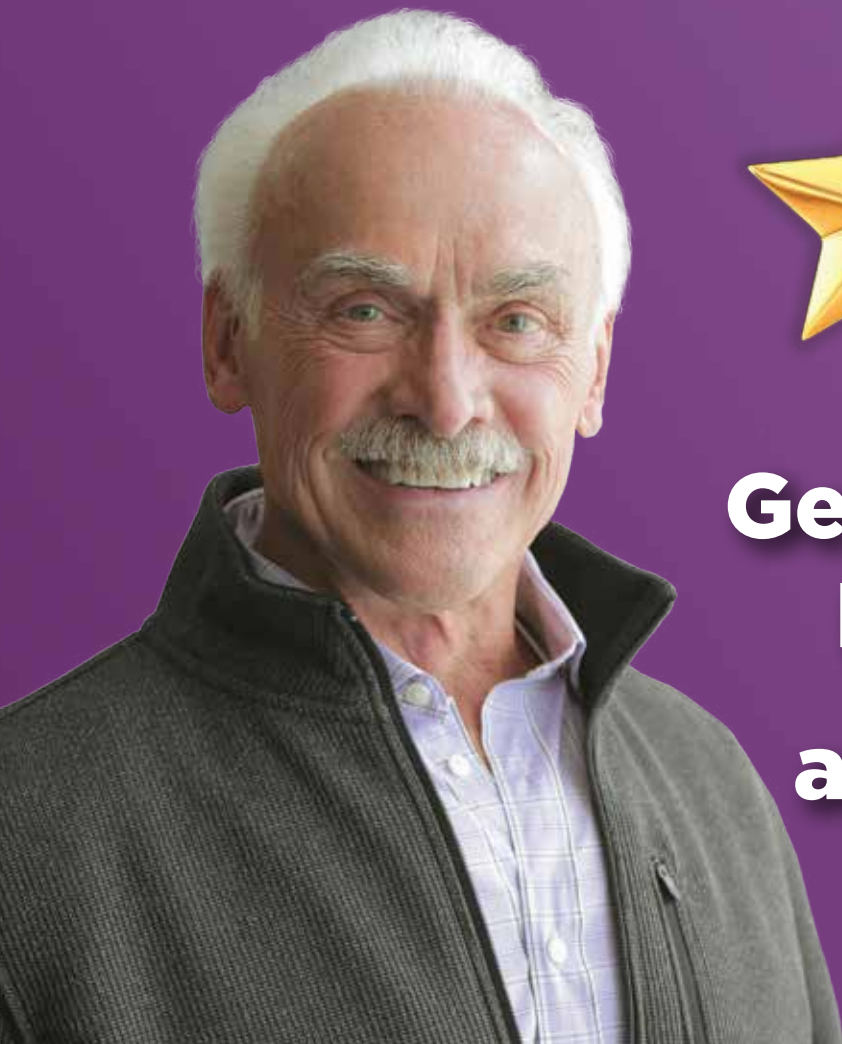
# SUPPORTING ERIE'S LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

FINDING ALLIES IN LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES, AND BUSINESSES



PLUS: GABY REYES | GHOST SHIPS OF LAKE ERIE  
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## From the Editors

### A marquee month for human rights

**R**elit for the first time in 40 years on Dec. 3, 2021, the Warner Theatre marquee (a reconstruction of the 1931 original) features 6,910 LED lights and weighs in at over 9 tons. The cost of the marquee and surrounding brick-and-stone facade totaled about \$1.36 million dollars.

Sometimes we pay a heavy price to shine — no one knows this better than the LGBTQIA+ community, whose fight for rights remains a marquee topic of our day.

In some regions of the world, it's dangerous to even step into the light. Last month, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni put his signature on a piece of legislation that sanctions capital punishment for "aggravated homosexuality" and 20 years incarceration for "promoting" homosexuality. Africa is notoriously inhospitable toward same-sex relations, where it is forbidden in 32 nations.

Although United Nations leaders admonished the law as an affront to human rights, the persecution of gays and transgenders is hardly foreign. Even here in the United States, wherein same-sex marriages have been federally recognized since the 2015 Supreme Court ruling *Obergefell v. Hodges*, LGBTQIA+ persons continue to face hostility and rollback of hard-earned rights. Just a week prior to this issue's publication, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a bill outlawing transgender healthcare for minors — affecting some 29,800 youth aged 13 to 17 in the Union's second-most populous state.

Pride Month is hardly empty theatrics. It's an opportunity for substantive conversations to take center stage, as an estimated 9 million LGBTQIA+ Americans (per UCLA's Williams Institute) continue to face harsh critics, often in the highest seats of power. It's a show of strength, purpose, and belonging. Even if Corporate America is just playing along (until public backlash begets backpedaling, a la Target), to genuine allies, Pride is an act of solidarity.

To exist as we are, to pursue what we want to become — these are fundamental freedoms, no matter who you are. In this issue, we celebrate not only those who identify as LGBTQIA+, but thinkers (the Jefferson Educational Society on its 15th anniversary), dreamers (recent graduates), and doers (artist, entrepreneur, and cover designer Gaby Reyes). We hope that our corner of the world remains an affirming sanctuary for all who dare to think, dream, and live — along the lakeshore (which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is considering for National Marine Sanctuary designation) and far beyond.

## Pressing Ahead

### Why we need robust student journalism

By: Liz Allen

Looking forward to my 50th school reunion at Marquette University this June, I thought about two celebrated alums from my alma mater: New York Times columnist Gail Collins and Pulitzer Prize winner Jacqui Banaszynski. I spent most of my career in Erie, not in high-profile news roles like these women did, and we graduated in different years — Collins in 1970, Banaszynski in 1974. But we share the same journalistic values — telling stories to put the news in context.

Two of their pieces seem especially relevant now, as journalists face hostility and encounter violence and as LGBTQIA+ rights are under attack. In her Dec. 14, 2022 column, “When Allen Ginsberg Came to Town,” Collins wrote about the time she and other students invited Ginsberg to speak at Marquette after meeting him at a University of Illinois event.

“The whole thing was set up when suddenly the (Marquette) dean of students, Father Richard Sherburne, got some background information on Ginsberg that he apparently didn’t like and announced that the reading had to be canceled,” Collins wrote. “The reasons were a little unclear. To be fair, Ginsberg had a history of drug use and of taking off his clothes in public, at least once. But the fact that he was gay did seem to be the real problem.”

In 1988, Banaszynski won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing for her three-part series, *AIDS in the Heartland*, in which she chronicled the final days of an AIDS activist who lived on a Minnesota farm with his partner.

In a 2016 interview in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Banaszynski said that initial reader reaction to her AIDS series was mostly negative. “The revulsion and fear around HIV and gays was so strong,” she said. “The hateful mail we got was astonishing.”

Today, when fearless journalism is more necessary than ever, it is no longer astonishing that journalists are being reviled. But it’s shocking that this occurs even at the high school level.

I wanted to write about the state of student journalism after learning that the *Merciad* newspaper at Mercyhurst University would be “taking a hiatus to re-evaluate student-led media on

campus,” according to a May 3 advertisement in the *Erie Times News*. I first read about the *Merciad* announcement in a Facebook post by Bill Welch, my friend and former newsroom colleague. If you can get news through social media, why bother with high school or college journalism, in print or online?

Yet student journalism serves multiple functions and various audiences, including faculty, staff, and the community. Now is no time to take a breather.

“Scholastic journalists are the only authentic reporters who live daily in the culture where they learn,” said Jane Blystone, a North East resident, retired high school journalism teacher, and college professor who advised student publications, including yearbook, newspaper, and literary magazine staffs for 28 years. In 2022, the National Journalism Education Association gave Blystone its highest honor, the Carl Towley Award.

Welch, a teacher in the Mercyhurst Intelligence Studies program and former *Merciad* advisor, said that those with journalism backgrounds make promising intelligence studies candidates, because intelligence professionals must ask good questions and write reports that “come very close to traditional journalism writing,” he said.

At the *Behrend Beacon*, published weekly when school is in session, staffers learn to seek out and review public records, including campus police reports, and they are the watchdogs of student government, said Robb Frederick, Penn State Behrend’s associate director of news and information. “It gives them good practice in asking hard questions,” Frederick said. In turn, student government leaders learn how to respond to news media questions, he said.

Teen journalists for Saegertown High School’s *Panther Press* in Crawford County are forging ahead with hard questions and deep-dive reporting, even though Stacey Hetrick, American literature teacher and newspaper advisor, is on medical leave because of backlash she has been subjected to due to student coverage of school board meetings, political campaigns, threats to LGBTQIA+ rights, and a new library policy in the Penncrest School District that allows books to be challenged, re-

CONTRIBUTED



**Panther Press staffers talk with PBS *Newshour* anchor Judy Woodruff, after she and her husband Al Hunt spoke at Gannon University during the Jefferson Educational Society’s Global Summit on Dec. 12, 2022.**

viewed, and possibly removed.

“In a participatory democracy we want people to be informed,” said Hetrick. She revived the dormant *Panther Press* in 2006 at the request of Randy Deemer, Saegertown principal at the time, and with the enthusiastic support and technical assistance of the *Meadville Tribune* and its publisher, Jeanne Yount.

The *Panther Press* is an elective, meeting five days a week; students receive credit for a computer course. The print newspaper publishes six to eight times a year and students update the website, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook posts daily. The *Meadville Tribune* still prints the student paper and provides “continued mentorship in design, principles of reporting, and journalism ethics,” Hetrick said.

In 2009, Hetrick was named Pennsylvania Journalism Teacher of the Year and in 2011, the *Panther Press* won the first of many Student Keystone Awards from the Pennsylvania News Media Association. In 2015, Hetrick was asked to serve on the Pennsylvania School Press Association’s executive board. Her immersion in journalism education is “the greatest learning activity in my life,” Hetrick said.

“In order to be a journalist, you have to be interested in things that might

not ordinarily interest you. You have to be willing to do research and understand what’s important to the public,” she said.

In 2014, when librarian positions were cut, student journalists decided to cover every school board meeting, both the work sessions and the voting ones. They learned where to find and digest board agendas. “That is public information. It should be available and seen,” Hetrick said. “I’ve had kids dive into the budget. These people are making decisions that impact them every day.”

But as her students covered the news, including recent controversies, school directors became “uncomfortable” with “this level of engagement from students,” Hetrick said. “They are not as receptive as they should be to questions from student journalists.” In January, the school board approved a new policy covering “inappropriate materials,” allowing anyone to challenge library books and have them reviewed.

*Panther Press* staffers reported that the list of more than 100 books under review included *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, the *Captain Underpants* series by Dav Pilkey, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Perks of Being*



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a *Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, *What My Mother Doesn't Know* by Sonya Sones and *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

In February, using information obtained through a Right-to-Know request by a community member, Brennen McWright, Panther Press editor-in-chief, published a spreadsheet with an alphabetical list the books pulled for review, as well as their “rating on Book Looks, age recommendation, and star rating from Common Sense Media, Amazon age rating and any awards the book has won,” according to McWright’s story.

“I cannot stress enough how important it is that children and teenagers do their own research and form their own opinions on issues,” McWright explained in an email. “The benefit of research is twofold: First, it allows a student to educate themselves and enables them to make informed decisions and secondly, it encourages students to engage with the world around them. These are qualities that are a necessity as a journalist, and these activities should be encouraged by the adults that surround our youth, such as parents, teachers and other role models.”

In March, Zorian Edwards, multimedia and features editor for Panther Press, did a Zoom interview with Halse Anderson, whose novel *Speak* was pulled from Penncrest libraries for review but later returned.

“I have many feelings; the most important one is, I’m so frustrated,” Halse Anderson told Edwards. “This book has been out since 1999. It has been used in curricula in the United States in grades eight through 12 — it was also taught in colleges since 2001 when it became available in paperback,” Edwards reported. “People have written their doctoral thesis on whether using *Speak* helps students reject rape mythology. You don’t have to read all 300 pages of the dissertation; the answer is yes. *Speak* is used, like all great literature is used, as a way to open conversations. Sexual assault is prevalent in every school in America.”

Edwards, who is in his freshman year, will continue next year. “I fell in love with journalism,” said Edwards, who is transgender. “What I do is important. I will carry my experiences with me for the rest of my life. I want to make a difference. In a way, I already have. I want to continue to tell the stories that need

to be told.”

But it’s getting more difficult for student journalists to tell stories the way they need to be told.

“In many districts, journalism is the sad stepsister in the curriculum that is often sequestered to the back room because administrators are intimidated by the fact that student journalists do know what is going on inside and are reporting the truth for the public to see,” Blystone said. “Students reporting on school issues make them watch dogs, more than any parent or community member can.”

Blystone continued: “I have worked with student journalists in three school districts across the commonwealth, as well as in three other states, who have stood tall when being intimidated and censored by administrators and bullied by members of the public. This is the sad state we are in today, adults telling students to tell the truth, then chastising them when they do.”

Hetrick, who is undergoing mental health treatment for the “threats, intimidation, and harassment” she has faced, is proud that her students continue to produce great journalism during her absence, including organizing a forum for school board candidates before the May primary, where the students “did not softball” any questions. “I am so proud of them,” she said. “I’m gone and they’re doing it. They have not quit for one second.”

Rick Green, Meadville Tribune editor, is impressed by the Panther Press journalists, too. “I think it’s instrumental to train the next generation of journalists to be the watchdogs of the community,” Green said. Not many high schools offer the level of training available at Saegertown, he said. “Big things can happen in small places. You might not think of rural Crawford County as a training ground for aspiring journalists but it happens,” he said.

