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August 7 - August 20 / Vol. 3, No. 16

ERIE READER

HE'S BACK:

**Embattled Ex-Mayor Rick Filippi Goes on Record to
Discuss Facing Jail Time, His Return to Politics,
and the Future of Erie**

Jay Breneman

Cele-Bret Erie

EPA Cover-up

McBride Viaduct and Its Future

**Professor Wig-Wag's
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"Oleanna"

Benchers Union 2013

The Gathering at Chaffee's Reviewed

Gay Marriage

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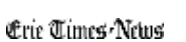


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From the Editors

Controversial? Yes, but also both aggressive and progressive, as Rebecca Styn tells us in this issue's cover story.

The subject? Rick Filippi.

Long before the Erie Reader was even just an idea, Erie made national news in December 2004 with a headline in USA Today that read: "Erie, Pa., mayor, two others charged in real estate deals."

If you were in Erie when the charges were first announced, you know the story. Erie's then-mayor, Democrat Rick Filippi, was accused of using "inside knowledge to invest in real estate near a proposed site of a horse racing and casino complex," as the USA Today reported. Aiko Acquisition LCC, the company Filippi invested in, had purchased the land near the former International Paper

mill site a year prior. Once the investigation was underway, the company sold the land, taking a \$700 loss.

While you can put a price on the land and the mistake Filippi admits he made, you can't put a price on the toll such a situation had on the city and on the man himself.

What ensued was a long, drawn out battle during which it would have been easier to count the times Filippi's name *wasn't* being discussed by local media. Staring down charges of criminal conspiracy, conflict of interest, and accepting improper influence, Filippi was facing a potential prison term – a term longer than the his time spent in the mayor's office.

But amidst the investigation and the trial, Filippi never gave up on Erie. He ran for re-election, losing to the city's current mayor, Joe

Sinnott in 2005's primary election. But in 2006, he was acquitted of all charges. Rather than uprooting and heading elsewhere, he remained in Erie – but he avoided the spotlight and otherwise disappeared from the city's political scene.

When the Erie Reader was still just in its infant stage, we knew we wanted to interview the former mayor, and to get him on record discussing his story, from his perspective – we just needed to wait until the time was right.


And that time is now.

After years of what he called a "self-imposed exile," Rick Filippi is back in the public eye. He's supporting and advising local political campaigns, and in the interview he talks about everything from the trial to his vision for the city, his political aspirations, Erie's future, and the

initiatives he began – like CelebrateErie.

It's time that Erie again heard from Rick Filippi. "The frustrating part now is sitting back and really not having an avenue to talk about things. The major changes are no longer in the dialogue," he said. "I mean, the city's not going to disappear."

He's right: The city isn't going to disappear. There's much we'd like to – and are working to – change, but our location isn't something we can. Erie can't move, and it's not going to disappear – but as Filippi puts it: "Erie is desperately in need of a few people to stick their necks out."

And, as you'll read in Rebecca Styn's story, the controversial, aggressive, and progressive Rick Filippi is (still) one of them. 

Cele-Bret Erie: A New Low

By: Cory Vaillancourt

Quite honestly, dear Reader readers, I'm embarrassed to be writing this column right now – for the third year in a row. I can't even believe we're still talking about the sideshow that is CelebrateErie. In true American fashion, most of us care far more about Mayor Joe Sinnott's Craprockery – recall Kansas and Ace Frehley – than the fact that our city faces larger issues.

When you really think about it, Mayor Sinnott's continued tradition of selecting and overpaying sub-par talent for a free festival (read: attendance not required) is ultimately dust in the wind when compared to Erie's wayward sons, who have been carrying on by using the slovenly citizens of Erie (motto: 10th fattest city in America!) for target practice like it's about to become illegal.

But noooooooooooooo, everybody wants to complain about yet another flare-up of Crap Rock at CelebrateErie, so let's talk about that, because apparently that matters more than the economy and crime on the east side.

As usual, Mayor Sinnott's announcement of the headliners for CelebrateErie went over like a dirigible made out of lead in certain quarters of our community – but not in room 500 of City Hall, where I sat with his staff during a press conference he held this past May.

CelebrateErie is important for tourism in our city, because nothing says "destination" like washed-up '80s glam rock b-listers.

Anyway, when the mayor announced Friday night's headliner – Sha Na Na – many in the room looked puzzled, including Erie Reader Managing Editor Ben Spегgen, who had never heard of them.

But Ben *is* a young 'un; he wasn't even alive when they had their TV show, much less when they opened for Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock in 1969 (seriously). Despite these respectable credentials, Sha Na Na is a nostalgia act – they perform '50s tunes by established artists. There are two original members remaining. They are, in essence, a cover band.

Saturday night's headliner Bret Michaels, on the other hand, is an original member of '80s Crap-Rock band Poison, and he continues to ride that dead horse like the motorcycle he rode in on as the Grand Marshall of Roar on the Shore motorcycle rally in 2009. He is, in essence, a cover band of himself.

Nevertheless, the press conference groupies greeted Michaels' name with an audible, swooning sigh; I rolled my eyes so hard they fell on the floor. Ben picked them up, wiped them off, and handed them back to me, just in time for me to jam them back into my head-holes and see Mayor Sinnott hoist a banner reading "Cele-Bret Erie." On the reverse side of the banner, it said, "Bret Michaels for Mayor."

Maybe that's not exactly how it happened, but that's how I remember it – after all, it was May, and this is August already. But the selection of Michaels – who is not only the epitome of crap-rock, but also was just here a few years ago – sig-



Close Cover, Strike Gently: "Without a proper vetting process for the selection of Erie's headlining acts, more Crap Rock is bound to flare up." - Artist editorial comment by Todd Scalise.

naled that CelebrateErie hit a new low this year.

Mayor Sinnott thinks that the people of Erie want to rock and roll *all* night – and party *every* day – and up until now – at least, for those people – his tenure as mayor has been nothin' but a good time; but if Bret Michaels has taught us anything, it's that every rose truly has its thorn. And Erie Mayor Joe Sinnott's thorn will always be remembered not as the lingering spectre of violent crime in our neighborhoods, but as Crap Rock.

Each year, the Sinnott manages to select irrelevant out-of-towners to headline a festival that's supposed to be celebrating Erie. Most vendors are from out of town as well – they're the itinerant carnies of the food world who roam from town to town in search of work, like Steinbeck's Lenny Small but with better impulse control.

In fact, the only thing "Erie" about CelebrateErie is the smattering of local acts who are patronized by their very selection, and then paid a pittance to perform.

Accordingly, the term "CelebrateErie" is blatant false advertising. If hizonner is going to continue operating the festival in this manner, they should relinquish the title, and rename it something more accurate, like "Craprock-aroo," or "Crapachella," or even "Woodsuck."

Then, some intrepid locals with their ears to the streets and their fingers on the pulse of this small town with a big music scene – perhaps even someone like you – would be free to create something that really does give Erie a reason to celebrate, instead of Cele-Bret.

Cory Vaillancourt is a brilliant writer/complete hack and can be complimented/beckled at cVaillancourt@ErieReader.com. Find him on Twitter @VLNCRT. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://erindr.com>



NEWS of the WEIRD

By: Chuck Shepherd

BREW NATION

Pro-nationalism English Defence League activists seemed to be itching for a street brawl to break up a scheduled anti-nationalist demonstration in downtown Birmingham, England, on July 18, causing the city to mobilize more than 1,000 police -- when officials arrived at a solution. Police shepherded "hundreds" of rowdy EDL operatives into the popular Bar Risa pub at 11 a.m., confining them for three hours, until the anti-EDL rally had dissipated. (Given British habits, many EDLers decided to enjoy their confinement with a brew.) As a result, police reported only sporadic street scuffling. (Bar Risa, perturbed by police pressure to host alleged "fascists," donated its profits to the Midlands Air Ambulance service.) [Birmingham Mail, 7-18-2013, 7-23-2013]

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

For "beach season" in Qingdao, China, recently, middle-aged ladies returned to the shore of the Yellow Sea sporting their relatively revealing (though age-appropriate) bathing suits -- but wearing distinctive cloth hoods with tiny holes only for the eyes, nose and mouth. To many in China, dark skin still signals laborers and fair skin the indoor "leisure" class, according to a July report on the business website Quartz. [Quartz (qz.com), 7-5-2013]

In Shenzhen, China, one of the country's richest cities, services are being openly advertised by "wet nurses" to supply adults with breast milk, either directly from the source or after pumping (and purchased by either the infirm or just rich people overconcerned with nourishment). These milk "suppliers" can earn at least four times the average personal income, with healthy, attractive women earning even more, of course, according to a July Agence France-Presse dispatch. Comments on China's social media ranged from "It's just a business" to "People become perverts when they are too rich and tire of other forms of entertainment." [Agence France-Presse via Google News, 7-4-2013]

Because Zimbabwe is reputedly among the world's most corrupt countries, bribery is normal and makes the news only when innovators go above and beyond. The anti-poverty organization Transparency International reported in July that one hospital in Harare had recently been imposing a \$5 charge on mothers each time they screamed during childbirth (in addition to the \$50 delivery fee). Furthermore, it has long been rumored that hospitals in Zimbabwe (and

other countries) may detain mothers and their children at the hospital if they cannot pay the fees. (Transparency International reported several days later, after finally obtaining a meeting with a government official, that the per-scream charge will be lifted.) [Washington Post, 7-11-2013]

LATEST RELIGIOUS MESSAGES

Satan was thrust into the recent Texas legislature debate with pro-choicers shouting, "Hail, Satan!" at the right-to-life faction. However, whom Satan had endorsed was not clear. A British organization called UK Church of Satan appeared to criticize the pro-choicers (according to Twitter comments) while the New York-based Church of Satan (founded in 1966 by Anton LaVey) insists on a woman's right to choose, said its High Priest Peter Gilmore -- although he acknowledged that shouting "Hail, Satan" to anti-abortion activists was "ludicrous and meaningless." [CNN, 7-9-2013]

Megachurch bishop Ira V. Hilliard told his Sugarland, Texas, congregation (New Light Christian Center) in June that one of his two private aircraft -- a helicopter valued at about \$1 million -- needs new blades, but rather than pay it himself, he asked parishioners to each find it in their hearts to send him \$52 "favor seeds" for the blades. (His ministry also owns a \$2 million Hawker jet and a \$3 million hangar.) To sweeten the deal, he virtually promised that a donor's gift would be met by a "breakthrough favor" from God in the form of a car repair or their very own "dream" car either 52 days or 52 weeks later (according to a church letter described by the Christian Post). [Christian Post via Houston Press, 6-25-2013]

QUESTIONABLE JUDGMENTS

Sharon Jobson thought her major grieving was over at the two-year mark after her son had been killed driving into a CN Rail train at a crossing that had not then been updated with safety features. (John Jobson, 22, was speeding and failed to stop, perhaps because of a partially obscured warning sign and a nonstandard train horn.) The government subsequently ordered upgrades, and Sharon decided not to sue, but CN Rail had no such reluctance and filed in July for \$500,000 against John's estate to cover damage to its tracks and the subsequent customer slowdown caused by the collision. (At press time, with grief forced upon her once again, Sharon was re-evaluating litigation.) [Toronto Sun, 7-10-2013]

Inexplicable: (1) In May, a 24-year-old man accidentally shot a teenage boy in the leg with a high-caliber gun at a home in Santa Fe, Texas, in front of the boy's mother, whose first reaction was to look up "gunshot" on WebMD -- and then not to take her son to Mainland Medical Center until seven hours later. Deborah Tagle was charged, along with the shooter, for injury to a child. (2) Carole Longhorn, 66, struck a metal object in her garden in Norfolk, England, in June, and, though it looked like a projectile-bomb, she said she decided to take it inside and wash it off in the sink before calling police (who later detonated the World War II-era munition in a controlled explosion). (Said her husband later: "You can imagine what I said to her.") [KHOU-TV, 5-10-2013] [BBC News, 6-7-2013]

Street Corner SOAPBOX

EPA Cover-up in Northeastern Pennsylvania

By: Jay Stevens

The Los Angeles Times reported on a leaked PowerPoint presentation from an EPA scientist about water well contamination in northeastern Pennsylvania near Dimrock. According to the Times, the presentation showed that on-site officials were concerned about elevated levels of methane and heavy metals in the groundwater, and that they suspected nearby gas drilling operations were responsible. High-level EPA officials in Washington, D.C. overruled those concerns. Instead, the water test results were considered naturally occurring, and further investigation into Dimrock's water supply was ended.

The dropping of the Dimrock investigation mirrors other outcomes in Wyoming and Texas where fracking was suspected of contamination groundwater, but high-level EPA officials in

Both state regulators and lawmakers seem to be bending over backward to protect the interests of the natural gas lobby but at the expense of everyday Pennsylvanians.

Washington curtailed further study.

While the EPA maintains that these decisions were correct, and that on-site concerns were based on "preliminary" data, and that investigation and consideration found the concerns... well...not concerning, the EPA's behavior in these cases mirrors the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) actions depicted in "Triple Divide," a documentary film about fracking in Pennsylvania and recently shown at the Erie Art Museum. According to the filmmakers Melissa Troutman and Josh Pribaniac, the DEP made a number of questionable industry-friendly decisions around fracking, such as erasing concerns about water well contamination by invalidating predrill water quality tests.

It's a disturbing pattern. One that pits the power of the state against Pennsylvania landowners.

It's a pattern that also appears in the numerous waivers fracking has from federal regulations, such as the Clean Water Act and other drinking

water and hazardous waste rules. And it's a pattern that shows itself in the Pennsylvania State Assembly, which has passed a number of fracking-friendly laws, including an industry-friendly fee system that will cost state schools billions and, more recently, a law that allows frackers to pool existing gas leases, hamstringing landowners from negotiating royalty payments. That is, both state regulators and lawmakers seem to be bending over backward to protect the interests of the natural gas lobby but at the expense of everyday Pennsylvanians.

This favoritism should alarm even the most ardent supporters of fracking. Even if you believe the environmental impacts are overblown, and that natural gas offers the nation a cheap, domestic, and clean fuel source that will both reduce our reliance on oil and coal and help curtail carbon emissions -- even if you believe all this, that the state and federal government have allied themselves with the gas industry should concern you, deeply.

This should concern you even if you are the gas

industry.

Here's the thing: This kind of favoritism by government, these cover ups, the skewed data, tailor-made laws, and agencies working blatantly for an industry, all of this erodes public confidence. Even among ardent supporters. A backlash will happen. Leases will be harder to sign. Media scrutiny sharper and more pointed. Reformers -- even among conservatives -- will enter the Assembly.

And Tom Corbett will not be governor forever.

An open transparent process should rule gas drilling in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Our groundwater is too precious to trade it in for a temporary natural gas boom.

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THE WAY I SEE IT

The Future of the McBride Viaduct

By: Rebecca Styn

The McBride Viaduct, which has served Erie residents since 1940, carried traffic between East 12th Street and East 19th Street, along East Avenue. The 1,170-foot-long steel and concrete bridge spans the CSX and Norfolk Southern railroad tracks.