By the way, it can take a long time for that knowledge to sink in. In her Ginsberg column, Collins wrote that when she returned to Marquette as a guest speaker years after graduation, an elderly Jesuit approached her. “I’ve been retired for a long time,” he said, “but I came tonight to find you and tell you ... that you were right and I was wrong.”

That aging priest was the former dean, the Rev. Richard Sherburne.

Liz Allen, who recently reconnected with her high school journalism advisor, Sister Josette Marie Goncella, SSJ, can be reached at [lizerie@aol.com](mailto:lizerie@aol.com).

CONTRIBUTED



**[Top]** Staff members from the Panther Press and yearbook participated in the Fall Regional Competition sponsored by the Pennsylvania School Press Association at Penn State Behrend in October 2022. **[Bottom]** Mercyhurst University newspaper staffers (left to right) Gillian Mazur, Sydney Dietz, Zach Dumais, and Samantha Weber display copies of the Merciad at the 2021 student involvement fair. The Merciad is now on hiatus.

**Did you know?**

Gannon University stopped print publication of the Gannon Knight in 2020 but students publish news, sports, opinion pieces, and reviews every Friday at [gannonknight.com](http://gannonknight.com), where you can also find the *Under the Arch* student podcast.

At Penn West University Edinboro, student media has been in flux due to the pandemic and the “integration of our university with Clarion and California (Pa.),” said Ronald K. Raymond, associate professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism. “Our branch website for campus media, [edinboronow.com](http://edinboronow.com), was put on hold until further notice and our newspaper staff began contributing to The Clarion Call,” he wrote in an email. “The content remained Edinboro focused, but it was being published on [clarioncallnews.com](http://clarioncallnews.com),” he said.

Edinboro is in the process of updating

[edinboronow.com](http://edinboronow.com) and hopes to have it “back in place sometime this fall so that the students writing about the Edinboro campus and community can contribute again to our unified PennWest Edinboro campus media website,” he wrote in an email.

Sydney Dietz, who majored in graphic design and integrated media and strategic communications at Mercyhurst, graduated in December and is sad but not surprised that the Merciad, the student newspaper, is on “hiatus.”

Still, she is confident that her work as the Merciad’s sports editor will help her land a full-time job in sports or communications. She especially enjoyed covering the school’s D-1 hockey teams and interviewing players. Seeing people read and react to her stories was almost as rewarding as reporting and editing, she said.



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# What's Next After Graduation?

Artificial intelligence and real humans offer their advice

By: Jonathan Burdick

While contemplating the wisdom needed for an article directed at graduating seniors, teenagers who are eagerly entering — or sometimes unwillingly stumbling *into* — adulthood, I did what any worldly person in 2023 would do: I consulted with artificial intelligence.

"Graduating high school doesn't mean you're done learning," OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot wanted graduates to know. "Education is a lifelong process and there are many ways to continue learning beyond the classroom. Read books, take online courses, attend workshops, or learn a new skill."

"That's some pretty good algorithmic advice there, ChatGPT," I wrote back. "What life experiences guide your counsel?"

"As an AI language model, I do not have life experiences," it responded. "There are certain aspects of life that are better understood and conveyed through human experiences, emotions, and empathy. Additionally, human advisors can provide emotional support and empathy, which are crucial elements in offering effective life advice."

That seemed like some pretty good advice too, so I took it. Now, the question remained: to whom should I speak? Teenagers themselves, not yet tainted by the trials and tribulations of adulthood? Celebrities who could entice more clicks for my article? Adults for whom the naivety of youth has been supplanted by the wisdom of experience? Maybe a local curmudgeon who, if only I could crack through their rigid exterior, would reveal compassionate truths of the universe?

"Both youthful teenagers and older individuals with life experience can possess wisdom, but in different ways," advised ChatGPT. "Wisdom is not necessarily tied to age, but rather, it is a combination of knowledge, experience, and judgment."

There was that word again: experience. As Julius Caesar famously said, "Experience is the teacher of all things." I decided to reach out to a few people with unique life experiences to see what wisdom could be mined from the depths of their collective journeys. My first question was one that I've asked myself many times: what advice would you give an 18-year-old you if you had the chance?

"I would say learn when to speak and when to stay silent," says Maurice Troop, a Central High School graduate whose experiences include being an educator, Erie City Council member, and head of The Breeze Band.

"Things may not always go *exactly* the way you plan, but things will work out exactly the way they are supposed to," explains Sonya Byes, an East High School graduate who now wears many hats, including as host of the local talk show *Chatting with Sonya & Friends*. To have fear of a choice, she believes, doesn't mean that it's the *wrong* choice. "Don't be afraid to take risks, because they often pay off. Have

CONTRIBUTED/JESSICA HUNTER



Successful and inspiring Erieites offer their words of advice to new graduates including (clockwise from top left) Dave Blazek, a Cathedral Preparatory School graduate, Maurice Troop, a Central High School graduate, Marcus Atkinson, a graduate of Strong Vincent, and Sonya Byes, who graduated from East High School.

the courage to do things [while] afraid."

Marcus Atkinson graduated from Strong Vincent, then attended school and lived in Atlanta for a decade before settling back in Erie. Today, he hosts *NEXT* with Marcus Atkinson on WQLN PBS and has held leadership positions with (among others) ServErie, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center, and The Nonprofit Partnership.

"Get involved with the community and get involved with the organizations and people [of your community]," he recommends, noting the significant crossover of people from his past experiences with roles he has taken later in life. It's something he never anticipated during his younger years. "You don't think about it when you're a kid, but just make sure that you're connecting and being involved — because for as much as you believe it will never come back around, it *does*."

Dave Blazek, a Cathedral Preparatory School graduate who won the Reuben Award for America's Best Newspaper Panel Comic in 2019 and 2020 as a cartoonist, wishes he had better understood that where you're from has no bearing on what you are able to accomplish. "Your talent doesn't know where you live," says the one-time Erieite, who now makes his home outside of Philadelphia. Today, his comic, *Loose Parts*, is syndicated by The Washington Post Writers Group and read across the world. "I've met

so many people with such great potential, yet they never pursued it under the weird thought that only people in big, fancy places have great ideas and the ability to bring them to fruition."

For many who come from a small city or rural town, it can be difficult to imagine breaking into industries that might seem otherworldly, professions that seem to exist in other realities, impossibly out of reach. Despite this perception, Blazek explains that *especially* today, with how technology and social media connect us across the globe, we have more avenues for pursuing our goals.

"So, get going," Blazek continues. "Start working your talents to see what develops. If you fail, make it because you failed, not because you restricted yourself. Your ideas for a business; your thoughts for a song; your dream of living an authentic, quiet life that matches you... none of this is geographically dependent. So, figure out what it is that makes you happy. Figure out how you might make a living at it. Focus on the point where those two lines intersect. And get going."

Perhaps it's easier said than done, of course. There is always adversity. Even with a clear plan in place, there will be the inevitable challenges and, at times, even paralyzingly scary moments. Byes notes that, for her, optimism and hope are essential. She deeply believes everything will work out exactly how it's



supposed to, but she still stresses the importance of being able to pivot when things don't go as expected. Being flexible and open to change when facing life's obstacles is key. "The power of redirection is the universe's way of saying: do it differently," she maintains.

The company you keep also matters. Atkinson stresses the importance of one's social circle to assist with strenuous times and highlights a childhood friend of 46 years as his "personal ace."

"He's always been my first call, my longest call, my most intimate call, and that includes a lot of tears, a lot of frustration, and a lot of yelling because he gives me the freedom in that space to just be me, because he knows me so well," describes Atkinson. Their roots and understanding of each other's history, values, and background provide insight that is often lost in some of the superficial friendships of the social media age. "[H]e understands the journey that it took me to get where I am. So, when life is tough, it's a lot easier for this person to say the things that he knows needs to be said in that moment."

Moving away certainly has value too, he adds, as it provides new perspectives and opportunities for growth, but sometimes the friends made later in life lack the perspective of longevity, which is why he always comes back to his childhood friend. He has noticed the same with his father, who, now in his seventies, still has regular conversations with his own childhood best friend.

"Figure out who knows and really gets you right

now, who has stood the test of time [as your friend]. Don't lose contact with that person," he suggests. "As time goes on, that person — or those persons if you're lucky enough to have more than one — is really key to your growth. There's a familiarity that you can't buy."

Troop has also seen the people in his life as indispensable during difficult times and he's made a conscious effort to lean on them for their wisdom and

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**"Get going. Start working your talents to see what develops. If you fail, make it because you failed, not because you restricted yourself." — Cathedral Prep graduate and *Loose Parts* cartoonist Dave Blazek**

---

experience. "I always had relatives or mentors that I would ask about various tough situations," he explains. "Their wisdom would help me to overcome them. You never know if you are totally making the right choice. But I would consult with people who have experience in those areas and then make a decision."

Atkinson seconds the importance of these mentors and notes that during every chapter in his life, these people have been available and necessary to his own

personal growth and his ability to see something within himself that he may have otherwise missed. "I believe that every season has a mentor or mentors for that season in your life," he says. "When it comes to wherever your life is heading, someone is always put into your life that helps shape it in that moment and direction you're going."

Sometimes though, as Byes says, you just need to trust your instincts. "I don't think you ever really know [if you're making the right choice]," she says. "What I do *know* is that I trust my woman's intuition. That's a *real* thing. If it doesn't feel right, more than likely it's *not* right. I also pray a lot and I believe a woman's intuition is a gift from God."

Blazek believes that another key is to, as he calls it, get "on the right side of the mountain" while also reducing the amount of bad decisions one makes in the process. If there is something that you *really* want to do or pursue in life, he says, you'll want to learn as much as you can about it and then simply *go* for it.

"Let's say you want to be a rock star," he illustrates. "Well, you might not have the full talent to do that, but get yourself into the music industry somehow, someway. Get on that side of the music mountain. Or, at the least, get into a creative field instead of a purely analytic one. Get on that side of the mountain. ... In short, you can afford to make a few bad choices, because you'll still end up somewhere you can learn to like."

Also, it's important to try and be cool, but maybe



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## FEATURE

not cool in the usual understanding of the word.

"Cool is the slow, long acquisition of skill," Blazek says. He points out that having a fancy car is nice, but not necessarily cool, as it's something anybody with the money could go out and buy. Instead, he argues, it's the skills that take time — playing an instrument, learning a language, running a farm, building a business, and so on — that are cool. "[S]ince a time-acquired skill can't easily be acquired by the next person you meet, it makes you unbelievably cool. Do this and you'll be the person other people are drawn to at parties." He compares it to being a long-distance runner and how the mentality learned from this process, the uphill battles and even the pain, is invaluable. "So, while you work on being cool, you're actually building the very endurance that will see you through the tough times."

I checked back in with the artificial intelligence. According to an algorithm, was this all good advice? "These are generally considered good principles to guide young individuals," ChatGPT concludes. "It's still important to note that everyone's circumstances are unique. It's essential for individuals to adapt these principles to their specific situations and make decisions that align with their personal values, goals, and aspirations."

Indeed, although experience guides us, every journey through life is different. "We know nothing of what will happen in future," remarked Abraham Lincoln in 1839, "but by the analogy of experience."

"When you look back, you get it," reflects Atkinson on the experiences of his life. "In so many ways, I'm that nine-year-old kid still. But at the same time, I've realized a lot of my potential as a man and that is an amalgamation of all of these different experiences and all of these different people. Life is a beautiful thing in that respect."

*Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at [jburdick@eriereader.com](mailto:jburdick@eriereader.com)*

## EC3 Sees First Class Graduate

MIKE SCHNELLE



Erie County Community College's first graduating class is also transitioning into a new phase in their lives. Their first ceremony was held on June 3, 2023 and included 28 graduates. Ten graduates received their certificate in welding and ten others earned an Associate of Applied Business in Management and Entrepreneurial Thinking. Of the graduates, 18 are mov-

ing right into the workforce while the others are planning to continue their education by transferring into four-year institutions including the Penn West University System, Penn State system, Mercyhurst University, and Slippery Rock University.

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# The Ghost Ships of Lake Erie: Our Underwater Museum

Erie's current opportunity to become a National Marine Sanctuary

By: Erin Phillips

On May 18, 2023, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that the Lake Erie Quadrangle was officially under consideration for designation as a National Marine Sanctuary. This may not sound very exciting at first read, but it is a very big deal for our area and has the potential to transform Erie, economically and environmentally. This nomination has been in the works since 2015, was spearheaded by our previous County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, and completed by the tireless efforts of many players at the private consulting and county levels, through the county planning office, regional archaeologists, local and state-wide elected officials, and over 100 stakeholders and invested citizens who wrote letters of support.

And after years of waiting in line (progress being slowed due to the pandemic as well as a presidential administration whose priorities did not align with environmental protection), Erie is finally having our day. Prior to NOAA making a decision on whether or not to move forward with designating the Lake Erie Quadrangle as a National Marine Sanctuary, they want our take on it. So until July 18, 2023, they are requesting public comment — via their website or by attending one of three public meetings — which they will take into consideration when they make their determination on our status.

So what is the Lake Erie Quadrangle? Why is it worth protecting? What does being a National Marine Sanctuary mean? What would be the benefit to our region if our portion of Lake Erie became a National Marine Sanctuary? How do you leave a public comment? Let's get into it.

## The Lake Erie Quadrangle: A Ghost Ship Graveyard

Lake Erie has been a source of life, food, survival, commerce, travel, and leisure since the lake assumed its present form, after the glaciers from the last Ice Age began to melt. Indigenous tribes of the area were populous along the lake and on what is now called Presque Isle, and after early European settlers came to the area, the lake was

PATRICK GRAB 8/14 PHOTO



The waters around Presque Isle are included in the 75 miles of Erie County shoreline (north to the Canadian border) poised to be designated as a National Marine Sanctuary by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which would help to protect and conserve the lake and historic shipwrecks within it.

key to travel, military positioning, fishing and ice harvesting, trading, shipping, and economic growth. Erie was an important "last stop to freedom" on the Underground Railroad, and people escaping enslavement traversed the lake to Canada, leaving untold remains within the lake. All of these thousands of years of life along the lake translates to a treasure trove of maritime and cultural objects buried beneath or residing upon the lakebed.

According to NOAA's designation proposal, "Nearly every type of vessel that operated on the Great Lakes during the 19th and 20th centuries is represented in the area being considered for sanctuary designation. Based on historical records, 196 vessels may have sunk within the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie, and 35 of these shipwrecks have been identified... This area also includes the potential for submerged prehistoric sites and historic properties that may be of religious and cultural significance to Indigenous nations and tribes."

Historically, the Lake Erie Quadrangle (meaning the approximately 75 miles of shoreline along Erie County, which contains six townships, two boroughs,

and the City of Erie, and north to the border with Canada) has been a very dangerous area of the lake to traverse. Hundreds of ships were lost, sunk, or run aground within the waters, particularly in the area close to Presque Isle where sandbars and constantly shifting land masses made accurate charting difficult and safe navigating nearly impossible.

According to Dave Stone and David Frew, authors of *The Lake Erie Quadrangle: Waters of Repose*, "When a storm or other circumstance arose requiring a ship to navigate this area, its captain had little or no information by which to guide his ship." Aside from the difficult geography of the area, there were many other factors at play in the 19th and early 20th century that contributed to the remarkable number of shipwrecks in Lake Erie including lack of lighting (both a lack of lighthouses and onboard navigational lighting), unpredictable water traffic crossing patterns, and primitive methods of weather prediction.

As a result, we essentially have a ghost ship archaeological graveyard beneath the waters of Lake Erie. Frew and Stone

comment, "Much of the research on Great Lakes shipwrecks is incomplete at best. Many of the ships which were lost disappeared with no trace. Crews were not able to give accounts of exact locations." But in their book they were able to, through historic accounts, catalog 429 ships that were lost in Lake Erie between Canada's Long Point and the Erie shore dating from 1797 to 1991, nearly half of these being in Pennsylvania waters. NOAA's designation proposal states, "The known shipwrecks span from the 1838 steamboat *Chesapeake* to speedboats, tugs, barges, and workboats lost before 1940. The collection includes schooners, brigs, and barks; barges and schooner barges; dredges and sand suckers; fishing tugs and trawlers; and sidewheel steamboats and propellers."

## Why Does the Quadrangle Need Protecting?

Part of what the NOAA designation of the Lake Erie Quadrangle as a National Marine Sanctuary would do is to protect and preserve these sites of historical significance. Current threats to the area's integrity include **human im-**



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## FEATURE

PASST



The Pennsylvania Archeology Shipwreck and Survey Team or PASST is a group comprised of members of a number of conservation organizations in Erie who regularly dive to catalog and record historic shipwrecks in Erie. Their work has helped to inform those working to advance the National Marine Sanctuary designation of the Lake Erie Quadrangle.

**pact** (inappropriate use of anchors and nets, removal or destruction of artifacts by recreational divers, and harmful agricultural fertilizers affecting the water quality) and **invasive species** (like zebra mussels, quagga mussels, and round gobies).

According to the proposal submitted to NOAA for potential designation, "Receiving a sanctuary designation would strongly aid in broader regulatory and educational efforts to mitigate the inadvertent and/or intentional damage to our maritime resources." So, not only would a National Marine Sanctuary designation aid in the preservation of the countless historic resources within the Quadrangle, it would also come with water quality monitoring that would ensure the waters of our lake are healthy (for the shipwrecks but also for all of us living here).

One important point to note, and one that may cause some residents or leaders who are averse to governmental regulation to soften a bit: the nomination as written "proposes to exclude the Port of Erie from the sanctuary boundaries to ensure compatible use with shipping and other commercial activities." Our current economic needs via the shipping network through our port would not be affected by the National Marine Sanctuary designation.

### What Does Being a National Marine Sanctuary Mean?

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of oceanic, marine, and Great Lakes waters. Being a part of this network means that we would fall under

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Museum educator Ed Bolla teaches an educational school group at the Erie Maritime Museum about the archaeology of shipwrecks in Lake Erie.

the protection and investment of a fully functioning system of conservation and preservation. According to a statement from NOAA, “Few places on the planet can compete with the diversity of the National Marine Sanctuary System, which protects America’s most iconic natural and cultural marine resources.”

Being a National Marine Sanctuary brings a number of benefits to the areas that are designated — including increased conservation efforts that are backed by one of the strongest pieces of conservation legislation, the National Marine Sanctuary Act which “seeks to preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections, and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures.” This is achieved through federally sanctioned research and monitoring, which would include programs tailored to our specific needs in Erie.

This designation would also involve opportunities for educational programs and outreach, funding opportunities, community engagement including community-based advisory groups, and a massive positive impact on the local economy.

#### What’s In It For Us?

Aside from the aforementioned environmental benefits, which would strongly bolster the future of our re-

gion, there are *significant* economic benefits to having a National Marine Sanctuary designation.

Let’s take Alpena, Michigan for example. The city of Alpena has a population of about 10,000 and is located on the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary of Lake Huron which has approximately 116 historically significant shipwrecks. There is no major interstate running to Alpena — in fact, it is an hour drive from the nearest highway — and the industrial history in Alpena is Rust Belt at its base. Prior to Alpena’s designation as a marine sanctuary, there really wasn’t a significant reason for anyone to visit the town (apart from its general location on a Great Lake, of course).

Fast forward to 2000 when Alpena earned its designation as a marine sanctuary, and now, in conjunction with their Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center, Alpena’s main industry is tourism. In 2021, the Alpena visitor center saw 100,000 visitors coming through who were specifically interested in diving the sanctuary.

Because of the town’s focus on their sanctuary designation, their historic shipwrecks, and their maritime culture, they have been able to buoy their small-town economy and cash in on those tourist dollars by offering activities such as glass bottom boat tours, archaeological and educational excur-

sions, and outdoor recreation. There is a nonprofit organization called Friends of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary that hosts lectures, activities, and events like their annual Maritime Festival, shipwreck tours, summer camps, and educational school groups.

According to a report from Central Michigan University: “Some of the biggest tourist attractions in Alpena lie beneath the waves. Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary holds over 100 shipwrecks. Some of them are mere miles from shore, making them accessible to everyday people. The sanctuary often tops lists of ‘Things to Do in Alpena,’ a town of 10,000 that sits over an hour from the interstate.”

As a result of the tourism boom that has happened in Alpena for the past 20+ years, the town itself has been transformed into that kind of small town that people love to visit: with bustling shops, restaurants, and lodging making up a significant portion of the employment in Alpena (second only to the healthcare industry).

Think about what could happen to Erie if we could boost our tourism industry in the same fashion. No offense to the people of Alpena, but Erie has a lot more going on. We are located directly off of two major highways (so we’re easier to get to), we have naturally occurring sandy beaches for recreation outside of diving, not to mention a few other things: a world-class art museum, historical museum, maritime museum, historic lighthouses, tons of waterfront related activities, a zoo, a children’s museum, theaters, venues, tons of hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, etc. If 100,000 divers are visiting the small town of Alpena each year, how many do you think would come to Erie, which offers a lot more reasons for tourists to stay for a while and spend their money besides the shipwrecks that might draw them here initially?

State leaders are in agreement that this could potentially be a huge boon for Erie’s economy. Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro commented to NOAA, “Lake Erie and its beautiful shoreline are true national treasures worthy of protecting — and on behalf of 13 million Pennsylvanians, I strongly support NOAA moving forward with its effort to designate a national marine sanctuary in Lake Erie.” He continues, “Lake Erie is a critical part of Pennsylvania’s history, culture, and economy, generating millions of dollars in tourism and economic activity for Northwestern

Pennsylvania. This designation would ensure we protect that heritage and safeguard those benefits for generations to come, and my administration looks forward to working with NOAA to make this designation a reality.”

#### How to Leave a Public Comment

NOAA is seeking public input, opinions, and comments prior to making the final decision on whether to designate the Lake Erie Quadrangle. There are a few ways to voice your support or concerns with NOAA. One is by leaving a comment through the Federal eRulemaking Portal by visiting regulations.gov and entering docket number NOAA-NOS-2023-0039.

You can also attend one of three scheduled public meetings (one in-person and two virtual). For the virtual meetings, you must register beforehand in order to make a public comment. All orally presented public comments are limited to three minutes. There is one in-person meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 21 in the Hirt Auditorium at Blasco Memorial Library (160 E. Front St.) from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The two virtual public meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, June 27 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. and Wednesday, June 28 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Links for attending these meetings will be available in the online version of this article.

Please note: the meetings will be audio recorded, including the public comment section, for the purposes of accurately developing meeting minutes. All public comments received, including any associated names, will be captured and included in the meeting minutes transcript, will be public, and will be maintained by NOAA as part of its administrative record.

The portal for making public comments will be open through July 18. Now is the time to speak up in support of this designation, which would be extremely beneficial to not only preserving the sunken history of Erie’s maritime heritage, but also in conserving the lake for future generations.

For more information on NOAA, National Marine Sanctuaries, or Erie’s potential designation, please visit: [sanctuaries.noaa.gov](https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)

If you’re interested in learning more about SCUBA diving the shipwrecks of Lake Erie, visit [scubaerie.com](https://scubaerie.com) or The Pennsylvania Archeology Shipwreck Survey Team (PASST) at [regsciconsort.com/lake-erie-shipwrecks/](https://regsciconsort.com/lake-erie-shipwrecks/)

Erin Phillips can be reached at [erin@eriereader.com](mailto:erin@eriereader.com)



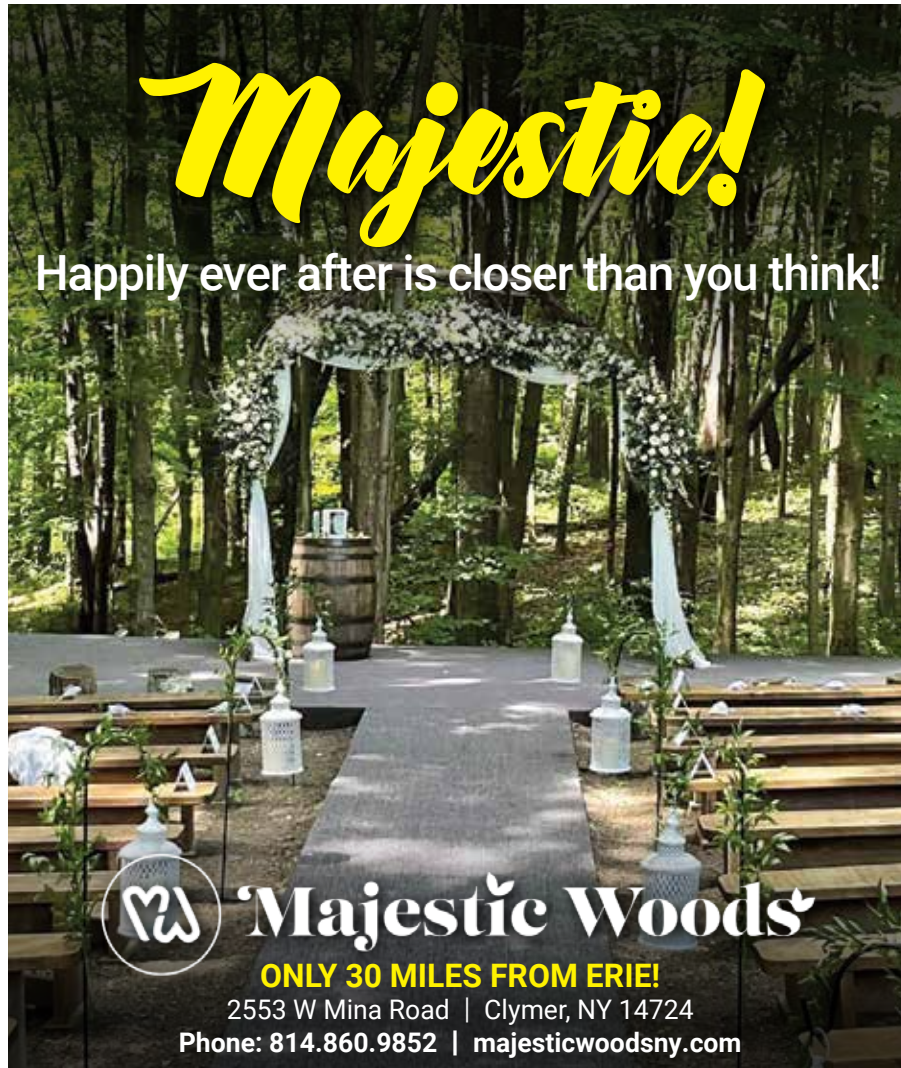
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## Supporting Erie's LGBTQIA+ Community

Finding allies in local organizations, agencies, and businesses

By: Erin Phillips

Being an ally is traditionally defined as joining together with someone or a group of people to achieve a common purpose. Being an ally within the LGBTQIA+ community means a little bit more. It means turning that togetherness into action by offering tangible support. That may be through legislation — fighting and voting for policies that protect LGBTQIA+ individuals from discrimination or violence. Or, as is true of the businesses and organizations listed below, by offering a safe place for LGBTQIA+ persons to gather, meet up, feel welcomed, or by offering individual support through therapy or gender-affirming medical care.