The bridge, however, closed in 2010 because engineers deemed it unsafe. In a statewide bridge database, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation rates the McBride Viaduct as "structurally deficient" and "functionally obsolete." Neither designation implies that a bridge is likely to collapse, but a structurally deficient bridge is one on which its load-carrying elements are found to be in poor condition because of deterioration. A functionally obsolete bridge is one that was built to standards that are not used today.

For the last few years, there have been ongoing discussions about what is to happen with the bridge. The options include fixing it, replacing it, or tearing it down. The Ebensburg, Pa.-based firm L.R. Kimball and Associates are the consultants for the project. On Wednesday, July 31, in a public meeting of 100 citizens, officials, and project personnel, the decision that was recommended by the consultants was that the bridge should be torn down.

The project would demolish the bridge and create a new Buffalo Road interchange on the Bayfront Connector. It is the least expensive option at \$7.5 million and the "preferred alternative," according to a consultant's recommendation to city officials.

Rehabilitating the bridge is the next cost effective option – totaling close to \$15 million. But the repairs would only last 20 to 25 years, and this option only pushes the issues down the road, ultimately costing the state and taxpayers even more money in the long run.

Building a new bridge the most expensive option, would cost \$25 million. Although a new bridge would last for 100 years, project managers suggest that the cost would not be a prudent investment because the nearby Bayfront Connector also provides eastside access.

Many citizens and elected officials disagree. And thousands of names of residents and businesses are listed on petitions urging that the viaduct be rebuilt.

One of those who support rebuilding the bridge includes City Councilman and local architect David Brennan, who believes that "the McBride Viaduct has provided a vital link

for residents and business owners. The closing of the bridge has affected and will continue to affect lower east side neighborhoods and businesses. There is definitely a linkage between infrastructure and economic development."

Although the bridge has been closed to all traffic since 2010, it actually closed back in 2008 to commercial traffic. As for the economic viability argument, the truth is, during those years, there has been no documented economic impact either way.

In addition, the alternative plan is actually probably safer from a pedestrian point of view. The viaduct has a 3-foot sidewalk at best with a 2-foot high guardrail separating the pedestrian from traffic. The Bayfront Connector was actually designed to accommodate pedestrian traffic alongside of it. It includes an 8-foot multi-use trail with a 4-foot concrete barrier with a railing on top.

Although the detours are slightly longer – the pedestrian detour is one city block, and the driving detour is close to a mile – those are hardly reasons to justify the expense.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (Erie MPO) conducted a county-wide long-range transportation plan. It was a study that conducted time travel analysis (I know what you're thinking, and no, sadly, not that kind). Rather, it studied the level of traffic and congestion on the citywide and countywide roadway network. The study accounted for the viaduct being closed and showed no substantial impact in terms of congestion or travel delay.

So, here's the way I see it: I believe there's probably a lot of outcry because of the name. Monsignor McBride was a figurehead in our city. And he was loved by many. And I also think the east side of town feels that the city doesn't really care about their interests. That's understandable. But the truth is there are a multitude of bridges that have closed all over the county, and there's no public outcry over them. I think the east side deserves a vast amount of improvements – I just don't know if the bridge is the improvement it needs.

Love? Hate? Agree? Disagree? I want to hear from you. Contact me at rStyn@ErieReader.com, and follow me on Twitter @rStyn. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com/xxxx>



TECHWATCH

Tinder... to start a fire.

By: Brennan Donnelly, Epic WebStudios

The combination of the sayings, "it was love at first sight," and "a picture is worth a thousand words" meets many youths' obsessions over snapping the perfect selfie in a smartphone app: Tinder. Tinder is an ultra-simplistic mobile dating app available on IOS and Android and designed to make connection between users based upon location, age, interests, mutual friends... and up to five selfies, or photographs of yourself.

The app works much like the old site "Hot or Not," where users can quickly and easily flip through photos/profiles of other users who fall within their matching preferences. To get a better understanding of the app, I downloaded it for a couple hours to become familiar with the interface and usability.

I was very surprised by the amount of users on the platform and enjoyed how efficiently the app operated. During my test, I filtered through local women between the ages of 22 and 28 within 20 miles of Erie. Photos appeared on the screen for each woman, showing a default photo and age. I could also expand each woman's profile, which sourced additional information from Facebook, including common interests, mutual friends, distance away, and up to four more photos.

And then it's judgment time. Swipe left for "Nope" swipe right for "Like," and that's it.

If anybody you have "liked" also likes you, then you both receive a notification, and a chat feature is enabled within the app between you. I like the idea that the chat is only available between users who are mutually interested, because you wouldn't have to worry about receiving unwanted messages from people you're not interested in.

If no connection is made, then no one is notified that any action was made. You are not able to view who "likes" your photos, and no one can see who you "liked." On the other hand, there's also no way to review the users that you have already classified. This means that, yes, no one knows who you judged or how you rated them, even if they had access to your phone and account – but it also limits your ability to re-review a potential match if you wanted to change your mind.

I suppose the appeal to this app is that it is based on attraction and conversation, rather than algorithms or computer programs to make matches from info that you may or may not have accurately filled out. Additionally, you do not have to interact with anyone except those you believe you might have interest in. It seems like it could be a great app for starting conversations with others who you may believe are your type.

If you are single, I would urge you to give it a try. Seems like it could be a fun way to start up a conversation with someone you think looks cute who also thinks you're cute.

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JUST TOYIN' WITCHA By: B. Toy

Hip music fans will be flocking to Celebrate Erie for the groovy jams!



Straightforward Art and the Confused Art Critic

Jason Lewis: *Expanses*

By Pen Ealain

I have to admit right off the bat that I'm conflicted about the show I'm reviewing here. I like it, but somehow it's against my aesthetic code to like it. What to do? Perhaps you, dear Reader reader, can ruminate with me as I puzzle this out. Perhaps it will be constructive for both of us.

My original intent was to review one of several captivating exhibits currently on display at the Erie Art Museum, but as I approached the entrance on East Fifth Street, the kaleidoscopic parade of treasures in the window of the gallery next door caught my eye. Being the easily distracted type, whose attention span is that of a goldfish, I altered my course and jingled the

Yes, at first glance it was just another picture of Presque Isle, but it was more than that. The lighting on the clouds was exactly what I remember when walking those beaches last December. In my mind, I could feel the coldness and the loneliness and the give of the sand under my boots. I could hear the waves lapping the shore and the breeze through the switch grass. The drawing was a bit of wonderful craftsmanship. It was evocative. It was... really good.

door as I entered. Glass Grower's Gallery is attached to the Art Museum – through the back anyway – and one-of-a-kind shiny curios can fire my creative spirit in ways that the mass-produced inferior rubbish you find in most stores can't. Everything in Glass Growers is worth looking at, because you are unlikely to see anything similar anywhere else.

Upon entering this wonderland of handcrafted artistry, the lovely proprietor, Deborah Vahanian met me with her usual bright smile and unbridled energy. Debbie dragged me back to the show she was busily hanging for Gallery Night.

Off to the side were some bright ceramic jars by Sue Hunter – pretty pieces with the metallic oxides typical of raku evident on their contours. Arranged in the main gallery space was a display of landscapes by Jason Lewis. As Debbie and I chatted about the art business, I glanced at the drawings and paintings surrounding me.

"Nope," I thought, "not going to review this



Jason Lewis' current exhibit hangs in Glass Growers Gallery, located at 10 E. Fifth St.

show. It's just a bunch of realistic landscapes, something we've all seen a thousand times before – way too cliché."

Here's a life lesson to share with you: Don't be too quick to dismiss chances you are given in life. The man who made these drawings and paintings had spent hundreds of quiet, practiced hours on them and I was about to make the arrogant and unwise decision of moving on to something else without giving them just a tiny fraction of those hours.

Luckily, I had Debbie with me. She was chatting away about how business changes during big downtown events like Roar on the Shore, when she noticed me glancing at the Lewis drawings. "Beautiful, aren't they?"

"Yeah, they are. You'll probably sell a lot of them," I cynically replied.

"Well, maybe, but what you should really notice

about these is the way he captures the light. He portrays the mood of the day in such a precise way, you feel like you are really there."

And of course, she was right. I had let prejudices pull me away from something that should have been given a chance. Chastened, I looked more closely at a colored pencil rendering of the beach in winter. Yes, at first glance it was just another picture of Presque Isle, but it was more than that. The lighting on the clouds was exactly what I remember when walking those beaches last December. In my mind, I could feel the coldness and the loneliness and the give of the sand under my boots. I could hear the waves lapping the shore and the breeze through the switch grass. The drawing was a bit of wonderful craftsmanship. It was evocative. It was... really good.

Herein lays the problem, dear Reader reader: As an art critic I'm not supposed to like this stuff.

It's not creative. It doesn't say anything new. It doesn't make the viewer think. But I have to ask myself: Does that make it bad art? It's probably not bad art if it can evoke those kinds of sensations.

As I moved around the room, I spent time with several of these tightly rendered and almost photographically realistic works. Each one transported me to a place I remember: a creek I had fished, a hillside I had sledded, a beach where I had skipped stones. The room faded away and I became lost in these places that everyone who loves the outdoors in Northwestern Pennsylvania knows so well. The paintings brought me to places where I had been alone with God and creation. They stirred in my soul a desire to be back in those places.

So, it must be pretty obvious to you by now that I was pretty impressed with the work of Jason Lewis, right? So what's the problem? Can't I just get over myself and come out and say that drawing realistic pictures from nature is just as legitimate as any other form of art? That would be easy, but my conflict runs deeper than just being an over-educated stuck-up art snob. I'm also an art teacher.

This becomes an issue because one of the biggest problems I have in educating my students is getting them to think that anything beyond realism is art. Show the average ninth grader a Picasso and they will turn their noses up at it and say, "It doesn't look real." If I let them, my students would all spend their high-school years doing tight portrait drawings of Nicki Minaj and 10-point bucks. They would also spend those years brooding about how their drawings aren't "good" enough. To them realism is good, everything else is bad. So I spend an inordinate amount of time trying to get that thought out of their heads. You don't want to be there for my tirade when they say to me, "There's nothing wrong with copying a picture out of this magazine." As a result, I may be predisposed to dismissing pictorial realism as soon as I see it.

All this exposition means that I'm conflicted about recommending Jason Lewis's show at Glass Growers Gallery to you. But as you can see, I never did write about the shows happening at the Art Museum, so I must not be that conflicted after all. Jason Lewis's art is quiet, contemplative, interesting, and beautiful. It may not have anything completely new to say, but what it does say is wonderful.

Glass Growers Gallery is located at 10 E. Fifth St.

Jason Lewis: *Expanses* - Detailed, interpretative, regional landscapes, Sue Hunter: *Small Treasures* - Raku fired ceramics, Lisa Monahan: *Switching Gears* - Interchangeable Silver Jewelry runs July 19 to September 3.

Pen Ealain can be contacted at PenEalain@ErieReader.com. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://erirdr.com>



He's Back:

Erie's Embattled Ex-Mayor Rick Filippi Goes on Record to Discuss Facing Jail Time, His Return to Politics, and the Future of Erie

By: Rebecca Styn

When Attorney Rick Filippi took office in 2002, he became Erie's 50th mayor; and he was only 36 years old. Even

before he started his first term, he was known to be progressive, aggressive, and controversial. This is ultimately what drove his agenda forward. He challenged the status quo. He wanted Erie to become greater than it was.

But he was also young. And the combination of all of those traits is probably also what became the demise of his regime, as he served only one term, losing to Erie's current mayor, Democrat Joe Sinnott in the primary elections in 2005.

Filippi admittedly made mistakes along the way. But, he made a significant one, one that changed the course of both his political career and his life in Erie.

In January 2004, local media started questioning Filippi's involvement in real estate dealings. It was this media probe that prompted the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office to investigate further. As a result, on Dec. 8, 2004, Filippi was formally charged with using inside knowledge to invest in real estate near the proposed site of a horse racing and casino complex. Then-interim PA State Attorney General Jerry Pappert said Filippi, who was 38 at the time, had invested money in a company formed to buy properties near a former paper plant at the same time he was leading confidential negotiations with developers seeking to turn the site into an \$80 million gambling complex.

The charges included criminal conspiracy, conflict of interest, and accepting improper influence. Two of Filippi's business partners, Eric Purchase – Filippi's longtime friend and former campaign manager – and Rolf Patberg, faced similar charges. The trial was then moved to Washington County, about 135 miles south of Erie, because of pretrial publicity. Filippi and his partners were acquitted on all charges – a verdict so overwhelming that his defense attorney Leonard Ambrose actually fainted as the jury announced their decision.

And through all this he ran for a second term – and lost.

What many of us forget though is that in the short term, Filippi made a significant investment into reclaiming, re-energizing, and revitalizing Erie's neighborhoods. A Downtown Business Improvement District was launched in June 2004. He was a strong proponent of arts and culture, and he created CelebrateErie.

He led an aggressive recycling campaign that saw residential recycling increase by some 300-



Former Mayor Rick Filippi looks out at Erie from his State Street office.

plus tons. He was also voted PA's Best Mayor in 2003 by PoliticsPA.com. Under his leadership, the city won the Erie Environmental Award for 2005, the Economic Development Multimedia Award, and the 2003 Most Livable City Award, the last two being national awards.

He did the job the way it was intended to be done – until he couldn't do it any longer. And then just like that, he was gone. But he didn't leave Erie. He stayed put, remaining part of the community, but secluded himself in what he calls a "self-imposed exile." To date, he runs a successful law practice, and he was even honored as Erie County 2010 Pro Bono Attorney of the Year.

But eight years later, he's back, re-entering the political field in Erie by supporting and advising current campaigns, the majority of which won 2013's primary elections. And now that the dust has had years to settle, and Erie has pushed onward, it is time for him to tell his story from his perspective, so I sat down with him on two

occasions to talk about his past and present – and Erie's future.

Rebecca Styn: You won the election for mayor after serving one term on City Council. What made you want to get involved in politics to begin with?

Rick Filippi: Believe it or not – and I've said this over the last 10-15 years – it was really a sense of responsibility to make some positive difference in Erie. That's really what drove me. I had a nice legal career going, and I know they've upped the [mayor's salary] now, but it certainly wasn't the pay in the mayor's office at the time.

I really believed that a mayor had the opportunity to change the way Erie thought about itself and how to do things and to impact in a positive way, the dissent that we've been experiencing for at least a generation. One statistic that I always cite when I'm talking about Erie County is that we've had no population growth since the 1970s. We are completely stagnant. That's one of the

most important vital signs of the community. I was motivated by all of these things.

RS: You also had several opponents in that race.

RF: There were six candidates total. All Democrats. And then I had to take on Republican Jack Anderson in the general election. I'm pretty sure I trounced Anderson in the general, though the primary was close.

Although, I find it ironic given the slate at that time that nobody is running anymore. I'm a little surprised about the general apathy that exists in the city from the political standpoint. The fact that the incumbent would run unopposed is kind of a shock to me. I think it's just a sign that the mayor's office has lost a lot of prestige. That feeling has been preeminent over the county executive for years, but it's gotten to the point where the mayor's office is seen that way. And we don't seem to have a lot of other major leadership. Thirty years ago, everyone looked at Lou Tullio like an iconic figure politically for the area. Now,

we've been sliced and diced.

For the first time in Erie's history, we don't have a representative in congress. My wife's from Butler – and I love Butler [Pa.] – but I don't consider Mike Kelly representing Erie County. It's sad because politics have done this to us. But it's also because of our failure to progress.

RS: Talk about your experiences your first few months in office?

RF: I had an aggressive agenda – there's no question about it. I felt like Erie at the time was teetering at the tipping point. At the time, I felt that some major changes were needed. And change doesn't come easy. You don't sit around and have coffee and talk about change.

So, I knew I was going to get a decent amount of pushback and controversy, but it certainly was a lot more than I anticipated. Even before day one I experienced it. I remember as part of the transition team, we issued letters to all the management employees at city hall and basically said, 'We want you to reapply for your job' – that was like a nuclear bomb going off [he laughs]. I had City Council members ranting and raving about it. But, at the end of the day we kept 90-some percent of the people. One of the things I wish I would have done was started fresh with my cabinet level officials – and I didn't. And that's my fault.

RS: So, tell me about some of those you did keep?

RF: I kept Chuck Herron as Finance Director and I elevated Doug Mitchell to the city's Public Works Director. But I should have brought more people from outside the government sector. We would have had some difficulty running it for a little while, but we would have adapted quickly

– it's not rocket science. I should have brought more of my own team in rather than trying to go in and win over the team that was already there – I'm talking about top-level management. The middle-level management – we needed those people. But, I had that culture working against me. We really only had two years before all the controversy about me came out, and we did accomplish a lot of our agenda.

was mainly self-created.

We also made a strategic decision that we needed to reduce the city's workforce, and you know we did that, I believe, in the most sympathetic way – we didn't cut it with a hatchet. We created a number of innovative retirement programs – one was the D.R.O.P. [Deferred Retirement Option Program]. It was a great way to get veteran police and firefighters to retire and to get great

"I felt that some major changes were needed. And change doesn't come easy. You don't sit around and have coffee and talk about change."

RS: Talk about your agenda.

RF: Most of it, I don't get any credit for it anymore. It was funny, at the time when we looked at the city's financial condition, certain parties, city council, and the media wanted to portray it as if the city was on the financial brink of destruction. And it never was – it was the worst misconception. We were never close to Act 47 [which empowers the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to declare certain municipalities as financially distressed]. It

benefits. It was later dropped by the city, but I was vindicated back in 2011, when the State Supreme Court said the city wrongly eliminated the D.R.O.P. without negotiating the change with the labor union for the city's firefighters. So, it was reinstated. Ultimately we reduced the cities workforce by 23 to 25 percent. Most of those cuts were done prior to 2006. It's not something I was happy about, but it was necessary.

RS: What was the community's response to all of this?

RF: I was in the paper virtually every day – some good and some bad – everything was controversial. You're always going to affect various constituencies that prefer things the way they are. One of the problems in Erie is we never went through what cities like Pittsburgh went through in the '80s with massive shutdown of the steel industry. Our losses have been gradual over time. Because of that, it's really never forced people to make hard decisions. Now with GE, that's like the final step. Is anything we're going to do now going to be in enough time?

RS: Let's talk about the controversy that started to ensue halfway through your term as mayor.

RF: Well, we get caught up in all the casino hoopla. Looking back now, I think it's one of the worst pieces of legislation the commonwealth has ever enacted – nothing more than a huge tax on some of the poorest in Pa., and it's a really an inefficient tax – the state only gets 50 percent of the money, the other 50 percent goes to people that don't even live here. I've seen very little economic development as a result of it, and the fact that the city doesn't get a dime out of the casino money is just unconscionable to me.

Anyhow, if you recall what was going on, was the International Paper site was up for consideration as a site for the casino. Whether that was ever realistic or not, I'm not really sure, but at some point during those discussions, instead of the casino people telling us what they're going to do for us with this great opportunity – instead, they wanted \$50 million from us to underwrite their construction of the casino.

At that point, I fought that. Why should we be doing that? We started looking at other casino options and that's when everything hit the fan.

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RS: In December 2004, PA Attorney General Tom Corbett charged you with conspiring to personally profit from the proposed racetrack at the former International Paper Co. property by using inside information gleaned through the Mayor's Office. Let's talk about that.

RF: Actually, it was then-interim PA State Attorney General Jerry Pappert's office that charged me. And, well, I pretty much got sliced and diced. I mean, I was 38 at the time – I was pretty naïve about the ways of the world. During that time I had a minor investment in [Aiko Acquisitions, LLC, a real estate development company developed for the purpose of acquiring, renovating and leasing for profit, blighted residential and commercial properties in the City, as well as Erie County] that was buying property in Erie – it was really before any of the casino hoopla started. But, I was a little ignorant. The mistake I made then – and I made a lot of them – is that I was trying to be aggressive. We should have come out publicly to talk about it. But we were scared, and nobody knew what to do.

And then there was an investigation, and I couldn't say anything – and one thing led to another – and took on a political connotation. This was an opportunity for the culture to eliminate me. Again, I contributed to it, and I'm not saying I didn't. I don't think we should have ever had to go through what we went through.

RS: Your Chief of Staff and good friend Jeff Bucci was asked to testify against you, yes?

RF: Actually, they gave him immunity to testify against me. And he testified we weren't doing anything wrong. He testified to that and Jim Walczak testified to the same thing. These were all state's witnesses, and they were all supposed to testify how somehow I was beating the system. Jeff Bucci and I have since buried the hatchet. Now [Greg] Rubino, well, you've got to know what you're dealing with. I mean, he's done some things – all on public record and all in federal court systems. But this is a guy that somehow gains credibility and still has it for some reason.

But I came out of this with integrity, dignity, and honor. [Rubino was involved in the case because his company, Tecnica Development Corp., handled local real-estate deals for MTR and its subsidiary, Presque Isle Downs Inc. At the time of the trial, prosecutors claimed Filippi and his friends were engaged in the illegal land deals, and Rubino was in discussions with Filippi about locating the horse racing track on the International Paper site.]

RS: Do you think you were targeted by the Attorney General's office because of being a Democrat?

RF: Were they sitting in a back room saying, "Oh we're going to get this democrat." Probably not. But the attorney general is a political position and always has been. Corbett hadn't taken the

"How can the mayor run unopposed? What it shows to me is a general level of apathy that has taken over. Where's someone to represent the people? There are decisions being made with little public input."

position at the time of the charges, and if Jim Eisenhower (the democrat running) had won that election – and he was predicted to win up until the night of the election – the indictment probably never would have occurred, because he's got nothing to gain unless the Feds were to pick it up, but the Feds never wanted the case. They investigated it, but they handed it to the A.G. People probably don't real-

ize this, but I was probably the highest elected official in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be acquitted after being charged. And I think that underscores the weakness of the case and possibly the political drive behind it.

RS: What was the toll on your family during the trial?

RF: My family is wonderful. My wife, who I've been married to 22 years this July, was behind me 100 percent. Fortunately, my children were still young, and I don't think it had too much impact. But we also had a great school – Saint Peter's [Cathedral] – and the school is very insulated and I think that helped protect them. But there were times when they were getting heckled and ridiculed. Like anything, the family gets together and supports each other.

What was really difficult is I lost my mother the

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first year I was in office, In December of 2002, after battling Pancreatic Cancer – she was only 59. Between being in office and the trial – I was never really able to get the time to grieve.

RS: Even after everything, you stayed in Erie. Some might not have. But you continue to remain part of the community and stay active and involved. Did you ever think otherwise?

RF: We contemplated leaving, but really what else do I have? I was raised here, my family is here and [he laughs] my law degree is only good here, in Pa. If I was going to leave, it would not have been to go anywhere else in Pennsylvania. The kids loved their school, and my family was my priority. Plus, I had to dig myself out of a large financial hole [due to the costs incurred through the trial] which took about five years.

In addition, I was going back into a practice – a business that relies on your integrity and honesty and character – and I didn't know what to expect. But I got the people who believed in who I was. I survived off of that and have done pretty well. I've also been able to give back in some ways as well – serving on a local nonprofit board and conducting a lot of pro-bono work. Even in 2010, I was pro-bono attorney of the year. And I still do that today.

RS: I recently heard you supported some candidates this past primary. Was this the first time you've gotten involved in any way since your time in office?

RF: This was the first time I really got involved – giving some contributions, meeting with people, and giving some strategy. I wanted to see some changes in the county. Everyone I supported – Kathy Dahlkemper, Jay Breneman, Teresa Stankiewicz – won. The only candidate that didn't was Joe Walsh. I mean, I like Pat Capabianca, but his time is over.

RS: How about some of the projects that Erie is currently tackling?

RF: Well, there's Destination Erie. I mean, I applaud those efforts, but it's really redundant. Much of the efforts are what our administration was putting forth. I am also still a huge proponent of the community college. I mean, GE was willing to pony up \$250k for it because they knew there was a need. It was No. 2 or 3 on the Bosworth Report's recommendation. [In 2001, economic development guru Brian Bosworth gave an unsparing and alarming assessment of the Erie region's prospects – he made a dozen recommendations for brightening Erie's economic picture, including establishing a community college, offering financial incentives to attract high-tech businesses and developing a

downtown commercial and entertainment zone.] And now the situation with GE. Do I think the main reason they're leaving is because we didn't build a community college? No. But it was definitely one of the reasons. You're looking at a community that wasn't willing to invest in itself. We'll build \$5 million Park-and-Rides so suburbanites can park for free so they can take a free bus into a free concert, but we won't put a dime into our educating our displaced workers and youth.

Look at the neighborhood revitalization program. There was the LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance) program I installed. It provided multi-year tax breaks for qualifying properties within a designated LERTA zone. It was one of the few things I was able to get City Council to support during my "honeymoon" period – was the 100 percent city-wide 10-year LERTA program. There had been a time that a single family home hadn't been built in Erie – 5 to 10 years before I took office. And I after I left, they changed it – cut it down, cut out certain neighborhoods.

The reality is some of the higher tax paying neighborhoods in Erie – Frontier, Glenwood – they're not competing against each other, they're competing to keep residents from moving to Fairview. So, the LERTA was designed to give all neighborhoods a fighting edge against a continued flight out to the 'burbs – we wanted to change that.

And then there's the LORD Corporation. When this issue came up, the city wasn't even at the table. I can't even fathom that. The city had a lot to offer – economic development funds, resources, and officials – at one time, political clout. I would have been at the table. I did this when it was National Fuel Gas. Then County Executive Rick Schenker and I went to Buffalo with a proposal from Erie County to move them here. Now, I went there knowing I wanted National Fuel to be in the city even though it was not one of the choices. But I had to fight.

But with this Lord Corporation move, the mayor could have been at the table, and extracted something. Let's say we put some money in the deal. Ten years later when Lord starts paying taxes, the city should get some of the cut. When we extended water and sewer lines, the city should have gotten some of that revenue.

I used to do neighborhood sweeps – where I would have police go through "Little Italy," and we would pick up abandoned cars, clean the streets, etc. The idea was to have people in that neighborhood know that we cared. Leaders don't necessarily have all the answers, but sometimes

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Filippi recently re-entered Erie's political scene, supporting and advising several campaigns in 2013's primary elections.

it's just by being there and letting people know you're there and working on it.

RS: Any other projects?

RF: One of the last things I was working on in office – and this has gotten almost no print – was working to create a regional airport. I had always advocated one. The idea was the city was going to sell or lease the airport – and get the value of the original investment out. We estimated we would get \$40 to 45 million and then we would transfer it to this new authority.

The city would get \$40 million of unrestricted funds and there would be a bond issued to finance that and we were going to take that money and create a neighborhood redevelopment fund. Instead, they added appointments, so effectively the city lost political control that it once had. I don't understand how that has gone by without people even questioning it.

RS: So, I need to ask about CelebrateErie since it was your concept?

RF: CelebrateErie is really the emotional one for me. Back in 2001, my wife and I went to the last "We Love Erie Days," and it was nothing but a carnival with all out-of-town vendors. It wasn't a family environment anymore. There was nothing about the event that was about Erie except for the name.

So, we went home with a yellow legal pad and came up with 50 or more ideas. Broad ideas. I mean, I'm not a creative guy and I knew we needed to empower the creative people. The artists, the chefs, the musicians – get them on board let them go with it.

People forget we had the hall of inventions, where half a locomotive from GE was displayed, and then the hall of immigration, where we gave all the ethnic groups a chance to display. All the food vendors were from Erie – the "Taste of Erie" we had on Thursday night. Even the music – there I knew I wanted it to be different, stuff I knew nothing about. This was all designed to remind people who we are as a people – kind of

along the same lines of what they're doing now with the Perry 200.

The year after I left office, I knew CelebrateErie was going down the tubes when the lead act was the Beach Boys. I mean, I like them, but that wasn't what it was supposed to be about. Washed-up acts milking a few bucks. It was supposed to be up-and-coming acts, acts that were still creative and still contributing. And it's not like we couldn't get the money. We got sponsorships, grants from Gov. [Ed] Rendell to support it.

And that's all evaporated. None of the extras are in there. We had a whole area for children. I haven't gone to it since we left, honest. Every day I wonder why they just don't change the name back to "We Love Erie Days." And there was nothing wrong with it at that time – it just ran its course. It was Lou Tullio's idea, and I think it ran out of steam and we pumped a lot of life back into it, and unfortunately we only had four years to run it and the legacy has faded off.

RS: Given all you had been through, why did you decide to run for mayor again in 2005?

RF: Well, part of the reason, I have to admit, was I was just trying to survive at the time. The main reason I ran was because of the indictment. If I had not run, then I was admitting I had done something wrong. And so by running I felt as though I was defending my agenda. And I knew I was going to lose – in my head I did. In my heart as I'm pounding the pavement, I kept thinking maybe somehow I could do this.

But you can't win an election when you have the Attorney General on your back, plus the paper. Next to my mother's passing, it was the most difficult thing I've gone through. Not the trial – but the second election. Going up and down the pavement and just knowing. I knew there was a fatigue that had set in with the citizens of Erie. Whether I was right or wrong, there had been too much controversy – and I didn't have any hope.

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But I wasn't going to go down without a fight. I don't have any regrets about that at all. I just had to do it. And it's done. The frustrating part now is sitting back and really not having an avenue to talk about things. The major changes are no longer in the dialogue. I mean, the city's not going to disappear.

RS: So, when you were in office, did you have any desire to go further in your career?

RF: Oh yeah. When Kathy Dahlkemper won congress, that was a bittersweet moment for me. My goal had to be run for mayor twice and then in my second term run against Phil English for congress. At that time, the district wasn't so gerrymandered and still had parts of Butler, which my wife is from and that would have given me a bit of an anchor.