It is incredibly important to the mental and physical health of the LGBTQIA+ community that these safe places of support not only exist, but are also visible, easily accessible, and successful. Local LGBTQIA+ activist, political leader, and founder of Compton's Table (featured herein) Dr. Tyler Titus offers their testimonial for why these places are so integral: "I so clearly remember the night I was sitting in my bedroom when I made the decision I didn't want to do it anymore. It was a fall evening, I was in ninth grade, and the heavy hurt inside my body was too much to hold any longer. I was piecing together who I was and I knew that my truth meant I was going to lose friends and family. I knew this because the messages I received about queer people was that we weren't supposed to exist. We weren't in books. We weren't in movies. We weren't in love songs. We were, however, the butt of jokes, a valid reason to be violent, undeserving of basic human rights, and ultimately seen as fundamentally flawed or broken."

Titus continues, "That night in my bedroom, I only knew stories of queer trauma, hurt, and struggle. I had no examples of queer happiness or joy, let alone queer thriving or success. Flash forward to 2021, I am meeting person after person who has a similar story to mine and watching as suicidality rates of queer youth between ages of 10-24 reaches 50 percent." Titus felt compelled to create a safe space for young people going through the same trials and tribulations.

The net of support organizations, nonprofits, advocacy groups, support groups, and businesses in Erie that present themselves as allies to the LGBTQIA+ population is so incredibly important, and is ever-growing, evolving, and expanding. Below are a few (listed alphabetically) that have been doing the work and fighting the fight for equal rights and fair treatment, offering empathy, compassion, and resources while also providing helpful examples of queer joy.

### Aging With Pride

**Their mission:** Aging With Pride is an organization of senior LGBTQIA+ members and allies, which aims to develop and sponsor social, recreational, and educational events to promote healthy leisure activities, community, and an active, enjoyable lifestyle.

**What they do:** A newer organization to Erie, Aging With Pride specifically addresses the needs of the lo-



**There are a number of support groups, organizations, and individual businesses in Erie that exist specifically to support the health, well-being, and protection of the LGBTQIA+ community including places like Compton's Table, Erie Gay News, NWPA Pride Alliance, and Central Outreach Wellness Center.**

cal senior LGBTQIA+ population. They host a regular book club meetup at Werner Books, selecting reading material that centers around the queer community, its struggles and triumphs. They have been visible at recent events like NWPA Pride Prom and at the LGBT Food Drive, and are planning to have a table at both Erie and Meadville Pride events later this month. Their goals include outings to offer social opportunities for senior LGBTQIA+ folks like cultural trips to Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo to experience art galleries, film festivals, and LGBT events.

*For more information visit: [agingwithprideerie.org](http://agingwithprideerie.org) or email [daleallgeier@outlook.com](mailto:daleallgeier@outlook.com)*

### Central Outreach Wellness Center

**Their mission:** The mission of Central Outreach Wellness Center (COWC) is to promote wellness in the community by fostering the patient's whole self. Their focus is on culturally competent care, working to understand what the client's needs are and how they can be treated holistically. COWC fosters LGBTQIA+ and HIV+ patients by understanding the unique needs of those clients. The center supports harm reduction as well as recovery, and no one is judged or shunned for their personal behaviors; trust is a process that takes time and effort to nurture.

**What they do:** Based out of Pittsburgh, COWC has a regional office in Erie at 3104 State St. The doctors and staff at COWC provide comprehensive gay and transgender health care including: gender-affirming hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery navigation, laser hair removal, mental health care, as well as specialized care for addiction and STD treatment and services. Having access to knowledgeable, non-judgmental, competent care providers is key to saving lives

within the LGBTQIA+ community and COWC of Erie provides that necessary support. The facility also hosts events in support of the local queer community.

*For more information visit: [centraloutreach.com](http://centraloutreach.com) (click on Erie, PA) or call (814) 619-4009*

### Compton's Table

**Their mission:** Compton's Table works to create a thriving queer community in Northwestern Pennsylvania through connecting peers and empowering queer youth and young adults to be agents of sustainable change. Compton's Table envisions a sustainable organization where queer youth and young adults can find community, are seen, valued, and affirmed.

**What they do:** The organization is named for the first transgender protest in America at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco 1966 which marked the beginning of transgender activism (and actually preceded the more famous Stonewall riots of 1969). Participants in the protest, who were largely transgender women and gay men, stood up for their rights and fought against police brutality, poverty, oppression, and discrimination. In that same vein, Compton's Table hopes to fight for the rights of the queer community of Erie while also providing a safe space for them to access the resources they need to thrive.

Started by Dr. Tyler Titus, Compton's Table specifically focuses their efforts on aiding queer youth ages 12-21, by providing resources that will support them in feeling less isolated, more validated, and move towards feeling comfortable expressing their true selves. Titus comments, "I wanted to provide a place where the youth and young adults who entered our doors felt seen, heard, affirmed, and left knowing queer joy and happiness was more than possible. I wanted to build what I

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**Friday, June 23**  
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## FEATURE

had needed as a young queer person.”

“At Compton’s, we focus on social engagement, peer empowerment, and reducing suicidality through creation of hope for the future. We laugh, we cry, we heal, but mostly we build connection and community.” This is accomplished through support groups as well as the organization’s “Compton’s Closet,” which aims to “help the outside match the inside,” and provides clothing to youth in need to allow them to dress in a way that feels correct for them.

For more information visit: [comptonstable.org](http://comptonstable.org), email [info@comptonstable.org](mailto:info@comptonstable.org), or call or text (814) 580-8185

### Erie Gay News

**Their mission:** Erie Gay News is published once monthly in print and as needed on the web as a source of news, events, information, support, and affirmation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, their friends, families, and supportive allies in the greater Erie and surrounding areas.

**What they do:** For the past 30 years, Erie Gay News (EGN) has given a public voice to the LGBTQIA+ community in Erie. Creator and editor Michael Mahler has published well over 300 issues through those years, and while at times the name of the publication has changed, the message hasn’t. The all-volunteer newspaper has existed since being “out” wasn’t nearly as accepted as it is today, while Mahler and company keep doing the work in the community to ensure that acceptance keeps growing, paving the way for the future of the queer community in Erie.

EGN has resources available on their website ranging from a calendar for LGBTQIA+ related events throughout the region, in-depth coverage of gay activism and programs throughout the area, HIV and health related resources, and information on how to register to vote. Looking at LGBTQIA+ issues from every angle, EGN is an invaluable resource in Erie.

For more information or to subscribe, visit: [eriegaynews.com](http://eriegaynews.com), email [info@eriegaynews.com](mailto:info@eriegaynews.com), or call (814) 456-9833

### Erie Sisters & Brothers Transgender Support Group

**Their mission:** Erie Sisters & Brothers Transgender Support Group exists to promote acceptance through education, enlightenment, and social integration.

**What they do:** This group has existed since 1991 — originally known as Erie Sisters, they have undergone a name change to reflect their inclusivity, but their support of the community has not wavered. As a private, well-moderated, online group, they assist all transgender people, spouses, significant others, and supporters of the transgender community.

For more information search Facebook Group: *Erie Sisters & Brothers Transgender Support Group*

### Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE)

**Their mission:** The Greater Erie Alliance for Equality, Inc. (GEAE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the region’s LGBTQIA+ community and its straight allies through educational programs, social events, and opportunities for service, which are designed to strengthen the community’s voice and improve quality of life in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

ERIN PHILLIPS



Healthcare provider Central Outreach’s Erie branch is located at 31st and State and offers gender-affirming, judgment-free care for all. They promote culturally competent care and their motto states: **pro Black, pro brown, pro weed, pro gay, pro choice, pro trans, pro hoe.**

**What they do:** GEAE provides scholarships for students within the queer community including the GEAE Pride Scholarship which offers \$1000 scholarships to any student in any kind of higher education facility who identifies as LGBTQIA+, as well as the Joseph M. Kulka Jr. Memorial Scholarship for Diversity Leadership.

The organization holds regular visibility events, runs a free gay youth program in Blasco Library’s Teen Space, and hosts food and clothing drives for those in need throughout the community. They are the primary fiscal sponsor of the monthly LGBTQIA+ Youth Events facilitated by Journey to a Trauma Informed Life (featured below).

For more information visit: [greatereriealliance.org](http://greatereriealliance.org) or email: [geaeinfo@gmail.com](mailto:geaeinfo@gmail.com)

### Journey to a Trauma Informed Life

**Their mission:** Journey to a Trauma Informed Life was created in July 2019 by three therapists in Erie who saw a need for trauma-informed, culturally and LGBTQIA+ sensitive mental health services in our community. Since then, the group has grown to a staff of 13 diverse therapists ready to help clients on their healing journey.

**What they do:** While this group of therapists offers quality, inclusive trauma-informed mental health therapy specializing in LGBTQIA+ issues, they are also advocates within the community offering inclusive events, drives, and support groups. The practice hosts book

clubs, food drives, yoga classes, and game/craft nights in an effort to offer a place of belonging, understanding, strengthening, and healing. Journey is recognized as a LGBT owned business by The National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

Co-founder of Journey, Angelica Spraggins, noted in an interview with Amy VanScoter in February, "Sitting across from someone who can have some connection to your experience takes some of that worry away from 'do I have to explain every part of who I am or can I get to the hard stuff?'" Getting to the hard stuff, especially within the queer community, is extremely important and the basis of the therapy that happens at Journey.

For more information visit: [atraumainformedlife.com](http://atraumainformedlife.com) or call (833) 487-5769

### Northwest Pennsylvania Pride Alliance

**Their mission:** NWPA Pride Alliance works to improve the visibility of the queer/LGBTQIA+ community in the greater Erie area. They are committed to fostering equality, respect, and diversity through events and organizations.

**What they do:** Since their inception in 2012, NWPA Pride Alliance has become THE organizing body for Pride related events throughout Erie. Now in their 12th year as an organization, NWPA Pride Alliance shows up with queer visibility at events like Blues and Jazz Festival, Miss Erie Drag Pageant, parades, and charitable drives. They organize the annual Erie Pride Parade —

this year's event is scheduled for June 24, originating at 11th and State streets and culminating at Perry Square. In addition to Pride related events, the group also hosts regular meet-ups including happy hours, picnics, and an annual Pride Day at Waldameer.

For more information visit: [nwpapride.org](http://nwpapride.org), email [president@nwpapride.org](mailto:president@nwpapride.org), or call (814) 314-9075

The net of support organizations, nonprofits, advocacy groups, support groups, and businesses in Erie that present themselves as allies to the LGBTQIA+ population is so incredibly important, and is ever-growing, evolving, and expanding. Those listed herein have been doing the work and fighting the fight for equal rights and fair treatment, offering empathy, compassion, and resources while also providing helpful examples of queer joy.

### TransFamily of NWPA

**Their mission:** TransFamily of NWPA's mission is to support the transgender community of Northwestern Pennsylvania, as well as those who are questioning, their loved ones, family members, and allies. TransFa-

mily works towards a greater understanding of people who are transgender through advocacy, education, and community engagement.

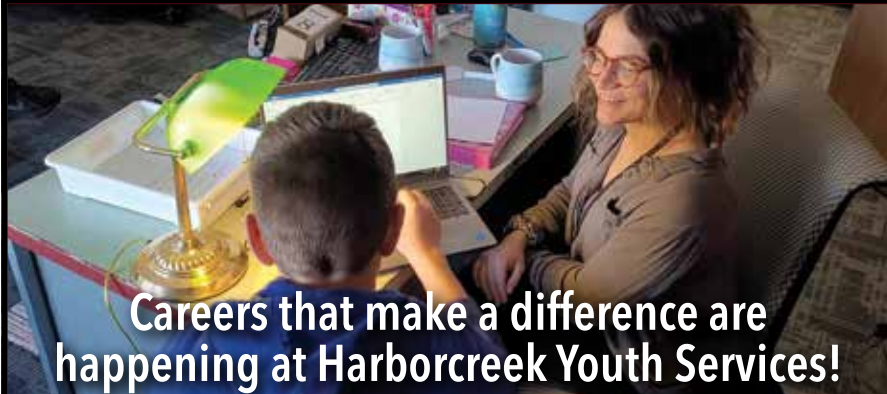
**What they do:** TransFamily of NWPA consists of a peer-based network of support groups serving the trans community in Erie, Crawford, and Warren counties. They support the trans community through advocacy efforts and education, as well as lawfully attending to charges of discrimination experienced by trans people in Erie County.

For more information, visit: [transfamilynwpa.org](http://transfamilynwpa.org) or email [TransFamilyNWPABOD@gmail.com](mailto:TransFamilyNWPABOD@gmail.com)

### The Zone Dance Club

**What they do:** As Erie's only queer bar and dance club, the Zone represents a key place of belonging for the LGBTQIA+ community in Erie. Bars like the Zone have been incredibly important to the gay movement throughout history by serving as safe places for the queer community to be together, to relax, and to have the opportunity to exist as their true selves. Established in 1998, The Zone is currently celebrating their 25th year in Erie. The club offers dancing, drinks, and food 365 days a year, while also hosting regular events like karaoke and trivia nights and drag shows and brunches.

For more information visit: [thezonedanceclub.com](http://thezonedanceclub.com), email [info@thezonedanceclub.com](mailto:info@thezonedanceclub.com), or call (814) 452-0125  
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## FEATURE

# The Jefferson Educational Society Turns 15

Global leadership, local advocacy, and an impressive array of invited guests

By: Dan Schank

“The Jefferson is a bit of a Swiss army knife,” says Ben Speggen, vice president of the Jefferson Educational Society (and contributing editor to this publication). “It does civic education, programming, and publications. And in the publications, it’s not just about environmental justice, or politics, or poetry, or foreign affairs. It’s all of it.”

I spoke to Speggen over Zoom in late May to assess the 15 years of programming our local think tank has offered. When I asked him to name an especially impressive accomplishment, he began to reminisce about their annual Global Summit. “The idea behind the Global Summit was that we wanted to import big ideas to our little corner of the world,” says Speggen. “People shouldn’t have to go to Chicago, New York, D.C., or San Francisco to learn from the best and brightest. That should be happening in Erie, Pennsylvania.”