The mistake I made was that I should have really just stayed on council and run for my council seat.

RS: Our current Mayor Joe Sinnott was only on council one year and ran. How is that different?

RF: Well, first you had me carrying around the Attorney General on my back, and I had six people in the race. Joe was just being opportunistic – and I can't fault him for that. Anybody that knew anything, knew I couldn't win – it was impossible. And they didn't have to have the majority to win, as it was a plurality. I think he ended up beating Barry Grossman [Erie's current county executive, who was defeated in the 2013 primary election by Kathy Dahlkemper] by about 400 some votes – fairly close.

What's really disconcerting for me now as a citizen is:

How can the mayor run unopposed? What it shows to me is a general level of apathy that has taken over. Where's someone to represent the people? There are decisions being made with little public input. I mean, talk about the buses on State Street. Apparently a decision was made, but everybody's running for cover to avoid responsibility and I can't understand that. And I can't grasp the apathy.

RS: Let's talk about the role of the county executive. Operational or visionary? What are your thoughts?

RF: You know, it all starts with the name. The name has no pizzazz. In Norfolk County Port Dover, Ontario, the County Executive is called the Mayor of the county. The name is too technical. And I don't mean any disrespect – I think we had a lot of people that ran it at that level. I think the role is to be the elected official that represents all of Erie County. Not just to have human resources or human services. Maybe that's the function of the county. The city has to give zoning permits too, but I don't view that as a function of the mayor. The mayor should oversee it – but people want a leader. Erie is desperately in need of a few people to stick their necks out.

If you can convince me that the way we're doing it now is working, okay go for it, but getting up and doing the same thing every day for the last 35-40 years just hasn't been working.

RS: What about the future of Erie?

RF: I believe the dynastic regimes are coming to an end. We saw [Ronald] Cleaver and [Joe] Giles [both of County Council] both brought down. Interestingly, in 15 years, we'll have had five County Executives – Judy Lynch, Rick Schenker, Mark Divecchio, Barry Grossman, and hopefully Kathy Dahlkemper. On one hand it's a good thing that the ability to change and elect new people is there, but it shows the lack of dynamic leadership. I'm not advocating people be in office for 30 years – totally opposed to that. But if you give yourself an agenda, you should be able to serve a couple of terms – and that should be enough because if you're really doing what needs to be done, you're going to burn yourself out.

Twelve years ago, Bosworth gave us major things we could do to improve the city. I hear elected officials all the time say we can't do certain things because Harrisburg has to control it – that's just crazy. There's so many things you can do locally – some type of local revenue sharing countywide – spearheaded by the county – which could help the city. One of the major issues with the city is that they have 40 to 50 percent of its properties tax exempt. Why isn't the mayor at the Convention Center Authority meeting every month saying, 'I want a cut of that (Hotel/Room tax)' – for the PILOT program or something. The city's taxpayers bear the burden. Why isn't he down there? I was working on those types of proposals back

then.

My predecessor would routinely give guarantees to the Parking Authority so they could get their bond issues. Why doesn't the city get something in return for that. There's a value in the Parking Authority. It reduces the costs of their bonds – and we figured that out. One year we got \$150k when we signed a guarantee.

I used to analyze all of the authority's annual reports because they all were hiding money – but not in a bad way. They had these capital reserve funds. The Parking Authority had \$10-12 million easy. And these are properties of the city – we should be getting something out of it. It just wasn't looked at. I point that out, that despite all the hoopla, we were good managers. We were trying to be leaders and we were trying to be good managers. ■

Rebecca Styn can be contacted at rStyn@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Twitter @rStyn. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com>



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If We Were You...

WEDNESDAY 8.07

Butterflies in the Park

Family fun in Frontier Park is a staple of summer in Erie. Join the Carrie T. Watson Garden Club at the labyrinth for poetry by Mary Frances Baugh, music by Tom "Strangers and Liars" Hitt, lectures on butterfly-friendly gardening, and of course, the release of beautiful butterflies! Hopefully, all the birds in Erie will be somewhere else.

When: 11 am to 3 p.m.

Where: Frontier Park

Contact: leaferie.org/events

whip out some original tracks and rockin' covers down at Sherlock's.

When: 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Where: 508 State St.

Contact: 453.7760 or facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace

Erie Downtown Partnership Block Party

The Cell Block is the site of the last block party of the summer, so be sure to head downtown for great live entertainment from The Earthquakers and Five Second High!

When: 6 to 10:30 p.m.

Where: 1213 State St.

Contact: 455.3743

slick work on the baritone sax.

When: 6 to 9 p.m.

Where: 3122 West Lake Rd

Contact: 833.1212

St. Paul's Italian Festival

St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church will be home to all the Italian food you can eat, along with music and games. There will also be a church procession for those that wish to worship, but you don't have to be religious to enjoy this great free festival, which is open to all.

When: All day

Where: 16 and Walnut streets

Contact: 459.3173

visit five Erie County ice cream shops, collecting a playing card at each location, and ending at Shades Beach all the usual fun - food and drink, a 50/50, and tunes by Small Town Rollers, Hammerd, Whiplash, Hammersmith, and Thirst 'N' Howl.

When: 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Where: 301 French St.

Contact: Facebook.com/baca.erie

THURSDAY 8.08

Six Years After

The members of Six Years After appreciate their history, with their name being inspired by the French's response to General George Washington's demand for them to leave Fort LeBoeuf. The harder alternative quartet also has some local blues in their blood, with lead singer Steve Banta being the son of Erie guitarist Jake Banta, so check out the Banta the younger and company

FRIDAY 8.09

Frank Singer Duo with Bruce Johnstone

Still sad that Blues and Jazz Fest is over? Well, just because the two-day celebration is through doesn't mean that you can't get your fill of some jazz. Head on over to Anchor In and check out the Gandalf of guitar Frank Singer as special guest Bruce Johnstone wows the crowd with his

"A Canterbury Feast"

Erie Station Dinner Theatre hosts this musical comedy with an interesting twist that promises to take you back to 1492! In medieval times, food was served with no utensils, so let's just say you'll want to wash your hands extra thoroughly before this dinner!

When: 7 p.m.

Where: 4940 Peach St.

Contact: 864.2022

SATURDAY 8.10

Royal/Revise, He Who Creates, Toothgrinder, Melrose, From the Ashes, and Crucify the Hopeless

Wouldn't life be simple if everything cost a dollar? Well, Basement Transmissions is bringing you six bands for only \$7, which is like shelling out \$1.17 per band, so that's pretty darn close, and as Mick Jagger sang, you can't always get what you want. Still, six progressive metal groups in one location should be just fine for you hard rockers out there.

When: 6 p.m.

Where: 1501 State St.

Contact: basement-transmissions.webs.com

BMC's 4th Annual Cardboard Boat Regatta

Build and race a cardboard boat or come watch the other cardboard creations push through water. Registration for this unique event is available in person at Bayfront Maritime Center at 10 a.m. or online and it's absolutely free to watch! The parade starts at 11 and the race starts at noon.

When: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Where: 40 Holland St.

Contact: bayfrontcenter.org

SUNDAY 8.11

BACA Erie 4th Annual Ice Cream Poker Ride

Whip out your hog and head to Sullivan's Pub for a rockin' ride that's all for a greater good. Bikers Against Child Abuse of Erie County again plays host to this charity poker run, in which riders will

MONDAY 8.12

Bears Do Dinner

Rawr! Although they're normally out stealing picnic baskets, on this night Erie's bear community will enjoy a nice sit-down dinner at the Colony Pub & Grille. So if you're a bear, a cub, a chub, a musclebear, an otter, a panda, polar bear, a wolf, or just an admirer, stop by, make some new fuzzy friends.

When: 5 p.m.

Where: 2670 W. Eighth St.

Contact: 838.2162 or drenchedfur.com

TUESDAY 8.13

Erie Gives Day

Hey, you; stop not giving to your favorite Erie nonprofits and seeing the Erie Community Foundation match the results! Back for a third year, Erie Gives Day gives you the chance to donate to your favorite nonprofit in Erie, and then see the Community Foundation dole out a prorated match of up to \$150,000 amongst participating organizations. Last year during the 12-hour giving period, more than \$1.1 million was raised, but \$1.1 million is so 2012 -- 2013's bigger, better, and brighter, so check out the list of participating nonprofits and get ready to give.

When: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Where: Any computer

Contact: ErieGives.org

WEDNESDAY 8.14

NWPA Ukuleles August Get-Together

If you're saying to yourself, "Self, I need more ukulele in my world," here's your chance to fill that void. Head over to Charlie's Pub and Eatery in Edinboro, and bring your uke, or, listen to others who have brought theirs. Eat, drink, play, listen - it's up to you; just stop saying there's not enough uke in your world.

When: 7 p.m.

Where: 600 Erie St., Edinboro

Contact: 734.1715

THURSDAY 8.15

Chasing Moira

As a trio of wise women once sang, don't go chasing waterfalls. Despite some of the perils of pursuit, there are some things worth going after, including local alt-rockers Chasing Moira. The



Thu. Aug. 8 **Six Years After**

Fri. Aug. 9 **Jackson Station**

Sat. Aug. 10 **French Kiss**

Thu. Aug. 15 **Chasing Moira**

Fri. Aug. 16 **I-90s**

Sat. Aug. 17 **I-90s**

Thu. Aug. 22 **Bail Easy & Via the Sun**

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band released their second album earlier this year and play at Sherlock's this fine Thursday, so don't go missing Moira now.

When: 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Where: 508 State St.
Contact: 453.7760, facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace

"Legally Blonde: The Musical"

Fans of the Reese Witherspoon movie or the original Amanda Brown novel can now thrill to the live onstage production of "Legally Blonde" at the Erie Playhouse. Perhaps the men in your party can keep the car warm. Tickets are \$13.50 for students and \$22 for adults.

When: 7:30 p.m.
Where: 13 W. 10th St.
Contact: contact@erieplayhouse.org

FRIDAY 8.16

Aqueous

It's rather appropriate that Aqueous is named after a word that is defined as something that is "made from, with, or by water," because when you go see the Buffalo band live, the music flows

from the quartet's 40 combined fingers. Seriously, these guys are pretty good, and they'll be stopping by the crooked i to help sate your thirst for groovy tunes.

When: 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Where: 1013 State St.
Contact: facebook.com/thecrookedierie

Purple Martin Palooza

Take a beautiful two-and-a-half hour pontoon tour through Presque Isle, learning all about the Purple Martin birds, which roost in Presque Isle for the summer before flying 5,000 miles back to Brazil for the winter. Best of all, the event is free and open for registration. Call today and register up to four people, 18 per pontoon boat.

When: 7 to 9:30 p.m.
Where: Presque Isle Park, Pontoon Boat Station
Contact: 833.7424

SATURDAY 8.17

Benchers Union After Party

Apart from the occasional Debbie Downer out there, everybody enjoys a good party, and the Benchers Union After Party is set to be a proper blast, with Clear Soul Forces, Beedie, and Mad

World leading a list of top hip-hop acts ready to come down and blow the roof of of the crooked i. Check out Matt Flowers piece on the Benchers Union on page 21 to get a taste of the whole historical event.

When: 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Where: 1013 State St.
Contact: facebook.com/thecrookedierie

Romolo Chocolates' Summer Music Series: Tom Principato

Returning from Romolo's 2011 series, guitarist Tom Principato brings his unique brand of Blues to the outdoor piazza once again. This free event will also feature drummer Joe Wells, bassist Jay Turner, and conga/harmonica player Josh Howell. Get here early, as 2011 saw the entire parking lot filled for his act.

When: 6 p.m.
Where: 1525 W. Eighth St.
Contact: 452.1933

SUNDAY 8.18

Fairview Historical Society presents "Danger in Our Midst"

You probably know all about the War of 1812

by now thanks to the Perry 200 Commemoration, but if you're looking for a slightly different perspective, learn about how our neighbors in Fairview saw the situation.

When: 1 to 4 p.m.
Where: 4302 Avonia Rd.
Contact: 474.5855

TUESDAY 8.20

8 Great Tuesdays featuring renowned jazz organist

Tony Monaco first found the keys to his successful jazz career with the accordion. At age 8. But then he shifted gears and took to the organ. Four years later, he heard of Jimmy Smith, who four years after that called Monaco and offered to be his mentor and teacher. Another four years later, the Columbus, Ohio-native was out in California playing in jazz clubs. For free – that's right, free – you can hear this master of the B-3 organ unite with local jazz and pop musicians for one of the last remaining 8 Great Tuesdays.

When: 6 to 10 p.m.
Where: Liberty Park, 726 W. Bayfront Parkway
Contact: 455.7557

the crooked i

UPCOMING EVENTS



THE CAUSE

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AUGUST 9 // FRIDAY @ 10:00



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A TRIBUTE TO BOB MARLEY FEATURING PREACH FREEDOM

AUGUST 10 // SATURDAY @ 10:00



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AUGUST 15 // THURSDAY @ 10:00



AQUEOUS

AUGUST 16 // FRIDAY @ 10:00



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AUGUST 17 // SATURDAY @ 10:00



PHIL-DA-BASS

AUGUST 18 // SUNDAY @ 10:00

TUE: Songwriter Showcase & Vinyl Night
SUN: Open Mic & Jam

To-do List

By: Alex Bieler

Professor Wig-Wag's Ice Cream Social & Bluegrass Festival

Last year, PACA hosted Attack of the PACA, a series of music and theater events held over two days for the community to enjoy. Now, Artistic Director Mark Tanenbaum is ready to host another two-day fun fest, although he's including a different demographic.

"I thought [Attack of the PACA] was fabulous, but at the same time I thought that it was lacking a children's component," Tanenbaum says. With the younger generation in mind, Tanenbaum has a new community event for this summer: Professor Wig-Wag's Ice Cream Social & Bluegrass Festival.

To make it even easier for people to bring their progeny down to PACA, Tanenbaum made sure that the two-day festival was quite affordable at the low, low cost of nothing. That's right: entrance to Professor Wig-Wag's is free of charge, welcoming parents and children to come down to the festivities at 1505 State St. to revel in the joys of bluegrass.

"Children don't get a chance to see live music, and I believe that if somebody doesn't see something, they can never aspire to it," Tanenbaum says. "If you have a child sitting on the sidelines and watches someone play the fiddle or the banjo or the stand-up bass or the guitar, they can say to themselves 'Golly, I'd like to do that too.'"

On Saturday, Aug. 10 and Sunday, Aug. 11, PACA will host 16 hours of live music (from 2 to 11 p.m. Saturday and 2 to 7 p.m. Sunday), with NPR-approved progressive bluegrass band The Barefoot Movement heading a list of musicians that include local stringsters Scarlet Ledbetter and Sean Patrick & the Newgrass Revolution.

Professor Wig-Wag's Ice Cream Social & Bluegrass Festival holds more treats than just music, however. As one would be inclined to guess from the name of the event, there will be ice cream for sale, allowing Wig-Waggers to purchase frozen scoops of goodness to go with the bluegrass. Also, Tanenbaum has another activity available for parents and children alike.