It’s safe to say that the Global Summit has delivered on this promise. Across its first 14 years, it has featured ex-presidents (George W. Bush) and noteworthy presidential hopefuls (Howard Dean). The Summit has featured a former CIA director (General Michael Hayden), a former Secretary of Defense (Chuck Hagel), a former director of the National Security Agency (General Michael Hayden), and two former Pennsylvania Governors named Tom (Ridge and Wolf). And it’s not all politics either. Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, whose book *Team Of Rivals* inspired a Stephen Spielberg movie and the original cabinet of the Obama administration, has taken the stage twice. In 2016, sociologist and ordained minister Michael Eric Dyson assessed the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. At the tail-end of quarantine in 2021, physician and Washington Post columnist Leana Wen offered her controversial thoughts about COVID-19. And Erie’s own Joan Chittister assessed her work with the Benedictine Sisters in 2014.

When I asked Angela Beaumont, the Jefferson’s director of programming, to recall an impactful partnership cultivated through the Summit, she thought of one guest immediately. “When I think about the Jefferson’s impact,” says Beaumont, “our work with renowned urban planner Bruce Katz comes to my



The annual Global Summit presented by the Jefferson Education Society is one of the organization’s largest events and considered one of their biggest accomplishments – bringing in renowned and diverse speakers from all over the world to give presentations in Erie.

mind.” In 2014, the former director of the Brookings Institution arrived to discuss post-industrial economies in the Rust Belt. The connections he made led to sustained involvement in Erie. “The Jefferson has gathered community leaders and stakeholders on numerous occasions to learn from Katz and other policy experts about how to build on Erie’s momentum,” according to Beaumont. “These conversations spurred the interest in, and the support of, strategic urban renewal, the potential of innovation districts, a focus on Erie’s advanced industries, and more. Most recently, this impact has led to the development of an investment playbook detailing some 35 projects totaling more than \$1.1 billion of potential investment. A ‘living document,’ Infinite Erie is now executing the playbook, and the JES continues to deploy its think tank resources to the cause.”

Speggen also stresses the value of regional partnerships developed through the Summit: “We are not a parachute think tank where you come off the tarmac, go give a talk, receive a check, and get back on the plane. We like to show

people around and ensure that they can meet people working directly in the fields that they’re discussing. Last year,” says Speggen, “a student working on an undergrad thesis had the chance to interview Judy Woodruff (PBS NewsHour anchor) and Al Hunt (Bloomberg View columnist) for a half hour. They were willing to sit down and just talk.”

Speggen has enjoyed similar conversations personally. “I once got to walk from the Sheraton up to Logistics Plus with Fiona Hill (foreign affairs specialist and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution) because she didn’t want to drive,” he says. “So we got to walk through our downtown and talk about similar things happening in her hometown in the UK. What they’re experiencing and the role that public art is playing in their revitalization.”

Some of these conversations lead to direct action in Erie. Prior to her lecture for the Summit in 2021, Camille Busette (Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution) became involved with the Erie Racial Justice Policy Initiative. “She came in as a consultant because the Better Together Council formed under Mayor

JESSICA HUNTER




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Schember had wanted to do a policy review," according to Speggen. "They asked the Jefferson to help identify those on the national level that understand Erie and could work with us for a year to help guide that process. So I'm able to get Busette and suddenly she's working with Erie for a year on this, identifying real solutions that can empower a resident-driven model to approach racial inequities in our community."

The think tank's Jefferson Civic Leadership Academy (JCLA) is even more directly focused on local impact than the Global Summit. The project came about because President Ferki Ferati wanted to ensure that "emerging leaders and people that have an appetite to find their way into leadership are being equipped to do so," according to Speggen. "And the incredibly challenging thing about Pennsylvania is that municipal governments are just wholly balkanized. In Erie County alone, we have 38 municipalities. So it's important that people understand the form and function of municipal government – and to find a cohort that can work together to address a critical issue facing the re-

gion."

The JCLA, which completed its eighth year in 2022, has mentored an impressive who's-who of local leadership. Its alumni include the former executive director of our library system (Erin Wincek), Erie City Councilwoman Susannah Faulkner and former Erie County Councilman Jay Breneman, the former president of our NAACP branch (Tiffany McCloud), the executive director of the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation (Veronica Rexford), and the executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (Perry Wood). Many local entrepreneurs have also completed the program, such as Hannah Kirby (Ember + Forge) and Shawnta Pulliam (founder of the child advocacy nonprofit Nurturing Hearts, Inc.).

In its first year, Angela Beaumont completed the program herself. "I had recently moved to Erie from overseas and needed to find myself professionally and personally again," she says. "When I graduated from the JCLA, I knew so much more about Erie's past, present challenges, and future potential."

Cut to 2023 and she is in charge of its

programming. "This year the JCLA is exploring childcare and early childhood education in our region," according to Beaumont. "Since many participants are in the age bracket where this is a big concern, we are poised to get some real buy-in and energy for this potentially transformative and actionable topic. It also touches on the repeated issues previous cohorts were exploring: how do we make and keep Erie an attractive and livable city for younger people and how do we raise the next generation as one community?"

Over the years, as enthusiasm about the JCLA continued to grow, the Jefferson's Raimy Fellowship Program was founded to offer a more intensive experience for certain students and alumni. The Fellowship requires long-term investigative scholarship and offers business trips to Washington, D.C., where participants have met with Senator Bob Casey and Congressman Mike Kelly. "Raimy Fellows study leadership and apply their knowledge to a practical policy problem in the local region," according to Beaumont. "For instance, a study on the Wattsburg School District area and

the lack of high-speed internet served as reference in an Erie County broadband expansion project. Another project resulted in a practical guide on how to navigate the paper barriers to employment for a transgender applicant." Much of the scholarship produced by the Fellowship is published by the Jefferson itself.

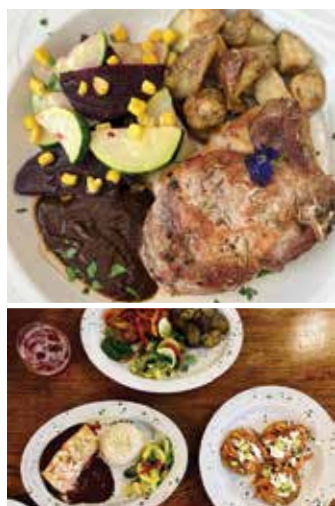
In its first 15 years, the Jefferson Educational Society has offered between 100 to 175 programs per year. Sometimes that means that a nationally recognized media figure comes to town, as will be the case when New York Times columnist David Brooks arrives for the 15th Anniversary Gala on June 10 at the Bayfront Convention Center. Sometimes, more homegrown investigations take the spotlight, like Baher Ghosheh's upcoming lecture about New American demographic trends in our region on July 20. Over the next 15 years, I'm confident that their work will play a key role in local policy debates — as well as everyday conversation in Erie.

More information can be found at [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org)  
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## FEATURE

### Gem City Style: June 2023 Pride

A Q&A with Gaby Reyes of Melancholy Brand

By: Jessica Hunter

**Jessica Hunter (JH):** Melancholy is a clothing brand rooted in self-love, personal growth, and mental health awareness. Gaby, you have an incredible story behind Melancholy Brand. Can you share a little bit about yourself and how you got started with the idea for the brand in 2018?

**Gaby Reyes (GR):** Sure! I am the product of an immigrant Latino family, a first-generation college graduate, and I am a queer artist based here in Erie. Melancholy was born out of a want to do more with my second chance at life. I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer when I was 17. I went through a thyroidectomy, radiation treatment, isolation, and mental health struggles because of my experience. I was declared cancer-free Nov. 30, 2017. I've always had an appreciation for clothing and the way it is used for expression so I wanted to take my art concepts and put it on clothing to spread messages of hope and healing.

**JH:** You are an advocate for self-love and growth in its many forms. How do you also promote inclusiveness and diversity into your brand?

**GR:** Melancholy creates a space where all are welcome. One of my core values is to show up wherever and be my authentic self. Melancholy encourages others to be their authentic selves as well. Being someone who is queer and Hispanic, I want to create an environment that welcomes people as they are and allows them to share their story with me. Mental health struggles don't discriminate and I want to be able to offer an experience that lets everyone know that they matter.

**JH:** How has the feedback been from the community and beyond? I am sure you get orders from all over the world!

**GR:** The feedback from the community leaves me in awe truly. I've gotten messages from people telling me that they are rooting for the brand and that Melancholy is making an impact and it amazes me. I've had one person ask me if they could get one of my designs tattooed! At the moment Melancholy is represented in 28 states and, internationally, Melancholy has been to England, Spain, Iceland, Denmark, and Canada.

**JH:** You recently worked on the latest Erie Reader June Pride Month cover. What was your inspiration behind the message and design?

© JESSICA HUNTER PHOTOS



**Gaby Reyes, creator of Melancholy, a clothing brand that spreads the message of hope and healing, has also designed the cover of this June Erie Reader issue. They hope their design conveys the message that love will prevail over the current wave of anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and legislation.**

**GR:** When coming up with the design, I drew inspiration from the feelings I had in response to rhetoric surrounding the LGBTQIA+ community lately. Often it can be overwhelming to see so much news about things like states banning gender-affirming care or other attempts to erase queerness from the public eye. In response to that, I feel that love shall prevail. No one can make us go back into the closet.

**JH:** What is your favorite type of imagery? And what is something new you would like to create in the future?

**GR:** My favorite type of imagery currently is that of the pop art movement. Two of my favorite artists are Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. In the future I would like to create posters of my original works that I would screenprint. I was inspired by Erie artist Roy Ahlgren to try and screenprint my works.

**JH:** You offer a screenprint and sip party. Can you tell us about the concept,

experience, and how to book with you?

**GR:** The screenprint and sip experience is one that gives a group of up to six people the chance to make their own garments with designs provided by local artists or the participants themselves. I wanted to create an interactive experience to demystify screenprinting and show that anyone is capable of making art. Guests can come in with their favorite beverages and spend an hour and a half printing with me and getting hands-on experience with the medium of screenprinting. There are some transitional things happening right now but when booking becomes available folks can book through the website or through messages to me directly.

*Gaby Reyes of Melancholy can be found at [melancholybrand.com](http://melancholybrand.com) or via Facebook or Instagram @melancholy\_brand*

*Jessica Hunter can be found at [jessica-hunterphotos.com](http://jessica-hunterphotos.com)*

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**Sara Lomelin, B.A.**

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why collective giving is important and how it can benefit communities, and then shows attendees how to take action.

Sara Lomelin is a connector of people and ideas, a relationship builder and a firm believer that everyone can be a philanthropist. A self-proclaimed philanthropy disruptor, Sara has traveled the world speaking about the power of collective giving at high-profile conferences and events, including TED 2022 where she delivered her talk, "Your Invitation to Disrupt Philanthropy." As founding CEO of Philanthropy Together, Sara is growing a movement of people-powered philanthropy to resource grassroots nonprofits, shift power dynamics and promote widespread philanthropy.



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## EVENTS

### It's Just Too Good To Be True

Erie Playhouse presents *Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons*

PREMIERING FRIDAY, JUN. 9

Almost every child has listened to their parents or grandparents belting out a Four Seasons song in the car or in the kitchen. With masterpieces such as "Sherry," "Bye Bye Baby," "Big Girls Don't Cry," and "December 1963," The Four Seasons are a staple in rock'n'roll history, and the story of how they came to be may surprise you a little bit.

The stage adaptation of the revolutionary New Jersey band's story is jam-packed with exhilarating drama that includes the mafia, young love, peer pressure, and the travails of starting a band with your best friends. And, oh yeah, Joe Pesci. The underlying theme of wanting to belong somewhere will be relatable to any audience.

Director Richard Davis, a 40-year veteran of the Erie theater community, says he's ready to take on the challenge of making this performance unique: "When staging any musical in a community theater setting, the big challenge is always, 'do you have the actors to pull it off?' With *Jersey Boys*, there are specific requirements in its roles, and with Owen Hitt as Frankie Valli, we struck gold." He continues to gush over his cast, "The entire cast is top-notch and the vocals are really thrilling. Our performers love doing this and don't treat it like just another job, which is very important at this level of theater."

Davis gives some insight on how *Jersey Boys* gives a look into the price of fame: "The sacrifices that are made to stay in focus and stay in the spotlight can really take a toll. Frankie shows a level of perseverance that can help



**Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons comes to the LECOM stage at the Erie Playhouse this June. It tells the dramatic story behind the music that helped define a generation.**

anyone to realize that no matter where you come from, you can overcome life's challenges."

Speaking of obstacles, Mr. Davis touches on the most difficult parts of preparing for a show of this caliber as a community company: "The challenge with any community production is how to create a show that meets the technical needs of a Broadway script at a fraction of the cost. Another speed bump is in the rehearsal numbers. With the unique script being so interwoven into the musical numbers, it was difficult to break into numbers and scenes." But with great practice comes great achievement, and hopes are high for a fantastic run of *Jersey Boys*. Davis would like to remind attendees that the show contains very adult language and situations, so please prepare accordingly. — Jordan Coon

Fridays and Saturdays, Jun. 9 - 24 at 7:30 p.m., Sundays, Jun. 18 & 25 at 2 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // \$17.49-\$27.40 // More info: [erieplayhouse.org](http://erieplayhouse.org)

### Kingdom Come at Dramashop

Dramedy proves you can fake it until you make it in love

PREMIERING FRIDAY, JUN. 9

An interesting thing happens when many of us write our dating app profiles: that one kayaking excursion you took last summer turns into a full-blown kayaking hobby, the ability to make Easy Mac turns into a "love of cooking," and 5'10" turns into six feet.

What about when two people take that exaggeration to a whole new level — inventing, as it were, completely different identities — but then they fall in love?

This is the general premise of Dramashop's next production *Kingdom Come* by playwright Jenny Rachel Weiner, which follows two thirty-something women as they catfish each other — but wind up truly connecting.

Under the direction of Anna McJunkin, also the artistic director of Dramashop, the play will run every remaining Friday and Saturday this month. "Despite what may sound like heavy or sappy subject matter, this play is funny," McJunkin stressed. "The cast is still finding new ways to make me laugh at every rehearsal."

That serious-but-not-too-seriousness comes in the form of the two main characters: Layne, who is a terrified, neurotic mess; and Samantha, who is morbidly obese and bedridden. "Samantha is not a perfect person, but she is deeply human... I feel really passionate about doing works onstage that reflect the full spectrum of our wonderfully varied and diverse community," McJunkin said. "Samantha deserves to have her love story told."

The play's staging was an initial challenge — portraying two people in different locations who are staring intently at



**An imaginatively comedic play about romance and honesty in the modern age, *Kingdom Come* at Dramashop brings the Jenny Rachel Weiner play to life using projections and magical realism.**

their computers for extended conversations. "We've decided to take it in the direction of magical realism," McJunkin said. "We're making use of projections to add an immersive atmosphere and visual layer that, to me, will be much more interesting."

Come downtown to Dramashop in June and get a little bit more connected — whether it's to the play and its actors or that new date you met on Bumble. — Cara Suppa

Fridays and Saturdays through Jun. 25 // 8 p.m. // Dramashop, 1001 State St., Suite 210 // \$15 with half price tickets during opening weekend // More info: [dramashop.org](http://dramashop.org)

### Presque Isle Poker Paddle Flush with Fun

Kayaks and more set to navigate through Presque Isle

SATURDAY, JUN. 10

While the fate of some poker hands may change on The River, this is more of a lagoon scenario. The latest edition of the Presque Isle Poker Paddle is at hand, with rows of eager rowers in tow. A more alliterative version of a poker run, the Poker Paddle essentially functions the same, but on water. Participants go from checkpoint to checkpoint, and get a card at each stop, hoping to get the winning hand from amongst the other players.

This journey will be a five-and-a-half mile foray through the waterways of Presque Isle State Park. Going through Presque Isle Lagoons, Marina Lake, Presque Isle Bay, Horseshoe Pond, Misery Bay, and Grave-

yard Pond, intrepid paddlers will each get a chance to collect a card from each checkpoint.

Canoes, kayaks, and stand-up-paddleboards (SUPs) of all kinds are welcome, with the event kicking off at 9 a.m. Following that, every 15 minutes, another group of 20 boats will launch, with the last group shoving off at 12:30 p.m., allowing for 280 participants in total.

Not only do proceeds of this event go to the Presque Isle Partnership, paddlers will receive a t-shirt, a safety whistle, a door prize ticket, and a free meal and discounted drinks at the Oasis Pub & Tiki Bar at the event's afterparty. — Nick Warren

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. // Presque Isle Lagoons Boat Launch, Thompson Dr. // For more info: [discoverpi.com/events](http://discoverpi.com/events)

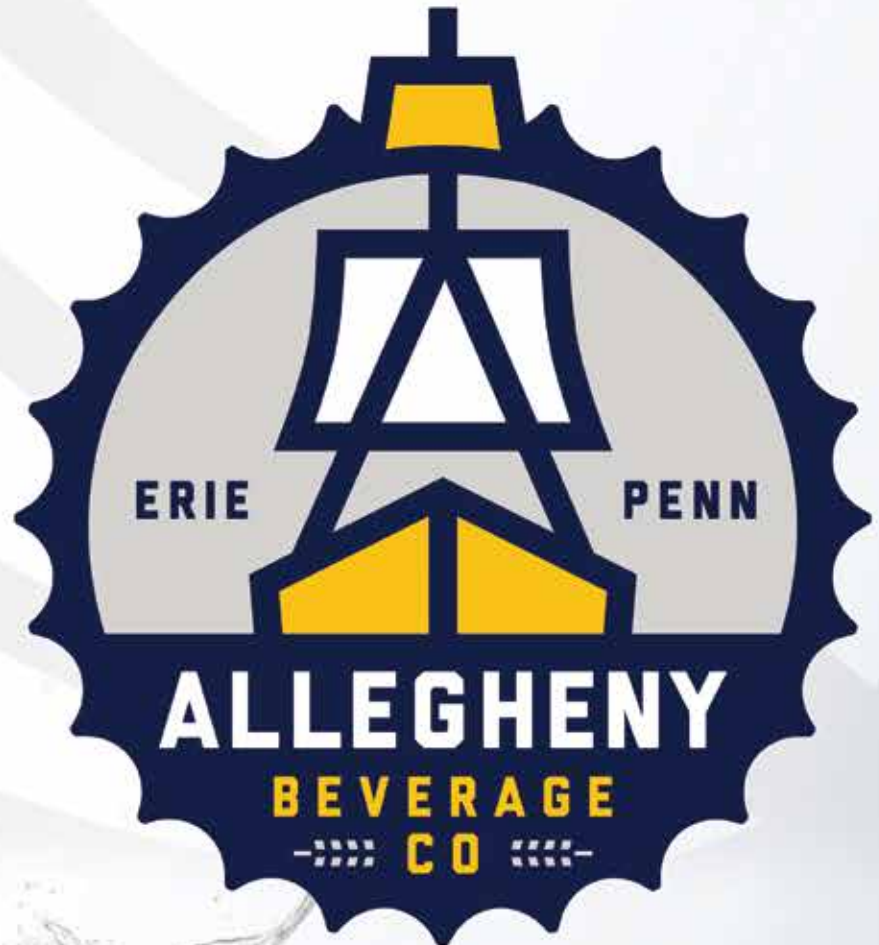


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## The Second Annual 14th Fest

EMTA brings summer kickoff party to their neighborhood

WEDNESDAY, JUN. 14

The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) in tandem with the Erie Downtown Partnership is bringing back their now-annual 14th Fest, which is a free community celebration that marks the official kickoff to summer at the EMTA's East 14th Street location. The event will feature live music from local favorites Small Town Revolution and The Groove along with children's activities provided by the Union City Family Support Center and Magic Steve. Lo-



Join the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority as they celebrate the start of summer and the unveiling of their new mural at the second annual 14th Fest. Local music, food and drink vendors, and family activities will make the street come alive.

"The EMTA is excited to do our part by bringing vibrancy to the new, inviting, mid-city neighborhood of Erie. We are fortunate to call 14th Street home and are happy to kick off summer once again with this event." — EMTA CEO Jeremy Peterson

cal food vendors include Cafe 7-10, The Que Abides, Kona Ice, Sticks and Bricks Wood Fired Pizza, and the Happy Camper Snack Shack. Area breweries serving up the suds include Erie Ale Works, Lavery Brewing Company, and The Brewerrie at Union Station. Plans also include a color guard display from the Wesleyville American Legion.

Part of the celebration this year will be a mural dedication, celebrating a piece of public art which was created as a part of Erie Arts and Culture's Views Festival. The mural will be completed the week-

end prior to the 14th Fest through the artistic efforts of Bencher's Union.

EMTA CEO Jeremy Peterson comments, "The EMTA is excited to do our part by bringing vibrancy to the new, inviting, mid-city neighborhood of Erie. We are fortunate to call 14th Street home and are happy to kick off summer once again with this event. We plan to continue 14th Fest for years to come as a way to show our community how much we appreciate their support."

Whether you come for the food, drinks, fun local entertainment, or just to get out and celebrate a great neighborhood in Erie, 14th Fest is sure to become a recurring event on your calendar. — Erin Phillips

5 p.m. to 10 p.m. // EMTA Headquarters, 127 E. 14th St. // For more info: [ride-the-e.com](http://ride-the-e.com)

## Erie's Juneteenth Celebration

BEGINNING THURSDAY JUN. 15

Juneteenth is an annual commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States — the first Juneteenth being celebrated on June 19, 1865 when enslaved people in Texas were the last to be informed about the Emancipation Proclamation that went into effect two years prior. This year, in Erie, Juneteenth will be celebrated with a three-day slate of activities from June 15 - 17. The event is made possible by the work of Erie's Juneteenth Celebration committee, The Booker T. Washington Center, and Erie's Black Wall Street with support from the Robert Benjamin Wiley Charter School, African American Concerned Clergy, and the NAACP.

Yearly event organizer Angela McNair comments, "One of the main celebrations that occurs in the African American community is Erie's Juneteenth Celebration. This is an annual cultural celebration located in downtown Erie that celebrates the culture as well as supports local minority owned businesses. This year it will be held in the heart of the city. The celebration gives us a chance to experience local Black history in the making."

The event kicks off on Thursday, June 15 at Woodard Dynasty Entertainment/Grand Central Events at 1225 State St. for a "Create and Paint" gathering from 7 to 9 p.m. On Friday, June 16, there will be an Erie's Black Wall Street networking mixer at Meiser Place at 23 W. 10th St. from 6 to 10 p.m. which will allow minori-



Erie's Juneteenth celebration will encompass three days of events including a Create and Paint event, an Erie's Black Wall Street networking mixer, and a block party featuring the music of the Breeze Band.

ty business owners a chance to meet and connect with others from around the city. The main Juneteenth event will take place on Saturday, June 17 with a party in Perry Square (both east and west sides, with State Street closed to traffic) from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. that will feature the timeless grooves of the Breeze Band along with vendors, food, drinks, and giveaways. — Erin Phillips

Thursday, Jun. 15 through Saturday, Jun. 17 // Various times and locations, main event in Perry Square, 601 State St. // For more information email [eriesjuneteenthcelebration@gmail.com](mailto:eriesjuneteenthcelebration@gmail.com) or follow Erie's Juneteenth Celebration on Facebook



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## EVENTS

### PACA Brings *Crocodile Fever* to Erie

A darkly comic and intriguing examination of oppression

PREMIERING FRIDAY, JUN. 16

The Performing Arts Collective Alliance (PACA) is bringing the play *Crocodile Fever* to Erie, starring Lisa Simonian, Lara Schaaf, David W. Mitchell, and Zack Morta. First premiering in 2019 at the Traverse Theater in Edinburgh, Scotland, Meghan Tyler's play received acclaim for its dramatic moments, fast pace, and dark comedy which critics and audiences enjoyed.

"The dark comedy pits two Irish sisters against both their abusive father and the British government," PACA describes in the official synopsis. "Set during the 'Troubles,' what starts out as a divine story with lightning-fast dialogue between the sisters eventually uncovers the oppression of the reptile-like father that has left them so psychologically scarred. All of this erupts in a hugely-funny bloodbath when the boil of long-buried turmoil is finally faced."

Despite the darkness in the play, the comedy shines through. Even the actors were surprised about the tone of the play. "There's definitely an underlying heaviness to it, but overall it tries to keep an entertaining, humorous flow." Schaaf describes. "It's not your laugh out-loud [comedy], it's not stand-up. This is such a ridiculous situation; it's so far-fetched that it's funny."

Much of the comedy comes from the dialogue between the two sisters, played by Schaaf and Simonian. Playing off of the contrasts between the two, there's a natural chemistry that shines through in the performance. "You know when

you're jamming and it kind of just works. It's like that, except with acting," Schaaf explains, comparing it to two musicians listening and adjusting their sound. Mitchell, who plays the father, thought of two words to describe his character: creepy and evil. "It's stuff I don't normally get to play and I haven't done anything like that in a very long time."

Throughout the show, the parallels between the family and the historical events are present. "The oppression is in the house, not just from the British military outside, but from the father." Mitchell said. "The oppression of the girls is reflected in the British oppression of Ireland. From the way the characters are written, you can just feel [in] the dialogue — their tragedies and their pain and their resentments. So much of it is in the foreground that you can't miss it."

With a review from The Guardian comparing the dialogue, comedy, and bloodshed to a Tarantino film, everyone at PACA is excited for the audience reaction on opening night. "We're hoping it's going to be like that with how we're setting things up with visual effects and surprises," Schaaf describes. "You think you know where it's going, and then it doesn't. It's bizarre but it's dark and funny."

Mitchell's response aptly describes *Crocodile Fever*: "It's not Neil Simon." — Thomas Taylor

Premiering Friday, Jun. 16 and running Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through Jul. 1 // 7 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$16 // For tickets and info: [paca1505.org](http://paca1505.org)



The latest production at PACA *Crocodile Fever*, a dark comedy contrasting the abuse of the British government to the abuse two women receive from their villainous father, brings the bizarre, hilarious, and very adult Meghan Tyler play to life.