"We're creating games that do not require electricity or batteries so that children can have an actual tactile experience with the games that they play," Tanenbaum says.

Now, if you're thinking all of this sounds like a great time for the members of the community to come together and have a blast, then you should really thank Tanenbaum and all the folks behind PACA. Remember, Erie Gives Day falls just two days after Professor Wig-Wag ends, and a donation to PACA can show a lot of gratitude and help bring more community celebrations like Professor Wig-Wag to downtown.

"Oleanna"

Despite what Michael Bay might think, you don't always need giant explosions, expensive special effects, quick edits, and even more explosions to entertain an audi-

ence. In fact, sometimes all it takes is a cast of two and the help of some great dialogue.

Of course, it certainly helps if that dialogue is written by Pulitzer Prize-winner David Mamet. All An Act Theater Productions will bring the American playwright's two-person play, "Oleanna," the story of a male college professor and a female student that don't quite see eye-to-eye, to their stage for a three-weekend run starting Friday, Aug. 9.

"At its heart, what the play is very literally about are these casual abuses that we carry out on one another because of our inability to empathize with each other, understand each other, or see another point of view," says Director Nick Kikola.

The show, a bit of a departure from the typically more humorous All An Act fare, puts Mamet's hyper-realistic writing style, dubbed "Mamet speak," on display, creating enough tension to fill the venue, even without giant robots and Shia LaBeouf.

"It is an intense 80 minutes," Kikola says. "It's really a lot of work on the actors and pretty intellectually challenging for the audience."

Sound interesting? You can check out "Oleanna" on Fridays and Saturdays Aug 9-10, 16-17, and 23-24 at 7:30 p.m., as well as a 3 p.m. Sunday performance August 25 for the more matinee-minded folks that prefer their explosions be delivered through extremely well-written dialogue.

CelebrateErie Local Spotlight

As you might have heard, CelebrateErie is bringing bandana-bearing rocker Bret Michaels, country quartet Lonestar, and '50s-styled Greaser rock band Sha Na Na to town. Well, if that \$117,000 lineup looks more like Bret Why-chaels, Groan-star, and Sha No No, don't worry, there are plenty of Erie bands that you can check out during the multi-day street festival.

Kick off your musical celebration Friday, Aug. 16 with some blues brought to you by Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Taste of Erie Gazebo Stage before heading off to check out up-and-coming hard rockers Kevlar at the 10th Street Community Stage from 5:45 to 6:45 p.m. Then finish off the night with Broke Boland at the 11th Street Sounds of Erie Stage from 9 to 10:30 p.m.

Saturday promises additional local treats, with the jazztastic Cat's a Bear and the acoustic plucking of MJT taking the Gazebo stage from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. and 4 to 5 p.m., respectively. Then head down to the Main Stage for some tasty guitar licks with Jake's Blues starting at 5:30 p.m. before making your way down to 11th Street to jam with Chasing Moira at 6:30 p.m.

If cover bands are more your thing, Sunday is your day to check out acts like Drunk in Memphis and Thirst 'n Howl. Want some pop? Go see The Romantic Era at 4 p.m. at the 11th Street stage.

This city has plenty of musical talent, so if you're more into loving rock than "Rock of Love," check out the local scene this CelebrateErie.

Alex Bieler can be contacted at aBieler@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @ [Catch20Q](https://twitter.com/Catch20Q). To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com>



The Gathering at Chaffee's Reviewed



Funktapuss and Aqueous took to the stage Friday, July 26 at The Gathering at Chaffee's.

By Ryan Smith

I was just making my way to the main stage at this year's Gathering at Chaffee's when I heard the first strains of "Play That Funky Music," instantly recognizable, carrying over the cool summer-night air.

For a moment there, I almost scoffed. Kinda predictable, that old horse is, I thought.

But flash-forward about six minutes or so: The band is in deep, bending and working that old funk-rock staple out in ways I hadn't figured possible, giving it a whole new (and way better than I'd ever heard before) kind of pulse.

I look around, and see this crowd is *really* gettin' down now – and, man, I am too.

The tentacles of the mighty Funktapuss – extending their reach over a usually-quiet section of northwestern Pennsylvania countryside – had pulled a crowd of hundreds into their grasps, and I didn't see a soul trying to get away. Just the opposite, in fact: Everyone caught in the moment – myself included – was exactly where they wanted to be.

It seemed the players who make up the Funktapuss' appendages felt the same.

"This is a beautiful, beautiful crowd. I'm *lovin'* it," frontman Latez Crawley, all smiles and all smooth, told the audience before going back into the grooves. "We've been havin' fun all day" at the Gathering, he said. "I love it."

The Gathering at Chaffee's – to my first, too-short experience there late last month – was indeed easy to love, and hard to leave. A lot like family.

And those who bring the big, little fest about – founder Doug Chaffee, promoters Tracy Evans and Ryan Bartosek, other organizers, volunteers, and the bands – say that's what it is, and they're happy to have their family growing.

It's "really great to be a part of something that so many people look forward to each summer," Bartosek said. "I was on cloud nine all weekend knowing that both the artists and the audience were having a blast."

Evans (who's also Funktapuss' general manager) said the Gathering is about hundreds – and what's looking to grow in coming years to be thousands – "of like-minded people coming together to enjoy time with old friends ... making new ones, and joining forces to jam the day and night away to some pretty amazing music. Nothing compares to the feeling of walking up to and waking up to the sounds of people forgetting their problems for a weekend," and from both sides of the stage, "it's nothing short of amazing," she said.

As far as the music goes, the whole weekend – two days full of sets by plenty of local favorites, new-to-here acts like Funktapuss and main-headliners Aqueous and Cope – was "a gigantic eargasm," Evans said.

I was only there for a Friday-night quickie myself – long enough to catch the Funktapuss and Aqueous sets – but I can't say I left the Gathering feeling at all unfulfilled.

That rendition of "Play That Funky Music," easily the best I've ever heard, was worth the trip in and of itself. And Aqueous – amazing, prog-jam wizards, those fellas – treated my ears (hell, my whole body and being) to what was, again, easily a best-I've-ever-heard with their rendition of Supertramp's "The Logical Song."

And those are just a couple of examples of the many ways in which minds were blown.

"I'm losing myself in my space," a guy beside me who was dancing – a truly into-it, beyond-thinking groove – kept repeating. "The music – I keep losing myself in it, losing myself in my space."

"Well that," I told him, "is never a bad space to be in, my friend."

He smiled. So did I.

And everyone danced some more.

Ryan Smith can be contacted at rsmith@erieReader.com. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://erindr.com>



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MUSIC REVIEWS

The Mountain Goats

All Hail West Texas [Reissue] Merge

★★★★★

While newer fans of the Mountain Goats may only be familiar with more recent albums like last year's "Transcendental Youth," long-time listeners can remember a time when John Darnielle's tracks were recorded on a boombox with the familiar hiss floating along with the beloved lyricist's captivating lines. A decade after its release, Merge and the Mountain Goats are reissuing "All Hail West Texas," a fan favorite in which Darnielle pumped out some of the most memorable tracks of his career. Armed with his guitar, Darnielle dishes out stories about crushed dreams, loss, and joy, whipping out lines like "When you punish a person for dreaming his dream/ Don't expect him to thank or forgive you/ The best ever death metal band out of Denton/ Will in time both outpace and outlive you" with such sincerity that you can't help but feel connected to his characters. Add in some bonus tracks and this reissue is an excellent listen for new fans and old. - Alex Bieler

Weekend

Jinx Slumberland

★★★★



Back in 2009, Weekend put out "Sports," a debut album full of abrasive shoegaze that drew in critics and fans alike. Now the quartet returns with a follow-up that smooths down the rough edges and goes more for melody. Inspired by the darkly shimmering synth-work of the '80s new wavers, "Jinx" is a welcome addition to today's shoegaze scene, although it never truly blows you away. "Jinx" is best represented by "Sirens" a track that's just a shade over three minutes long comprised an echoing background of vocal takes and a pulsating bass riff equal parts darkly uneasy and gorgeous, while Durkan's breathy vocals float along. It's a captivating 187 seconds, but it never really leads anywhere, a song that slowly builds but doesn't ever have that explosive payoff, either exuberant or dark. There are plenty of pretty sounds and well-crafted soundscapes, but "Jinx" could have used a little more intensity. - Alex Bieler

Hunx and His Punx

Street Punk Hardly Art

★★★

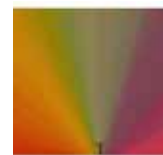


The origin behind California band Hunx and His Punx could easily have been a subplot in the 1996 film "The Birdcage," with hairdresser Seth Bogart going out and starting up his own openly gay band. The story continues with latest album "Street Punk," a new genre of punk that Bogart has claimed "exclusively for women and gays." This new brand of queercore leads Bogart and his all-female backing band into louder, fuzzier sonic terrain, often playing fast and hard, like a more fabulous Black Flag, all while retaining the trashy fun songwriting that drew in older Hunx fans. All but two of the 12 songs on "Street Punk" clock in at less than two minutes, with hits and misses along the way. Songs like "You Think You're Tough" manage to make a lasting impression, but other tunes often zip past without grabbing too much of your attention. - Alex Bieler

Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros

Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros Community

★★★★



Frontman Alex Ebert and his 10-plus piece feel-good, communal-inspired psychedelic folk-rock collective return with this self-titled LP. With plenty of cooks in the kitchen, the album dishes out discordant fun over any artistic growth, with prominent themes like, "We don't have to talk - let's dance!" and "It's all Kung fu in the mud when we're high on love!" are simple and the group's signature sound - a heavy splattering of Polyphonic Spree sided with chunks of the Beach Boys and Otis Redding - continues from 2012's "Here." The deluxe edition offers three additional tracks, but even with those bonuses, nothing stands out or leaves a lasting impression. Songs that last only 3 minutes - "Life is Hard" - seem like they take 6, and songs that last 6 minutes - "Let's Get High" - get caught in a frustrating loop of hooks - albetthem catchy - that never resolve into something bigger or great that hasn't been heard before. - Ben Spегgen

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AUGUST 7 | THE THIRD MAN (1949)

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Starring: Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, Orson Welles



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Street Fashionista

Roberto & Vanessa Moneta

By: Leslie McAllister

Summer Wedding Bliss

The sun is shining, the birds are chirping, tiny, colorful butterflies are flitting by, and the fluffy clouds are smiling – why wouldn't you want to marry at such a glorious time? Weddings have become mega affairs in the last forty years – 300-plus guests, designer gowns, million-dollar celebrations. I wonder: do we sell ourselves out with overpopulating the exchange of vows?

Here's the thing: there is something quaint and meaningful with an under-100-wedding; it becomes sacred, intimate. And the gowns – so over-the-top anymore – what happened to that sleek, ladylike ingénue? Gowns now are gushing with sequins and tulle and lace and stuff and whoa... too much.

The gracefulness of a classic gown with clean lines, a little lace, a little silk, a tiny bustle, a tuck, and a touch of opulence – never out of style be it in white or ivory. Talk about setting a trend: Queen Victoria started the whole white wedding idea in white lace when she wed Prince Albert in 1840. Prior to that gowns were emerald velvet, pale pink, scarlet, or even, gasp, tweed suits. But this white thing stuck, and it really does make a maiden glow on the day she is betrothed.

There is something quaint and meaningful with an under-100-wedding; it becomes sacred, intimate. And the gowns – so over-the-top anymore – what happened to that sleek, ladylike ingénue?

So my thoughts – classic, simple, delicate, understated; have someone you love make it, try a neckline (give the strapless dress a rest and let us miss it), try a jacket, try a cape, experiment with a headdress, and a pair of fun funky shoes. That's what I always said: I will buy a \$5 dress from an estate sale and spend \$1,000 on my shoes a la Christian Louboutin – I'm sure he has something in my size.

Who? Vanessa Vahanian-Moneta and Roberto Moneta with Vanessa's babies Milo and Fiona, and gal pal, Sue Martin.

Where? Their wedding at the Customs House (The old EAM)

Why this crew? There is such a timeless innocence here. There also exists class, sophistication, and imagination in this bunch. Vanessa's dress is dripping with vintage glamour and crisp elegance. A traditional gown complemented with a pop of lavender heels and boldly colored bouquet of garden flowers. The bridesmaid, Miss Martin, (maids not pictured Noreen Finn-Atwood and Dawna Northup) is dashing in her '40s-inspired dress with victory curls, hot pink tights, and a

sweet butterfly representing the married couple. Milo and Fiona are perfect in their black and white ensembles, and Rob is debonair in his black on black tux and white-hot kicks.

Vanessa, tell me about your two dresses, the one Deb Sementelli made and the get-away dress. Ideas? Inspiration? Memories while making them? I had dreamed of my wedding dress since I was a little girl. I had searched for months just looking for ideas in magazines, blogs, and Etsy shops. I narrowed it down to two different ideas, one very traditional and one very edgy. I chose traditional because of the vintage-inspired theme of the wedding. Deb was wonderfully excited about the materials she found to make the dress. It came down to two days before the wedding, and I began to think of an edgier dress. My mom and I went on a search for a getaway/post reception dress. Lo, buried in the racks of Macy's obnoxious teen prom dresses, was a dress much like the ones I drew when I was 7. Bingo!

What was your inspiration for the bridesmaid dresses, and where did you find them? Colored tights, hair, bouquets, butterflies, bags? I love vintage, and I really like the look of the '40s. After the fab '20s, the depression stripped the glitz and glam and fashion grew balls – sharp angles and material that hugged and draped over a woman's body. My girls helped me search, and we found a maker on Etsy: "Heart My Closet." When it came to the starkness of the white Custom's House and black dresses, to express my style, I thought to do fun tights with colorful bouquets, which I did myself. The butterflies come from a childhood association with my name, a genus of butterfly named 'Vanessa'. A few months back, I was displaying the butterfly earrings we carry at Glass Grower's Gallery and noticed 'Moneta' on a label. I looked it up, and sure enough, there is a genus of butterfly by the same last name I'd be taking! Lastly, the bags. I know the brides often go with jewelry for the 'maids, but when it came down to it, I liked the idea of something even more functional – vintage clutches! I happen to have a great connection, *wink wink*, to find such goodies, and thanks to Shop Juju's my girls had absolutely perfect gifts!

Rob, tell me about the groomsmen's tuxedos and the inspiration there. Honestly, Vanessa picked them. I mean, we agreed of course – but she took the reigns as far as pointing out a slim, clean look. The black on black was very reflective of my own style, so it all turned out looking great.

Loved your babies, Fiona and Milo. Vanessa, talk about what they are wearing. Simple and effortless but classic. We let them pick their own. We Internet shopped for months. After observing that most everyone was wearing black, Milo was very specific on what he wanted. His desire to look so dapper was so adorable. I never have to worry about Fiona's choice in clothing – E.S.P. when it comes to dressing up. She's a true fashionista who always dresses just right for the occasion.

Overall wedding vibe? Simple, but emotional.