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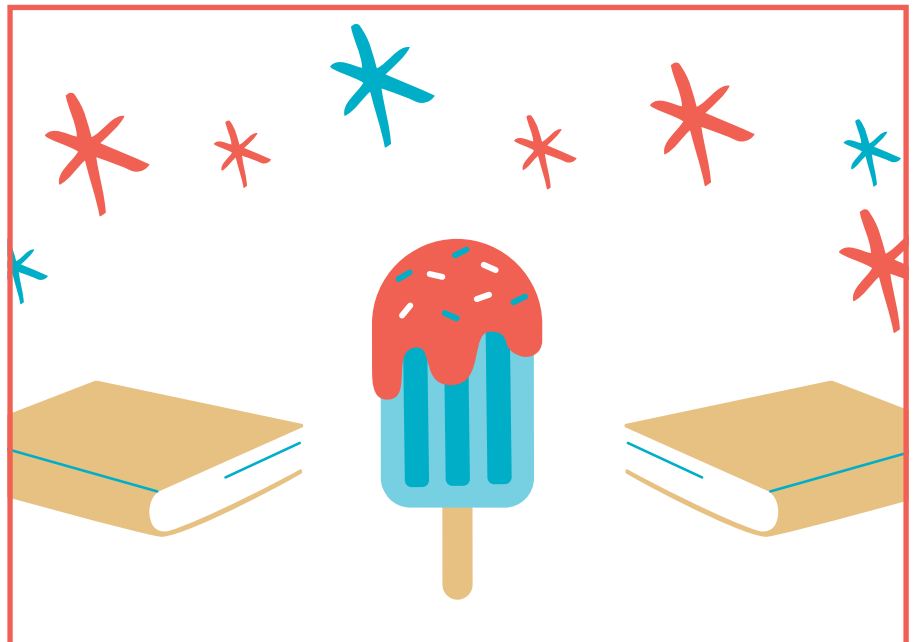
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**Parade to Pridefest**

Celebrate LGBTQIA+ rights at Perry Square

**SATURDAY, JUN. 24**

Celebrate love in all its colorful forms this June and show your pride and alliance with LGBTQIA+ family and friends. Friends and allies gather at 11th and State streets at 11 a.m. and begin marching to Perry Square at noon, where there will be information tables, vendors, drag performances, and more on the main stage. The NWPAs Pride Alliance march welcomes all who would like to walk and does not require registration. Spectators can cheer from State Street before making their way to Perry Square.

Adagio Health will be offering a health and wellness zone. Central Outreach Erie and PA Thrive will be providing HIV and STI testing as well as other health services to all ages, free of charge.

The origins of Pride started June 28, 1970, one year after the raid of Manhattan's Stonewall Inn. Sparking what we consider the beginning of Pride, thousands of LGBTQIA+ people and their allies gathered for marches in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago to honor Stonewall and demonstrate for equal rights. Prior to the events of Stonewall, decades of queer activism and organizing had already been taking place around the world.

Pride traditions were adapted from the "Reminder Day Pickets" held annually on July 4 at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. It is no wonder the energy of Pride month kindles a deep sense of honor and respect amongst participants. To



**Erie's Pridefest 2023 is brought to life through the tireless work of the NWPAs Pride Alliance and will feature a colorful parade, vendors, and performers throughout the day on Saturday, June 24.**

this day, the queer community continues to advocate for equal rights, safety, to be who they are, and to love without gender boundaries.

It is a breath of fresh air to see Pride now being celebrated not only in just large cities, but in almost every city and town across the globe, including our own beloved Erie. — Cypher Eihwaz

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. // Parade begins at 11th and State St., concludes at Perry Square, 601 State St. // Free

**A Taste of Beer History at Lavery Brewing Company**

Brew a deeper appreciation for the beloved beverage

**FRIDAY, JUN. 30**

Have you ever been out with some friends, enjoying a good beer, when suddenly you realize you know nothing about it or how it came to be? If so, then look no further than the exciting upcoming presentation "A Taste of Beer History" in the Lavery Brewing Company Bunker.

"A lot of people think learning about history is boring and you have to either watch a documentary or sit in a classroom to learn about it. My hope is that this type of event shows people that learning about history can be fun and interactive!" — Courtney Baran, presenter of "A Taste of Beer History"

Beer aficionados and casual beer drinkers alike will not want to miss local historian Courtney Baran's wealth of insights. She will start the night off with a general history of beer and beer making, followed by discussion on four tried-and-true favorite styles: West Coast IPA, New England IPA, Kolsch, and sour. Regular menu drinks will be available for purchase in the main building, but the four beers featured in the presentation will be available to buy in the Bunker.

Baran has always enjoyed the history of beer and the idea of bringing it to an audience in an entertaining community setting. "A lot of people think learning about history is boring and you have



**Learn more about the history of beer brewing through a unique event brought to you by Lavery Brewing Company. Food historian Courtney Baran will present an in-depth look at historic brewing techniques with tastings included.**

to either watch a documentary or sit in a classroom to learn about it," Baran said. "My hope is that this type of event shows people that learning about history can be fun and interactive!"

Although the event will take place in The Bunker, attendees are encouraged to check out the newly expanded brewpub, which boasts double the seating, a better-equipped kitchen, and more bar space.

This event is free to attend with first come, first served seating, and enough seats for around 70 people. Drinks will be available for purchase. — Ally Kutz

5:30 p.m. // Lavery Brewing Company, 128 W. 12th St. in the Bunker north of the main building // 21+ // For more info: [laverybrewing.com](http://laverybrewing.com)

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Hijab Butch Blues: A Memoir*

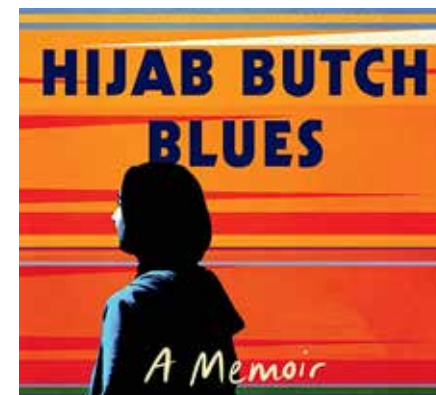
Muslim author maintains faith despite persecuted sexuality

For the better part of history, most major religions of the world have not accepted the queer identity and have either fully dismissed or openly rallied against those in the LGBTQIA+ community. In the new memoir *Hijab Butch Blues*, Muslim author Lanya H. — who writes under a pseudonym and omits certain details to protect her identity — recounts how she's been able to reconcile her faith with her identity as a queer woman.

From a young age, Lanya has felt out of place: moving to what she only calls "an Arab country" from her native home she finds herself among those different from her, both in looks and in feeling. At 14, when she realizes she has unfamiliar feelings for a female teacher, further alienating her from her peers.

Lanya finds comfort in her faith, though, and takes many of her monumental experiences — both struggles and successes — and finds comparisons between them and those of the prophets in the Quran. From questioning why she feels the way she does to understanding that you must pick your battles, Lanya finds deeper meaning in these passages as they apply to her life.

Thanks to this, the memoir holds more



power and surprise than one may initially think. At face value, it seems like it would be the struggle to come into one's own identity as a queer woman while also maintaining a faith that seems to oppose — if not completely vilify — that identity, but this story is so much more. While that conflict is certainly part of the story, it is not the overarching theme.

*Hijab Butch Blues* is intimate, touching, and most importantly thought-provoking, allowing readers to understand that religion and queer identity are not two opposites on a spectrum, but instead can be intricately and beautifully intertwined. — Ally Kutz

*The Dial Press // 304 pages // Memoir, LGBTQ+*



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June 10, 2023 6:30pm • Bayfront Convention Center • Erie Roller Derby  
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### Theresa Johnson Visiting The Hippie Space

June 23, 2023 12:00pm EDT • The Hippie Space • Love Light Heart Soul  
Join us in the Seawolves Stadium Club for Bowties and Baseball on June 30th for a 6:35pm game against the Akron RubberDucks. Fans will also enjoy intergalactic postgame fireworks with a Star Wars theme. Fans are encouraged to dress as their favorite Jedi, Padawan, Droid, or Wookiee and enjoy our galactic brand of fun. The team will wear special Star Wars jerseys that will be auctioned off during the game. Tickets are \$65 and include buffet, drink tickets, and a great night at the ballpark. Oh and let's not forget - You will also receive your very own bowtie! Proceeds benefit the children we help that are impacted by sexual assault, abuse, and other crimes.



### Bowties & Baseball

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**Some New Kind Of Kick: A Memoir**

Alt-rock guitar god Kid Congo Powers could be your cousin or your friend

Magazines like *Creem* told us it was all about the sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll. Aspiring rock journalist Brian Tristan (soon to be known as Kid Congo Powers) wanted to be near it all — a young, artistic Mexican-American boy sneaking out to glam rock nights at L.A. nightclubs, losing his mind over punk 45s, scratching together fanzines, and watching monster movies at drive-in theaters all while helming the Ramones' Los Angeles fan club. During the '70s, many rock journalists were nearly rock stars themselves. Why not be something more? Wading in deeper — Tristan snuck off to a punk show during a senior trip to London, crashed in strange squats during whirlwind trips to New York City on acid, and formed the groundbreaking band The Gun Club with Jeffrey Lee Pierce while in line at a Pere Ubu show. Never having played guitar before didn't slow him down one bit.

Entranced by his serpentine moves, painterly strumming, and youthful malleability, icons Lux Interior and Poison Ivy recruited Tristan into the cult of The Cramps. Induction was complete after

they taught him more guitar chords and changed his name to Kid Congo Powers. After leaving The Cramps and while weaving in and out of The Gun Club, Kid joined forces with The Bad Seeds. Opportunities unfolded and Kid grabbed

Rock memoirs appeal to our sense of voyeurism. We want stories to make us feel the heat of steamy-windowed backseat sex. We enjoy feeling filthy, sucked into the black hole of heroin addiction in Berlin. Our hearts pound over thoughts of getting arrested for shoplifting and spending a night trashed in jail. We would rather party than worry about paying rent.

them. He shared that he didn't know how it all happened, it just happened.

Rock memoirs appeal to our sense of voyeurism. We want stories to make us feel the heat of steamy-windowed backseat sex. We enjoy feeling filthy, sucked into the black hole of heroin addiction in Berlin. Our hearts pound over thoughts

of getting arrested for shoplifting and spending a night trashed in jail. We would rather party than worry about paying rent. Yet these aren't just Kid's stories. They are those of any '70s-80s punk kid who was looking for and finding their own tribes and thrills. His just had bigger names. Suffering a hangover while at an amusement park (Siouxsie Sioux). Sacrificing Kiss covers to fight off boredom (Lydia Lunch). Watching helplessly while friends painfully kick drugs and find sobriety (Nick Cave and Anita Lane).

Smarmy, name-dropping tales aren't what pulls the reader into Kid's story. He is self-effacing and genuine. His successes startle him as much as the reader. He realizes the absurdity of it all. His sublime, easy humor carries one through his trauma and confusion. Kid's family appears to accept him when he comes out. His closest friends embrace him. Although he finds his troop of outsiders, he still feels like an outsider among them as a gay man. Even when he dives into a decadent scene, he dampens his expression of sexuality. Sadly, meaningful relationships don't come as easily as



his other opportunities, but somehow he still shines brightly on the other side of dark times, loneliness, and addiction to find a better place. By the end of this book, he is a close life-long friend. If one is lucky, one already has and loves a Kid Congo Powers in their own life. — Melissa Sullivan-Shimek

Omnibus Press/ 272 pages/ Biography, Music, LGBTQ



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## MOVIE REVIEWS

### Space Oddity

*Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* is messy but fun

★★★

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is a convoluted mess. After a surprisingly streamlined beginning, the series quickly devolved into a miasma of interconnected plots and characters that have only gotten more confused as more entries appear. The lone oasis from this mess has been James Gunn's *Guardians of the Galaxy* series which mostly kept to itself before *Infinity War* dragged the characters into the party. So now that the big bad is dead and the Peter Quill/Gamora potential romance was unceremoniously cut short, where does Gunn go with the conclusion to his saga? The answer is a labyrinthine, overlong, occasionally annoying but still fun and charming epic.

The Guardians have set up shop in the outpost of Knowhere, but a visit from a powerful being bent on revenge has left Rocket (Bradley Cooper doing some great voice work) mortally wounded. His friends must travel the stars, uncovering his mysterious origins in order to save him. In doing so, they discover a plot



by a villainous scientist (a wonderfully evil Chukwudi Iwuji) to create a utopian world using poor animals as test subjects.

More than any other film, this one is Rocket's story. It makes sense since the other Guardians have already wrapped up their tales in previous films, but it throws the dynamic between the characters off. Much of the chemistry that the first two films had in abundance is sorely missing from this outing. That said, Rocket's backstory is compelling and Gunn's dialogue is still funny

and charming when it needs to be. The *Guardians* films have always been my personal favorite Marvel films and now that they're over, I think I finally feel comfortable putting the series to rest. —Forest Taylor

Written and directed by James Gunn // Starring Chris Pratt, Bradley Cooper, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Karen Gillan, Pom Klementieff, Vin Diesel, Sean Gunn, Chukwudi Iwuji, Will Poulter, Maria Bakalova, Elizabeth Debicki, Linda Cardellini, Judy Greer, Nathan Fillion, and Sylvester Stallone // Marvel Studios // 150 minutes // Rated PG-13

### Second Act Slump

*You Hurt My Feelings* is witty and likable

★★★★

The worst thing one can say to an artist is that their art is good when it's not. If an artist doesn't receive honest criticism of their work, they will never grow and improve. But what does one do when the artist being criticized is a loved one? Do you tell them the harsh truth or a polite lie and show blind support? This is the question at the heart of Nicole Holofcener's new comedy *You Hurt My Feelings*, which doesn't contain many filmmaking flourishes, but still holds viewer interest with smart dialogue and charismatic performances.

Beth (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) is a successful novelist who, after writing a hit memoir, is nearly finished with her first fictional novel in years. She is in the process of speaking with publishers and everything seems to be going smoothly, but doubt begins setting in after she overhears her husband (Tobias Menzies) saying that he doesn't really care for her novel after telling her it was great. Beth begins questioning her own talents and this self-doubt bleeds into the lives of not only her husband, but



her sister (Michaela Watkins) and her husband (Arian Moayed) who all begin doubting their own careers.