Leslie McAllister

We were blessed with the presence of 70 of our closest family and friends. The smaller wedding made it seem so meaningful and true to our emotions. Our favorite memory happens to be the same one – that moment I walked down the aisle. I looked around at the guests, our attendants, and Rob – and everyone seemed to just sparkle.

I looked her in the eyes, added Rob, beaming, and knew this was it.

What's next? Immediately? Sofa shopping. **Long-term?** Raising our beautiful family.

Find me out on the town and challenge yourself to get noticed by the Erie Reader!

Leslie McAllister can be contacted at IMcAllister@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Twitter @ShopJuju. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://erirdr.com>



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Rural Erie: Meet the Bencher's Union

A Three-day Celebration of Erie's Hip-hop Scene

By: Matthew Flowers

There is something so distinct about the sound of a can of spray paint being shaken, like the dice to a game of craps being shot from a tin cup – the metal peas bouncing from top to bottom, side to side, stirring a liquid that will soon adorn a decrepit brick wall, a rust-spotted freight train, or the dark sides of an underpass.

The next sound is equally unmistakable; it's the light, toneless, whistle of a colorful mist, spraying life onto stone or steel through a small valve cap. The paint hits the wall in small blasts; graceful motions from a steady hand guide the streaks of color through transition of contour strokes and thin lines. When the piece is finished, it'll be adored by those who pass by and take the time to admire it – without the interruption of a curator's input – or on the flipside, the piece itself could pass you by, by way of freight train. And there too – posted up by the tracks – you'll find enthusiasts taking in these nomadic exhibits.

It's all about the sights, sounds, the message, and the motion. It's all about hip-hop.

A culture upheld by four essential elements, hip-hop blends rhyme spittin' MCing, DJs keepin' the beat, the B-Boys break dancin' in the street, and the graffiti writers benchin' it or brightening up the scene.

"Not only are we graffiti writers, but we're benchers, we like to just sit and watch graffiti and enjoy it," says owner of Steadfast Tattoo Parlor and Bencher's Union co-founder Joel "Suga Bear" Brennan. Benchin' is the act of kicking back; taking the time to study and simply appreciate the elegant works that blanket passing freight train cars.

When a taste for hip-hop culture is acquired, a city's barren wall can serve as a kitchen, its venues' stages a table for feasting, and all those present for the festivities are united by the captivating elements of this artistic sustenance: Hence The Bencher's Union, a progressive group of artists who come to use their collective creativity to turn portions of lifeless city scape into stunning murals.

Coming from New York City, Suga Bear was eager to bring this urban culture to Erie, realizing and need and a niche for such colorful traditions in an occasionally drab city. Before opening Steadfast Tattoo Parlour, he had been working at Ink Assassins where he met some of the chief teamsters in this union. Six years ago, this group of Benchers started as a small circle of friends that had come together simply for art's sake just to paint a wall – in this case, Raven Sound's exterior.

Over a shared passion for hip-hop and its culture, a friendship transpired between Suga and – at the time co-owner of 2189 Skateshop, which capped this corner spot inkwell – Jason "Iggy" Imig. From a young age, Iggy started promoting local shows, booking punk-rock bands at the



Chris Blabel & Howard Glover

Running August 16 to 18, the Bencher's Union highlights the key elements of hip-hop.

Continental Ballroom in the '80s, and later found an interest in hip-hop acts. When Suga took an interest in promoting a hip-hop show at Forward Hall in 2009 to coincide with this "Graffiti Gathering," the bond solidified.

"There has never really been a huge underground hip-hop scene," says Iggy, about Erie's often-times limited selection of live entertainment. So he took it upon himself to help out others with a similar passion for this genre and culture.

2011 marked the first official Bencher's Union with the help of co-founder Danny "Gamble" Babcock of High Level Art, a company that specializes in murals, signs, and exclusive custom projects. "Together we said, 'let's make a hip-hop event,'" Suga puts it simply.

Originally from Cincinnati, Gamble had found inspiration from events like Scribble Jam, a festival that showcased all of hip-hop's elements in one celebration. While the event last occurred in 2008, it added to Suga and Gamble's motivation to repaint the picture.

Not only does Bencher's Union celebrate this culture, but it also merges style. Suga's graffiti maintains an old-school freight-train style art form while Gamble's puts the weight on the modern side of the scale.

"I think what allows events like this to hap-


pen is a city mentality where multiple cultures get together and there is an expression of art," Suga says. In recent years, thanks to Jim Berlin, CEO of Logistics Plus for offering his wall to the world of art – in this case graffiti – the Bencher's Union now congregates around a capacious centerpiece, a stone canvas that stretches from Sasafra Street to Peach Street.

You may think with the negative connotation of graffiti being the equivalent to vandalism that getting the go-ahead would be difficult, but Erie is home to some progressive minds. "It's actually not that hard. You just walk in and say, 'Hey, I want to paint your wall...'. If you have a city mentality, you see things like [Bencher's Union] as a growth in culture. Who is anybody to really say, 'No' to that?"

Like one wall of a box, graffiti relies on the other three to secure the whole package. To fully celebrate hip-hop culture, you also need the motion, the music, and the message. While Iggy started pulling in some local and regional hip-hop artists to play for the weekend, he asked Jon Box, co-founder of The Box 814 – a socially conscious Erie clothing company – to help sponsor the weekend-long event.

Jon was delighted as the hip-hop scene in Erie has not always had an easy time flourishing, and he believes there is more to this culture

than meets the eye and ear. "The fifth element of hip-hop is knowledge," Jon says. "There's a stigma associated with hip-hop shows... we're slowly changing that."

While Bencher's Union may be coinciding with Celebrate Erie, it's also an opportunity for knowledge to spread, that hip-hop culture enriches and beautifies our surroundings and its traditions can thrive in this city. 

On August 16, 17, and 18 The Bencher's Union, in coordination with the Box, will be celebrating hip-hop culture all weekend long. Drop by Basement Transmissions [1501 State St.] Friday to get your music fix with Beedie; Saturday go to the wall that follows the train tracks spanning from Sasafra Street to Peach Street, and "bench it" for a while, as you'll be able watch this city's walls come alive; and finally, on Sunday night, come watch the B-Boys battle it out outside the crooked i.

Matthew Flowers can be contacted at mFlowers@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @MFlowersER. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com>



LGBT Voices

A Step Forward for Equality

By: Rich McCarty

Just two months ago I wrote about the need for marriage equality for same-sex couples, not only in Pennsylvania, but across the United States as a whole. When I wrote that article, the nation was waiting for the Supreme Court of the United States to rule on two important cases. The first case: about the constitutionality of Proposition 8, a 2008 California voter ban on same-sex marriage — which took away *existing* marriage rights for LGBT people in that state. The second case: a challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) — a law that prohibited the federal government from recognizing any state civil marriages extended to same-sex couples.

On June 26, the Supreme Court ruled in such a way that marriage equality resumed in the State of California, and the prohibition against federal recognition of same-sex marriage was struck down.

The importance of this is not to be understated. California is the most populated state in the Union, which means that 38 million people — gay and straight — came under the umbrella

States where same-sex marriage is not legal are not obligated to recognize the legal same-sex marriages of other states. That means my partner and I can drive twenty minutes to the State of New York, get legally married, return to Erie, and technically be “single” in the eyes of state law

of marriage equality virtually overnight. And with the defeat of DOMA, same-sex couples that get married in California not only receive the state’s marriage rights — its tax benefits, inheritance rights, and hundreds of other privileges awarded to married couples — they also receive the rights and privileges extended by the federal government to married couples. What’s more, DOMA’s demise means that same-sex couples who are married in the other states where same-sex marriage is legal — Connecticut, Delaware,



While DOMA's been defeated, same-sex marriage still faces challenges at the state level.

Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Washington D.C. — will also receive the same marriage benefits from the federal government, which is to say, gay and straight couples in these states will now be treated equally under the law. That is a very good thing.

However, DOMA is *not* entirely dead — at least, not yet. In the recent Supreme Court ruling, only Section 3 of DOMA was struck down. Section 3 prevented the federal government from recognizing the legal marriages of same-sex couples, as issued by the states. But Section 2 of DOMA is still in effect. That provision says that states where same-sex marriage is not legal are not obligated to recognize the legal same-sex marriages of other states. That means my partner and I can drive twenty minutes to the State of New York, get legally married, return to Erie, and technically be “single” in the eyes of state law — and if single according to Pennsylvania state law, it’s currently not clear if the federal government would recognize our marriage license from New York, and it’s also not clear if we would enjoy the benefits the federal government grants to married couples.

While marriage equality came to many LGBT

people in the United States on June 26, it did not come to all.

If life is like a superhero movie, the good guys just won a big battle, but the final showdown is yet to come. Thankfully, we have a few heroes right here in Pennsylvania. For example, our first openly gay state representative, Brian Sims, is working in Harrisburg to get marriage equality legislation passed. Also, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has also announced that it is suing Pennsylvania for discriminating against same-sex couples.

So, if marriage legislation is stalled in Harrisburg, Pennsylvanians still have hope that the courts will recognize the current injustice and rule it unconstitutional. What has made the ACLU’s lawsuit all the more exciting, is that Pennsylvania’s Attorney General, Kathleen Kane, has refused to defend the state’s current discriminatory marriage laws.

There may even come a time when Section 2 of DOMA is struck down. For example, a same-sex couple married in Iowa cannot move to a state like Pennsylvania, because they would lose all the legal protections afforded by the civil marriage laws of Iowa and the federal government. That would violate their constitutional rights. In par-

ticular, it would violate Article Four of the U.S. Constitution, which states that “full faith and credit shall be given in each state to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state.” In other words, what one state grants legally to their citizenry, other states must also honor.

But in order for that to happen, we will need a brave couple to stand up and let their marriage be examined and critiqued on a national platform, so that the Supreme Court might once again have the opportunity to steer our Union toward a greater realization of liberty and equality.

That day will come. The only question we in Erie need to ask is how each one of us will actually *help* to make it so.

Rich McCarty holds a Ph.D. in Religious Studies, specializing in sexual ethics. McCarty works in Erie as a professor, serves the community as an ordained minister, and proudly identifies as a member of the LGBT community. You can contact him at rMcCarty@ErieReader.com. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com>



Back in the Day

Erie County: First Home of the American Circus

By: Barry Casselman

Unless you grew up in Girard, you probably don't know that Erie County was where the first American circus made its winter home.

Before there was Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey, there was Dan Rice. Rice created the touring American circus and was the premier showman of his time. In 1853, he moved to Girard in western Erie County, and established this site as his winter quarters for his new circus troupe.

Rice was one of the most colorful characters and most famous Americans of the then young republic. His circus was called "the greatest show on earth" well before Ringling Brothers pitched their first tent, and he is

Martin, who had grown up in Girard and had become the foremost animal trainer of his day, persuaded Rice to settle there. Soon after arriving, Rice built a huge house near the public square and established winter quarters in the town for his famed circus. Girard quickly became the headquarters of most of the other major American circuses, including Thayer & Noyes; Rice & Forepaugh; G.R. Spaulding & Co.; Anderson & Co.; Warner, Springer and Henderson; and others, and Erie County became the center of the 19th-century U.S. circus world. Barns housing elephants and other circus animal were built – Martin himself became famous as the man who trained the legendary circus elephant Hannibal.

Martin and many 19th century circus figures are buried in Girard, but Rice's

Not only has this giant figure of the 19th century been largely forgotten in the 21st century, most traces of the Erie Extension Canal, which brought him to Erie County, are gone, as is the outlandish mansion where he lived.

now called "the most famous man you never knew." Rice is even considered one of the models for Uncle Sam, often dressing up as the character who's the personification of America for two centuries. But Rice was not only a pioneer showman. He was also a professional clown (one of the nation's first), an actor, a director and producer, a songwriter, and even a presidential candidate.

It's worth noting that another super-prominent American of that era, and the country's most famous early journalist, Horace Greeley, also lived in Erie (about 20 years before Rice arrived in Girard).

Girard in 1853 was a very small town, more or less as it is now, located near the Erie Extension Canal that went from Pittsburgh to Erie. (Much less well-known than the Erie Canal that went from Albany to Buffalo, the Erie Extension Canal enabled direct shipping from New Orleans via the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to reach the Great Lakes.)

Something about Girard attracted Rice. An article in *Bandwagon*, the circus magazine, suggests that Agrippa

mansion and most of the other 19th century circus buildings have been razed.

Except for a U.S. Civil War statue (the first one in the U.S., erected in 1863), one barn, and "Dan Rice Days," the annual Girard summer festival, there are few physical remaining reminders of Girard's circus glory days and its most famous resident.

In the age before radio, TV and the movies, Rice was one of America's first "pop culture" mega-celebrities. In addition to inventing the modern circus, he is also credited by some as one of the originators of vaudeville – before it was known by that name – by putting together programs of "novelty acts" on 19th century stages, one of which was Erie's Park Theater on North Park Row. In 1868, Rice even ran for president.

Not only has this giant figure of the 19th century been largely forgotten in the 21st century, most traces of the Erie Extension Canal, which brought him to Erie County, are gone, as is the outlandish mansion where he lived. But the circus continues, as do the offspring of Rice's novelty acts (in the



Unless you grew up in Girard, you probably didn't know that Erie County was where the first American circus made its winter home.

form of stand-up comedy and theater musicals). Rice's friend and fellow early resident of Erie, Horace Greeley, was a major pioneer of American media, and is equally forgotten.

There was a time in Erie's history when so much in today's American

culture germinated here. That should not be forgotten.

Barry Casselman, an Erie native, now lives in Minneapolis. He has been a national political commentator for many years, as well as a widely published au-

thor of poetry and short fiction. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com>



You Ought to Know:

Jay Breneman

By: Cory Vaillancourt

In the land of high ceilings the floor is often barren but for a gravelly-coarse carpet of rock.

But if Montana's big sky is the limit to what any American may theoretically achieve, the persistent bitterroot plant – scratching and struggling to survive in that scabbly, sandy soil – is the gritty reality of where most Americans begin.

Jay Breneman is one of those Americans. You remember Jay – he's the political neophyte, the first-timer who stunned much of Erie by unseating popular two-term incumbent Erie County Councilman Ronald "Whitey" Cleaver in the Municipal Primary Election last spring. And no, I'm not going to run through this piece comparing him to a flower, although the bitterroot is the state flower of his home state of Montana, and it does heartily persevere through difficult-yet-enriching conditions like he did, and it does eventually blossom into an Erie County Councilman like Jay Breneman has.

Breneman grew up in mountainous western Montana, in a family well below the poverty

line, but you won't find a trace of anger, regret, or shame on his 31-years young face. Jay's a slim guy, mostly calm in his mannerisms, and could probably pass for 21; he's a good listener, and when he talks, his body language suggests a certain kind of openness, like when he elaborated on his childhood.

At times, he said, dinner for his family – including 6 siblings – consisted of ketchup sandwiches on white bread. Other times, the canvas Army surplus tent they occasionally called home was devoid of such precious victuals. However, the rugged and self-reliant attitude of the people who call that rocky region home rubbed off on a young Jay Breneman, and he eagerly displayed a willingness to get his hands dirty for the greater good from a very young age.