The film is little more than a collection of conversations between characters and it is not shot in any particularly interesting way, but still works thanks to the strength of its writing and performances. Louis-Dreyfus perfectly captures the neurosis of a talented person who can't escape from her

own negative thoughts. *You Hurt My Feelings* doesn't do anything groundbreaking, but it is still an enjoyable ride that breezes by at a brisk pace. —Forest Taylor

Written and directed by Nicole Holofcener // Starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Tobias Menzies, Michaela Watkins, Arian Moayed, Owen Teague, Amber Tamblyn, David Cross, Spike Einbinder, Zach Cherry, Sarah Steele, and Jeannie Berlin // 93 minutes // A24 // Rated R

# RECIPE FOR DISASTER

LETICIA USED HER ABUELA'S AWARD WINNING RECIPE FOR CHERRY PIE TO SUBMIT FOR THE COUNTY FAIR THREE YEARS IN A ROW, BUT SHE NEVER WON ANY RIBBONS.



NO ONE WANTS A CHERRY PIE THAT BITES BACK.  
-RUPAUL

WHAT SHE NEVER REALIZED IS YOU CAN'T USE ROTTEN FRUIT.



MSS2023

# JUST TOYIN' WITCHA - by B. TOY

SATURDAY NIGHT ON THE TOWN; ERIE, PA



DRESSED TO SWILL

DRESSED TO KILL

6/23

# Fish that Talk

2023 by John Baward

These boots were made for walkin'

350 million years ago, aliens came down to earth and had this reaction to the first walking fish, because they knew where evolution was heading.

I could kill this bastard and get it all over with!

Settle down now. You know we're not supposed to intervene!

A\*\*hole

SILLY HUMANS

© BAWARD

# CHAIRMAN OF THE BORED

BY BRAD PATTULLO  
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bradpattullo.com

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... THIS CONCLUDES OUR FINANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT...



... NEXT WE WILL MOVE INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR LEGAL AND PERSONNEL...



## ALBUM REVIEWS

### Odd Atrocity

Groundscore  
BFE Studios



Edinboro based post grunge band Odd Atrocity score big on their sophomore release *Groundscore*. The band started performing under the name Luc!d in 2019, releasing their debut album *Kitchen Grooves* in 2021 to positive reviews. Shortly thereafter, they changed their name to Odd Atrocity, and began tightening their sound and recording with producer Brian Gloskey at BFE Studios. Since their debut release they have seen a lineup change and a shift to heavier sounds. On *Groundscore* you still have the same DIY attitude, but with the polished sound of a band that has been working as hard at performing as it has at recording. They have truly become a well-oiled machine, and with the addition of second guitarist Corbin Fowler, they have started exploring longer songs that feature heavy rhythms and alternate guitar leads. Lyrically they continue to share what they believe in and give the listener a look into their lifestyles, often with a sense of humor. Some standout tracks are album opener "Helium Head," the melodic "Heavy Lungs," groovy "Dirty Jungle," and metal jam "Ohm Deficient" (featuring Terry Crebel of Gelatin Skeleton). Odd Atrocity is able to combine the metal-inflected grunge sound of early Soundgarden or the Melvins with the punk ethos of bands like Lunachicks and Bikini Kill. — Larry Wheaton



### Northbound Soul

Love, Loss, and the in-Between  
Self-released



A nearly perfect blend of quintessentially American sounds, Northbound Soul's full-length album, *Love, Loss, and the in-Between* is a gorgeous record. Part country, part folk, and part alt-rock, this local quintet has crafted a supremely listenable collection of songs fit for fans of any genre. The band is, in essence, from the mind of singer-songwriter Mike Spagnolo, whose rich baritone voice reads perfectly on these recordings. Weaving bittersweet narratives in every one of these dozen tracks, Spagnolo certainly has many stories to tell, and I'm happy to hear them. Joined by drummer and longtime friend Alan Bickel, Spagnolo took a handful of open mic appearances to the next level, eventually adding bandmates Kyle and Chelsea Hall (on bass and keyboards) along with Logan Battin on lead guitar to round out the band. This album is the logical evolution of Spagnolo's beautifully spartan 2020 *Love & Loss* EP, which contributes four of the most memorable songs that appear on its successor. *Love, Loss, and the in-Between* was recorded by Brian Gloskey at BFE Studios, who continues to be a blessing for our local music scene. Each member of the band is so incredibly tasteful here, making elemental, radio-ready hits. — Nick Warren



### Alex Lahey

The Answer is Always Yes  
Liberation Music



If this isn't my favorite album of the year, it's certainly primed to be. Australian indie songwriter Alex Lahey is so perfectly on-target that it's, frankly, unsettling in the way that online advertising seems to be accurately reading your brain. An absolutely explicit break-up album filled with humor and hooks galore, *The Answer is Always Yes* is back-loaded with absolute bangers perfect for summer drives with the windows down. The main detriment to the record has to be, however, the first two songs. While they are both in a vacuum excellent, they draw such immediate comparisons to Courtney Barnett and Mitski that they serve to detract from the record as a whole. While Lahey has publicly stated that comparisons to Barnett are not only lazy but sexist, the similar meter of her delivery on this song (and this song alone) simply sounds like one of Barnett's bigger hits, while the second track has verses incredibly reminiscent of Mitski's "Why Didn't You Stop Me?" [note: These are two of my favorite artists of the last 10 years, so this is not intrinsically a bad thing whatsoever]. Everything after this is solid gold. Lahey's personality shines through, serving similar sounds to Illuminati Hotties, Belly, and Bully alike. — Nick Warren



### waveform\*

Antarctica  
Run for Cover Records



Freshly signed by Run For Cover Records who re-released 2020's excellent *Last Room*, waveform\* have returned with yet another batch of lovely emo-adjacent indie-rock experiments. And much like that record's relationship with its predecessor, *Antarctica* continues to tone down the band's weirdness — or at least make it more palatable for newcomers. In fact, many of the songs recall the organic beauty of *Last Room*'s "Hello Goodbye." Take opening track "Lonely," which also happens to be the album's best; hypnotic, simple guitars pull you in as the band delivers an even sweeter and simpler hook: "Lonely, lonely, lonely/Lonely when you go/Only, only, only/Happy when your home." And "hypnotic" is the key word here; the band has worked hard to emerge from constant Alex G comparisons, and while *Antarctica* does little to change waveform\*'s formula ("Firework" in particular seems to recall Giannascoli's "Gretel"), it's songs like "In My Drink" that show off the band's inclinations. Plodding and winding guitars call back to some of Modest Mouse's best — and gentlest — work. *Antarctica* is likely waveform\*'s most accessible collection yet, and while some fans might be starting to yearn for something fresh, it's a perfect introduction to a talented band on the rise. —Aaron Mook



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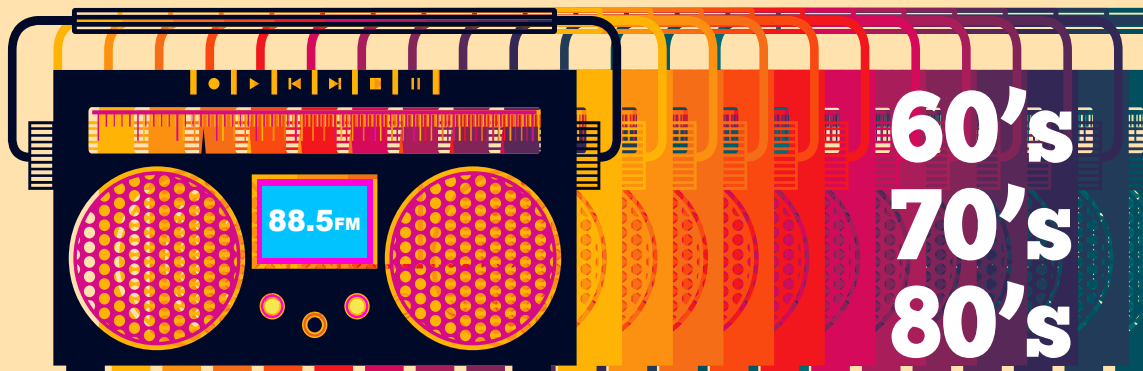


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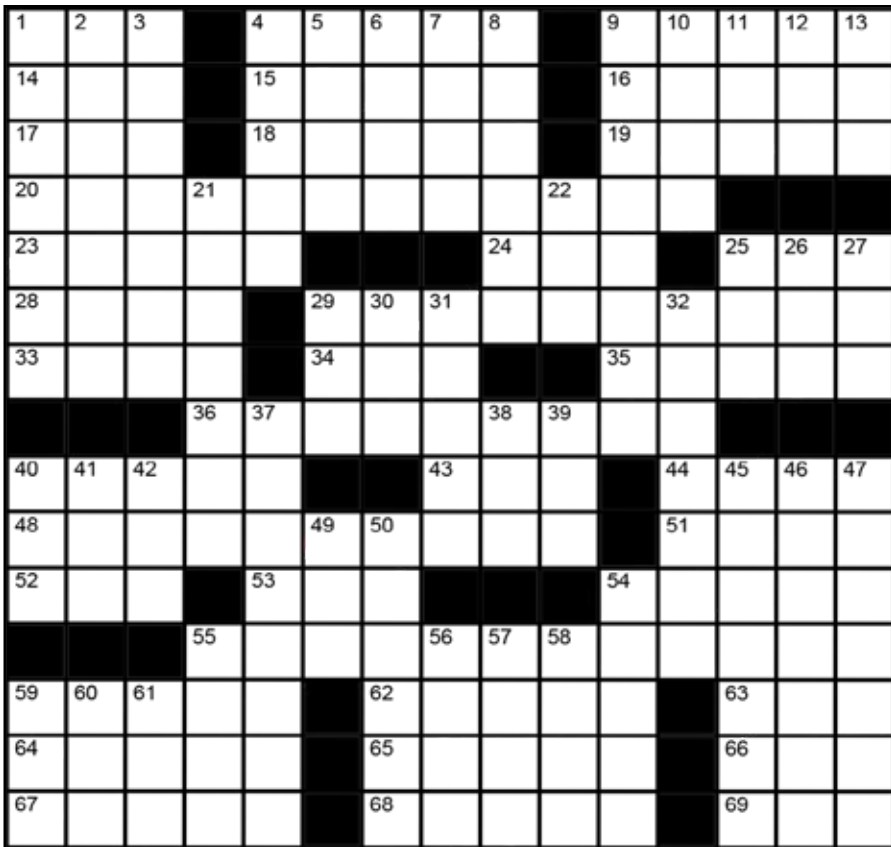
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**88.5FM**



# CROSSWORD



## Across

- 1. Go "pfft"
- 4. Likely will, after "is"
- 9. "You get a car, and you get a car!" speaker
- 14. Molecule in many COVID vaccines
- 15. India's first prime minister
- 16. Shoes worn in many drag shows
- 17. Extra NBA periods
- 18. Fish with a rainbow variety
- 19. Pro Football Hall of Fame receiver Michael
- 20. 1969 Toots and the Maytals tune that Rolling Stone magazine once listed among its 500 Greatest Songs of All Time
- 23. Like squirrel tails
- 24. Bach's "Mass \_\_\_\_ Minor"
- 25. AOC or JFK, e.g.
- 28. Garfield's drooling frenemy
- 29. Sweater-wearing television star
- 33. Titular warrior princess
- 34. Golf ball's path
- 35. '90s hip-hop lover's purchase
- 36. Signs of spring
- 40. Prop in a legal drama
- 43. Capture
- 44. \_\_\_\_-masochist
- 48. Cheapest Airbnb option, usually
- 51. Curling \_\_\_\_
- 52. Jazz trumpeter Adderley
- 53. Year George W. Bvsh was sworn in?

- 54. "Betta Getta \_\_\_\_" (Volkswagen ad campaign)
- 55. End-to-beginning, say ... or what's found in 20-, 29-, 36- and 48-across
- 59. Costa \_\_\_\_ (Panamanian's neighbor)
- 62. Lounges in the bathtub
- 63. Paul Anka's " \_\_\_\_ Beso"
- 64. "The Kiss" painter Gustav
- 65. Lauder of cosmetics
- 66. Admit (to)
- 67. Green-lights
- 68. Poor
- 69. Number on a foam finger

## Down

- 1. Big name in cloud storage
- 2. Ruin a private moment
- 3. Enters gradually
- 4. On pins and needles
- 5. Home to the oldest continuously operating university in the Americas
- 6. Film role for Chris Hemsworth
- 7. "Good point"
- 8. Bested
- 9. Like seven of the 12 U.S. presidents between 1869 and 1923
- 10. \_\_\_\_ walk
- 11. Cause to go "Vroom!"
- 12. Comedian Wong
- 13. QVC alternative
- 21. Harry who voices Ned Flanders, Principal Skinner, Mr. Burns and others on "The Simpsons"
- 22. GI's chill time
- 25. \_\_\_\_ talk
- 26. "The Lord of the Rings" beast
- 27. Drug in Michael Pollan's "How to Change Your Mind"
- 29. It's hot until it's not
- 30. Basic education trio, informally
- 31. \_\_\_\_ Lodge (budget motel chain)
- 32. More bloated, say
- 37. Earth, wind and fire
- 38. Xiao long \_\_\_\_ (soup dumplings)
- 39. Pioneering PC company
- 40. "People Puzzler" channel
- 41. "Take On Me" band
- 42. Dye holder
- 45. Radio City Music Hall style
- 46. Spoils, as a grandchild
- 47. Tethered
- 49. Sloths' workplace in "Zootopia"
- 50. German chocolate brand
- 54. "The Outlaw \_\_\_\_ Wales" (1976 Clint Eastwood film)
- 55. Hulu series about the son of Egyptian immigrants
- 56. Stood up
- 57. Kind of sauce made with peanuts
- 58. Just got (by)
- 59. Big Five studio of Hollywood's Golden Age
- 60. Variety
- 61. "Zero Dark Thirty" org.



## Answers to last puzzle





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