"My stepfather did cowboy work, some of the most dangerous..." he pauses, his eyes figuratively looking westward as though he's right back there with the mud and the blood and the sweat and the ketchup and the tent. He speaks with a somewhat high-pitched, slightly twangy cadence when he gets excited, but is otherwise very measured and calm in his speech. "I helped him. Even though we weren't paid extra, I still went out and helped him to do the work."



Proving Upfront's prediction wrong, Democrat Jay Breneman defeated two-term incumbent County Councilman Ronald "Whitey" Cleaver.

This Spartan lifestyle clearly left its mark on Breneman, and as he reached the age of majority, he struck out on his own looking for a way to make a living for himself.

"In Montana, it was either lumberjack, cowboy, or panhandler," he said. "There weren't too many jobs out there. You're either rich, or you're poor."

So at the tender age of 18, Breneman moved to Ohio in search of economic opportunity.

"I found a job, a great-paying warehouse job. That was 2000 or 2001. Then 9-11 happened," he said, again fixing his gaze a thousand yards off into the distance. "I was working second shift; I had just got into a new apartment, and I set up this 13-inch black-and-white TV with rabbit ears. I happened to be up early that day, and was just watching whatever channel I could get."

Like many on that fateful day, Breneman watched the temples of American consumerism come down, bringing almost 4,000 innocents with them. "I was 18, and it had a huge impact on me. I felt like I had to do something," he said.

He got his affairs in order, contacted an Army recruiter, and a year later was preparing to ship off to basic training.

"Growing up in Montana, we listened to AM radio all the time," Breneman said. "I am very well-versed in Libertarian philosophy; I grew up around loaded weapons, learned how to fire just about everything. We had to hunt for our own food sometimes, because we couldn't afford it."

With a curriculum vitae that includes growing up around firearms in a deeply red state and serving in the Army, Breneman has the perfect pedigree to position him as a conservative extremist; in fact, it wouldn't be a stretch to see someone with a background like Breneman's starting a militia, establishing a fortified rural compound, and printing his own money. However, there's just one problem with that scenario – Breneman's a staunch Democrat.

"I was 18 during the 2000 elections, and I didn't even participate in that," he said. "At the time, I had a lot of libertarian or anti-government [feelings]. I was like, 'Oh, why would I even bother with that?'"

But Breneman's service in the Army – as a long-range telecommunications specialist – opened his ears to the predicament of humans halfway across the planet and, at the same time, transformed his worldview.

"Some of the things I've seen – starving children, orphans, communities decimated, I started to see the plight of the people of Iraq. And of course in the Army you meet all kinds of people – from Compton or from way out in the boon-docks, and one of the recurring themes I heard about was poverty, poverty, poverty. So as far as being a Democrat, I think it just spoke to me the most, and my experiences in the Army solidified it."

Upon being honorably discharged from the Army as a staff sergeant after six years of duty – including two tours in Iraq – Breneman's journey then led him to Erie. "My wife Jamie [Stubenhofer] and her family are strongly rooted here, and I fell in love with the Erie area," he said.

That love for the area soon turned into a passion for improving it, and Breneman likewise got the itch to improve not only his community, but also himself. He completed his bachelor's degree in social work from Mercyhurst University in an astonishing two years, earned his master's degree in social administration from Case Western Reserve University in just one, and started eyeing opportunities for public service.

"I was kind of frustrated with the way things were moving in Erie – the attention and focus our leaders were putting on certain issues. Somebody told me that my county council seat was open, so I went and did my homework right away. I pulled 13 years of voting and legislative history. And in a matter of maybe a week or two, I made my decision [to run for Erie County Council], then

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Yamato



Delightfully
unexpected.

I talked to my wife, and she was behind me," he said.

"At the time, I was nervous as hell," Breneman explained. "But going door to door, I started to get the feeling that there was a still a greater opportunity that existed."

However, the local political community's reaction to a first-timer – an outsider – challenging a popular incumbent was mixed, at best. While some were enamored with the promise of a dynamic, progressive young leader contributing to the vitality of our community, others tried to dissuade Breneman from running.

"[County Executive Barry] Grossman hinted at me dropping out, and said, pretty much my chances were nil."

And Grossman's not the only one who felt that way. In the March 20 edition of my regular column, Upfront, I predicted Breneman's defeat at the hands of Cleaver.

"I got home from work and I had picked up the Reader, and I was going through it, and I saw the article, and I was like, [laughing] 'Oh boy, here we go. What's this guy gonna say?' I didn't expect it to be glowing – I loved the humor in it, and I was chuckling to myself, but I actually read my section last. I saw my name, blanked it out of my mind, and read the sections on all the other races first."

Expecting the worst, Breneman came to his portion of the article, read it, and reacted.

"I looked at it, and I said, 'That is a very fair assessment,' because this was early March; at that point, I had been to maybe a few hundred households, and so I knew that I had a strong chance, but I didn't know what my opponent was doing, so I had a significant unknown," he said. "So when I read the article, I didn't... it's not that I

was fraught with distress, but I got like 2 hours of sleep that night because I stayed up revisiting my strategy from square one. I revisited everything. It wasn't like, 'Oh he's 100 percent wrong, I'm gonna just keep on keepin' on,' and it wasn't like, 'Oh he's totally right, I'm gonna throw up my hands and give up.' It was, 'He's right if I don't do the right stuff.' So I refined my strategy two or three times that night, and I hit it even harder."

A few days later, Breneman sent me a private message on Twitter, calling me out – albeit in a good-natured, bust-your-chops kind of way. He told me that I was about to meet my "Dewey defeats Truman" moment, and I told him that if he won, he would indeed have his Dewey defeats Truman, or rather, Cleaver defeats Breneman moment.

"I thought about it, and I wanted to acknowledge that I had read [the column], and my response to you was more of a challenge to myself," he told me. "The names 'Cleaver,' 'Dewey,' 'Breneman,' and 'Truman' came to my mind, and I was like, 'Well, that's a challenge for myself while at the same time letting you know not to count me out.'"

Sometimes the people who have the privilege of having a platform such as the one I have can be incorrect in their suppositions and predictions. It doesn't happen all that often, but it is a chance we all take every time we write anything. And in this case, I was wrong. Way wrong. And as the returns began to roll in on election night, because of his military-like persistence and precision throughout the long campaign, Breneman immediately jumped out to a healthy lead – a lead he would never relinquish.

But Breneman was elected as much for his hard work as for his stance on the issues; chief among them is the creation of a domestic partnership registry in Erie County, which would allow county employees involved in same-sex relationships to finally achieve a level of equality with their heterosexual peers by conferring upon them the same benefits opposite-sex couples currently enjoy.

"I know employment and the economy are number one on a lot of people's minds," he said, "but there are a lot of issues that garner people's attention, and of course how you feel welcome in your own community is very important."

Of the registry, Breneman said that "It can be done. We have the legal capacity to do so, so let's do it. For me, that is a no-brainer."

Another no-brainer for a newly-elected official is to get the lay of the land, so to speak. Breneman says he's been meeting with local authorities, county agencies, and nonprofits to focus on employment and economics, and as a result, he's developed an interesting perspective on the fate of Erie County.

"I hear far too often that you have to entice businesses to come to Erie, but I read some-

thing somewhere that really stuck with me – it's not about new ingredients, it's about new recipes with the ingredients you have. So my focus, heavily now, is on those recipes."

As Breneman grows into his office and matures, it will be hard to watch his progress without

"I was kind of frustrated with the way things were moving in Erie – the attention and focus our leaders were putting on certain issues. Somebody told me that my county council seat was open, so I went and did my homework right away. I pulled 13 years of voting and legislative history. And in a matter of maybe a week or two, I made my decision"

Answer to Sudoku

4	2	6	8	3	7	5	9	1
8	3	9	4	5	1	2	6	7
1	7	5	6	2	9	8	4	3
9	4	3	2	1	8	7	5	6
7	6	8	3	4	5	9	1	2
5	1	2	7	9	6	4	3	8
2	5	1	9	8	3	6	7	4
6	9	4	1	7	2	3	8	5
3	8	7	5	6	4	1	2	9

thinking back to that persistent bitterroot plant, scratching and struggling to survive in the scrubby, sandy soil. But this is an exciting and particularly hopeful time in Erie politics. A new crop of leaders – from city to county – has been sown and will affect the landscape of Northwestern Pennsylvania for generations to come; if but half of these newly sprouted leaders bloom the way the man from the big sky has, we're all in for a more beautiful, much less bitter future.

Cory Vaillancourt can be contacted at cVaillancourt@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @VIncrT. To follow this story or comment, scan the QR code or go to <http://eridr.com>



Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

4				3			9	1
	3							
1				2		8	4	
9								6
			4				1	2
	1						3	
2				8	3			4
6	9							8
3	8		5				1	

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DIFFICULTY: ★★★☆☆

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- 1 Federal Aviation Admin. (abbr.)
- 4 Sinbad's bird
- 7 Postpaid (abbr.)
- 10 Festival
- 11 Amateur Boxing Assn. (abbr.)
- 14 Mensa (2 words)
- 16 Maori seagoing canoe
- 17 Sheep's cry
- 18 Portion out
- 20 Tactical Air Command (abbr.)
- 21 Birds (pref.)
- 22 Fist
- 24 Bait
- 28 Funeral oration
- 31 Aoudad
- 32 Corrode
- 34 "Dies ____"
- 35 Fit
- 37 Father of Ajax
- 39 Air (pref.)
- 41 Badly (pref.)
- 42 Priest's garment
- 44 Pollen brush
- 46 Tennis stroke
- 49 Semitic deity
- 51 Pimento
- 53 Shak. villain
- 54 Council for Econ. Advisors (abbr.)
- 55 Tanning solution
- 56 Son of Hermes
- 57 Propeller
- 58 River rapids

DOWN

- 1 FDR's dog
- 2 Alberta (abbr.)
- 3 Narrower than AA
- 4 Naut. rope
- 5 Old Gr. coin
- 6 Fowl
- 7 Animal's foot

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

	M	A	I	L		C	I	L	I			
	D	I	R	A	E		A	C	E	R	B	
S	O	L	O	N	G		M	O	D	E	S	T
A	M	L	A		P	L	A	N		N	E	O
L	E	E		F	A	I	N		Z	I	N	C
P	I	S	M	I	R	E		H	E	C	T	O
			A	F	T		C	E	A			
A	M	O	L	E		C	H	A	L	I	C	E
C	A	R	A		L	I	E	D		F	A	A
M	I	R		P	U	R	E		F	E	B	R
E	D	E	N	I	C		T	R	A	V	E	L
	E	R	I	C	A		A	U	B	E	R	
			Y	L	O	N		L	E	E	R	

	1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9			
10					11				12			13		
14					15				16					
17					18				19		20			
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24	25	26					27		28			29	30	
31							32		33		34			
35							36		37		38			
							39		40		41			
42	43						44		45			46	47	48
49							50		51			52		
53									54			55		
									56			57		58

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A39

- 8 Dais
- 9 Wild mango fruit
- 10 Witless chatter
- 13 Son of, in Gaelic names
- 15 Harangue
- 19 Golf peg
- 21 Vestment
- 23 Pseudonym
- 24 Hat
- 25 Pray (pref.)
- 26 Turnip
- 27 Knot lace
- 29 General Accounting Office (abbr.)
- 30 Poetic contraction
- 33 Knight
- 36 Hours (abbr.)
- 38 Geological epoch
- 40 Fruit
- 42 Mother of Hezekia
- 43 Eucalyptus secretion
- 45 Olive genus
- 46 River into the Yellow Sea
- 47 Eight (Lat.)
- 48 Insect
- 50 Longitude (abbr.)
- 52 Public Broadcasting Service (abbr.)

ERIE'S EATS

American Fusion

AVANTI'S If you've only eaten breakfast at Avanti's, you are in for a big surprise. Every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night, this daytime diner changes over to a fine dining establishment. Check back often since the menu changes weekly. BYOB

1662 W. 8th St. // 456.3096

SUMMER HOUSE CAFE With an ever-changing menu and lots of fresh baked goodies, this local favorite serves breakfast and lunch daily and stays open for dinner Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. BYOB

2605 Washington Ave. // 452.2500

1201 KITCHEN Featuring Latin/Asian-inspired food, this hip downtown spot is full of great art, and the marble bar is a perfect place to try their fresh sushi. With a menu that changes every four to six weeks, be sure to check in often.

1201 State St. // 464.8989

UNDER THE CLOCK - Located in the historic Boston Store, Under the Clock is reviving the old phrase "Let's meet under the clock." With a "sophisticated casual"-style restaurant experience, Under the Clock offers lunch and dinner menus with something for everyone. The steak salad is a must-try for any self-respecting carnivore. Looking for something lighter? Try their seared ahi tuna.

101 Boston Store Place // 454.4700

American

PLYMOUTH TAVERN An Erie institution with great food and drink specials every night of the week.

1109 State St. // 453.6454

PUFFERBELLY Set in a decommissioned firehouse, the Pufferbelly is full of artifacts from Erie's fire fighting past.

414 French St. // 454.1557

CALAMARI'S Extra-long bar, with a large outdoor patio for those warm summer nights.

1317 State St. // 459.4276

Barbecue

THREE-B SALOON Beer, Bacon & Barbecue—the name says it all. Featuring slow-cooked brisket, ribs, and other down-home favorites. If you behave yourself, you may get a free slice of bacon with your beer.

732 W. 4th St. // 451.0007

Breakfast

SUMMER HOUSE CAFE Open from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day of the week, the Summer House Cafe serves

up some of Erie's more unique breakfast and lunch options. Their breakfast burrito is a must-try, but be sure to check in for fresh daily specials.

2605 Washington Ave. // 452.2500

JO'S BROOKLYN BAGELS A walk through the door says it all. Well, at least it's speaking to your noise. Inhale deeply and breathe in those aromas. Fresh bagels and coffee. What's not to love about that combination? A little piece of Brooklyn right here in Erie.

833 W. 38th St. // 520.6246

PEGGY'S RESTAURANT A landmark in the Liberty Plaza for a few decades now, Peggy's serves up quick, affordable meals and plenty of room for conversation. You can sit at the long counter that spans nearly the entire restaurant, grab a booth up front, or get a table in the back.

3512 Liberty St. // 866.3216

THE BREAKFAST PLACE Low prices and big portions—just the way Erie likes it! The Cajun eggs are a must-try.

2340 E. 38th St. // 825.2727

PANOS Open late night with an attentive wait staff who will never let your coffee mug go empty. Try the famous Greek omelet.

1504 W. 38th St. // 866.0517

SIDEWALK CAFE Tucked away on historic North Park Row, you'll find one of downtown's popular breakfast and lunch places.

26 N. Park Row // 455.0002

GEORGE'S With retro decor trimmed in red and black, George's is known just as much for looking like a retro diner as it is for the friendly safe and great grub. They're famous for their mashed potatoes, but don't get stuck on only that. Try the soups and sandwiches on for size too.

2614 Glenwood Park Avenue // 455.0860

DOMINICK'S Famous among Erie's late-night bar patrons who swear by this place as a sure-fire hangover cure.

123 E. 12th St. // 456.6891

HYATT'S - Serving up breakfast and lunch standards for years and is a staple in the West Erie Plaza.

928 W. Erie Plaza // 456.0102

FLIP CAFE Tired of the chain restaurant dishing out breakfast by the numbers? Then try this sweet little spot tucked away in Edinboro. Flip Cafe serves breakfast and lunch from morning til afternoon, so stop in and try any one of the favorites, including "Flip Bread." You won't pay much and you'll go home happy thinking about coming back again.

103 Meadville St. Edinboro

// 734.3400

Brewpub

BREWERY Erie's only brew-on-premise pub and eatery, the Brewery is on a mission to, "Revitalize Downtown Erie One Pint at a Time."

123 W. 14th St. // 454.2200

Carribbean

PINEAPPLE EDDIE Southern regional cuisine served up with a bit of caribbean flair. Featuring savory dishes like Creole shrimp and andouille sausage over grits, seared catfish served with rice and beans and fresh sauteed vegetables, and grilled Angus Rib Eye steak. Deserts include grilled pound cake served w/fresh glazed pineapple, ice cream and rum sauce, and luscious lime layer cake. BYOB.

1402 W. 10th St. // 454.0700

Chinese

GOLDEN WOK Quality ingredients, affordable prices, and consistent service make this Chinese restaurant stand out among the rest.

3202 Pitt. Ave. // 836.9657

Delicatessens

TERESA'S ITALIAN DELI

Teresa's Deli has been a staple in Erie for over 60 years, and it's no secret why. Now in its third generation, the Theresa's staff still makes the food fresh every day, following the same scratch recipes used since 1949.

3201 Greengarden Blvd. // 864.5322 and 810 E. 38th St. // 459.1145

PICASSO'S With signature panini-style sandwiches like the Lee Roslyn (Twinkie, ham, and cheese) and the DaVinci (sausage, ravioli, and provolone), Picasso's is a must-try. Great vegetarian options available.

2060 Interchange Rd. (Outside Millcreek Mall) 866.1183

TICKLE'S DELI - This popular deli features good prices and big, tasty sandwiches including the famous "Big Freddy." Call ahead if you can because this downtown hotspot gets busy at lunchtime.

17 W. 4th St. // 455.5718

GERRY'S 8TH STREET DELI From the world-class deli to the homemade soups, Gerry's offers everything you'd expect from a deli. But with sandwich names like "Cluckmeister," "Chive Turkey," "Tongue Fu," and "Breast of Times" just to name a few, you're going to want to keep going back to check out all of these one-of-a-kind sandwiches. Deli hours run Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

2620 W. 8th St. // 836.8702

French

BERTRAND'S BISTRO A menu featuring local meats and vegetables and organic and Kosher ingredients when possible. The crepes and award-winning wine selection are more than enough to encourage a trip to France via downtown Erie.

18 N. Park Row // 871.6477

Gastropubs

JECKYL & HYDES - Just like the title characters—wait, character—this gastropub seems bent on being two things at once—and that's a good thing. While the seating area is small, which makes for a cozy experience, the tastes are big and bold.

8 E. 10th St. // 456.0072

Irish

MOLLY BRANNIGANS - Got a hankering for bangers and mash? Have no idea what the heck bangers and mash is? Head to this authentic Irish gastropub where you can get your fill of Irish-ness and Irish drinks. From Jameson to Guinness, from Shepherd's Pie to Purcell's Fish and Chips, Molly Brannigans brings the Irish pub to downtown Erie.

506 State St. // 453.7800

MCGARREY'S OAKWOOD CAFE Known for the award-winning Reuben, McGarrey's believes in big portions of comfort food served up hot and fresh. Although Irish in name, McGarrey's also dishes out American and Italian cuisine so that you're bound to find something satisfying.

1624 W. 38th St. // 866.0552

Italian

ALTO CUCINA Chef Pat Rodgers mixes the old-world with the exotic. Beautiful décor, with an outdoor deck for the summer months.

3531 W. Lake Road // 835.3900

COLAO'S Authentic Italian, fresh seafood, and a cozy, intimate setting.

2826 Plum St. // 866.9621

MI SCUZI Southern Italian cuisine with fresh, homemade pasta.

2641 Myrtle St. // 454.4533

AMICI RISTORANTE With dinner hours from 5 to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and a takeout menu available Monday through Saturday, Amici Ristorante dishes out fresh food at affordable prices. From wings to pizza to fresh perch sandwiches and more, the menu has something for everyone. Call ahead one hour for takeout since food is prepared fresh per order.

1518 Walnut St. // 455.0041

Japanese

SUSHI AND ASIAN CUISINE Fresh sushi and sashimi steal the spotlight of this show but their supporting cast shouldn't go unnoticed. The Kim Chi is a great place to start and any of the noodle choices make for good choices to continue on. With veggie-friendly options and a staff happy to serve you, Sushi and Asian Cuisine is a must.

1014 State St. // 455.0596

AOYAMA Think it's hard to find a daily sushi bar in Erie? Find your way to Aoyama for the hibachi experience combined with an extensive sashimi and sushi menu. You'll have the choice between hibachi-style seating and the traditional sit-down dining experience, so your mood can do the choosing for you. Reservations are highly suggested.

970 Millcreek Mall // 868.7999

HIBACHI From flinging shrimp to slinging steak, Hibachi combines dinner with the show without service charges or ticket fees. If you're fine with sitting beside your date instead of across from him or her, opt for this straight-off the grill without time-to-chill dinner experience.

3000 W. 12th St. // 838.2495

Mediterranean

PETRA Open since 2004, Petra serves as Erie's window to the Eastern Mediterranean. The folks at Petra want you to have "a unique culinary experience." And with Mediterranean-inspired items on the menu you're unlikely to find anywhere else, this is a one of a kind dining experience.

3602 W. Lake Road // 838.7197

Mexican

EL TORO LOCO With a full bar and the best margaritas in town, there is something for everyone. Enjoy a little taste of Mexico right here in downtown Erie.

333 State St. // 454.5626

LATINO'S With fresh ingredients and a commitment to serving up the authentic Mexican-cuisine experience, Latinos is the place to go for more than just the average Tex-Mex experience. The place isn't flashy, but with food this good, it doesn't have to be.

1315 Parade St. // 452.1966

EL CANELO With three locations to serve the greater-Erie area, you're never more than a 15 minute drive from all the chips and salsa you can handle served up with sizzling fajitas, hand-wrapped enchiladas and burritos, and a whole lot more. The Super Crab Quesadilla is a must-try that

won't break the bank but will definitely stretch your belt.

2709 W. 12th St. // 835.2290 and 4236 Peach St. // 860.8187 and 4459 Buffalo Rd. // 898.1531

MOE'S With friendly staff serving up fresh, made-to-order southwest fare, Moe's is a great place for quality, on-the-go Mexican food.

2052 Edinboro Rd. (Outside Millcreek Mall) 459.2121

Middle Eastern

CASABLANCA From traditional to modern recipes, from strictly vegetarian meals to meals centered around a choice selection of fresh meat, Casablanca Grille looks to provide something for everyone looking for a good Moroccan meal—and the diversity's a good thing too since when it comes to Middle East Mediterranean cuisine, Casablanca is it. Reservations are recommended.

2174 W. 8th St. // 452.4544

PALM MARKET AND DELI

This authentic Arabic market and eatery offers delicious, freshly prepared food and baked goods for a very reasonable price. The market offers a wide variety of exotic food and merchandise.

720 Peach St. // 866.2337

Pizza

PAPA JOE'S With specialty pizzas ranging from "Vegan Demise" to "Chicken Gorgonzola" and subs that go by the names of "Enchanted Eggplant" and "Chuck Norris," Papa Joe's brings more to the table than any commercial pizza joint. And to boot, they serve up a mean falafel sandwich—something that's a must.

3826 W. Ridge Rd. // 835.3360

VALERIO'S More than just Pizza, Wings, and Subs! Local Italian Restaurant & Pizzeria that has been serving Erie County for over 17 years. Offering a variety of Homemade Italian Dinners, Seafood, Daily Lunch Specials, and Catering Services. Check out our menus online at www.valeriospizzeria.com. With 3 convenient locations to serve you, we'll have you singing...Manga Italiano!

2179 W. 32nd St. // 833-2979 and 1803 E. 38th St. 825-2693 and 724 Powell 833-8884 // Catering Office// 866-3193

STEEL 12 Jonesing for some Pittsburgh eats but don't have four hours to kill on a roundtrip just for some grub? Hit up this Peach-Street eat for fries on your sandwich and a pizza crust that can't be beat. But if yinz are really looking for a chal-

lenge, give the ol' Double-Triple Bypass, which packs on three all-beef patties, ham, salami, pepperoni, capicola, provolone, and American cheese all on one hoagie roll, a try.

24 N. Park Row // 455.1072

Suds and Grub

U PICK 6 TAP HOUSE Great beer meets great food at the corner of Fourth and State streets. From gourmet flatbreads to pizza muffins, there's plenty of great grub to pair with the endless flow of over 20 microbrews on tap. And with helpful servers who know their beer, this is a great place to come to try the beers you've never had but have always wanted to.

333 State St. // 520.5419

SIX PACK HOUSE OF BEER With an ever-changing lineup of brews on tap and cooler wall of six-packs to go, Six Pack also serves up some cheap eats to boot.

847 Pitt. Ave. // 454.1989

U PICK 6 BEER STORE Off the downtown beaten path, U Pick 6 takes pride in its revolving draft beer lineup. With some quick eats and sandwiches sliced up right in front of you, U Pick 6 draws you in for the beer and keeps you for the conversation.

7520 Peach St. // 866.2337

Steakhouse

SENSORY 3 Next time you're at Presque Isle Downs & Casino, take a break from the table games and check out this bar and grille! If you're cashing in your chips for fine dining, we bet on being satisfied by a fine steak since Sensory 3 serves up some of the best cuts in the area.

8199 Perry Hwy // 866.8359

COLONY PUB & GRILLE - Multiple fireplaces and three intimate dining rooms make the Colony a popular spot for a romantic dinner.

2670 W. 8 St. // 838.2162

RICARDO'S Opened in 1943 by two brothers, Ricardo's serves up some of Erie's finest steaks. Chef Peter West and Cathy Merks run one of Erie's choice restaurants that's known for its hand-cut, grain-fed western beef and delicious, mouth-watering ribs cooked outside year-round. Hearty Italian fare with casual feel of fine dining make Ricardo's a must.

2112 E. Lake Rd // 455.4947

VICTOR'S - Located inside the Bel-Aire hotel, Victor's offers fine steak and seafood with drink specials every night of the week.

2800 W. 8 St. // 833.1116

Thai

KHAO THAI The only full-time Thai restaurant in Erie. Luckily, it's fantastic! Try the drunken noodles for a spicy delight. Vegetarian friendly. BYOB

36 N. Park Row // 454.4069

Vegetarian

WHOLE FOODS CAFE Offering a wide variety of vegetarian staples, including wraps, sandwiches, soups, pizza, and seasonal specialties.

1341 W. 26th St. // 456-0282

Wings

BUFFALO WILD WINGS

Fourteen original sauces and loads of televisions make BWW a great place to meet friends for the big game. Full bar menu available.

Interchange Road (Across from Millcreek Mall) 868.9464

ODIS 12 Award-winning wings and affordable sit-down dining. Odis 12 features over 100 different flavors, including the crowd-favorite "ugly cousin."

664 W. 26th St. // 452.6347

GREENGARDEN TAVERN

Classic corner bar atmosphere, great prices, excellent wings. Honey-hot barbecue and cranch are standouts. Go Browns!

1543 W. 8th St. // 454.3367

PARK TAVERN - Known for its wings, the Park Tavern boasts a family-friendly smoke-free environment. Try some Herbies or crispy Cajuns. Buffalo Cajun is also recommended.

4205 E. Lake Road // 899.8661

Sweet Treats

MIGHTY FINE DONUTS If you love donuts and are looking for something off the well-worn path to Dunkin' Donuts and Krispy Kreme, this local gem is your destination spot. Heralded by locals as the best donuts ever

2612 Parade St. // 455.6408

ROMOLO CHOCOLATES

Tommy Stefanelli apprenticed with his family in the chocolate business for nearly 20 years. Where'd that get him? He's one of only 26 master confectioners and he's right here in Erie. So for hand-made pieces of chocolate, be sure to stop by Romolo's—then boast to your out-of-town friends about having a master confectioner in your city.

1525 W. 8th St. // 452.1933

PULAKOS George P. Pulakos opened his first chocolate shop at 926 State St. in 1903. Over a hundred years later, the fourth-generation-run chocolate shop is still one of Erie's favorite places for a wide selection of all things chocolate—and other delicious snacks too.

2530 Parade St.

DONUT CONNECTION - Just off the corner of Peach and Liberty streets sits a family-owned donut shop that's celebrating its Golden Anniversary this year. With the "best coffee" in town and a wide selection of delicious hand-cut donuts, this is a great place for a sweet treat.

3842 Liberty St. // 864.8702



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ErieGives.org • August 13, 2013 • 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Erie Gives is one day completely devoted to giving back to our community. You can help any of the participating 300 nonprofits during our 12 hours of online giving.

To make an online gift, visit www.ErieGives.org and donate \$25 or more on August 13, between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. When you do, a prorated match from a \$150,000 pool will be added to your donation. Special thanks to GE Transportation for their \$50,000 donation.

Erie Gives is a project of The Erie Community Foundation



GET IN YOUR GAME!

SUNDAY CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH

11am - 3:45pm

\$16.95

Featuring carved prime rib and all the best breakfast classics!

BACKSTRETCH
BUFFET



SIZZLING TABLES

HOT SEAT

Saturdays, August 10, 17, 24 & 31

7pm - 10pm

Four Random \$500 CASH Winners!

Plus players at that table win \$25 cash!

Open to table players only.



CHALLENGE THE CHICKEN FOR SOME SERIOUS DOUGH!

WIN up to \$1,000 CASH!

Sundays, Mondays & Wednesdays
Now - August 28 • 10am - 10pm

Start earning to play at 6am!

See INClub™ for full details.



SHOW TIME: 7PM • RACETRACK PATIO

HOTEL CALIFORNIA
"A SALUTE TO THE EAGLES"
FRIDAY, AUGUST 23
Tickets • \$5 • \$10



Tickets on sale now at Ticketweb.com [ticketweb](http://ticketweb.com)

Tickets purchased at Presque Isle Downs & Casino are an additional \$5.

I-90 Exit 27, Erie PA | presqueisledowns.com | 1.866.ERIE.FUN



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GET **IN** YOUR GAME

If You or Someone You Know Has a Gambling Problem, Help is Available. Call 1-800-GAMBLER.