



**ERIE READER**

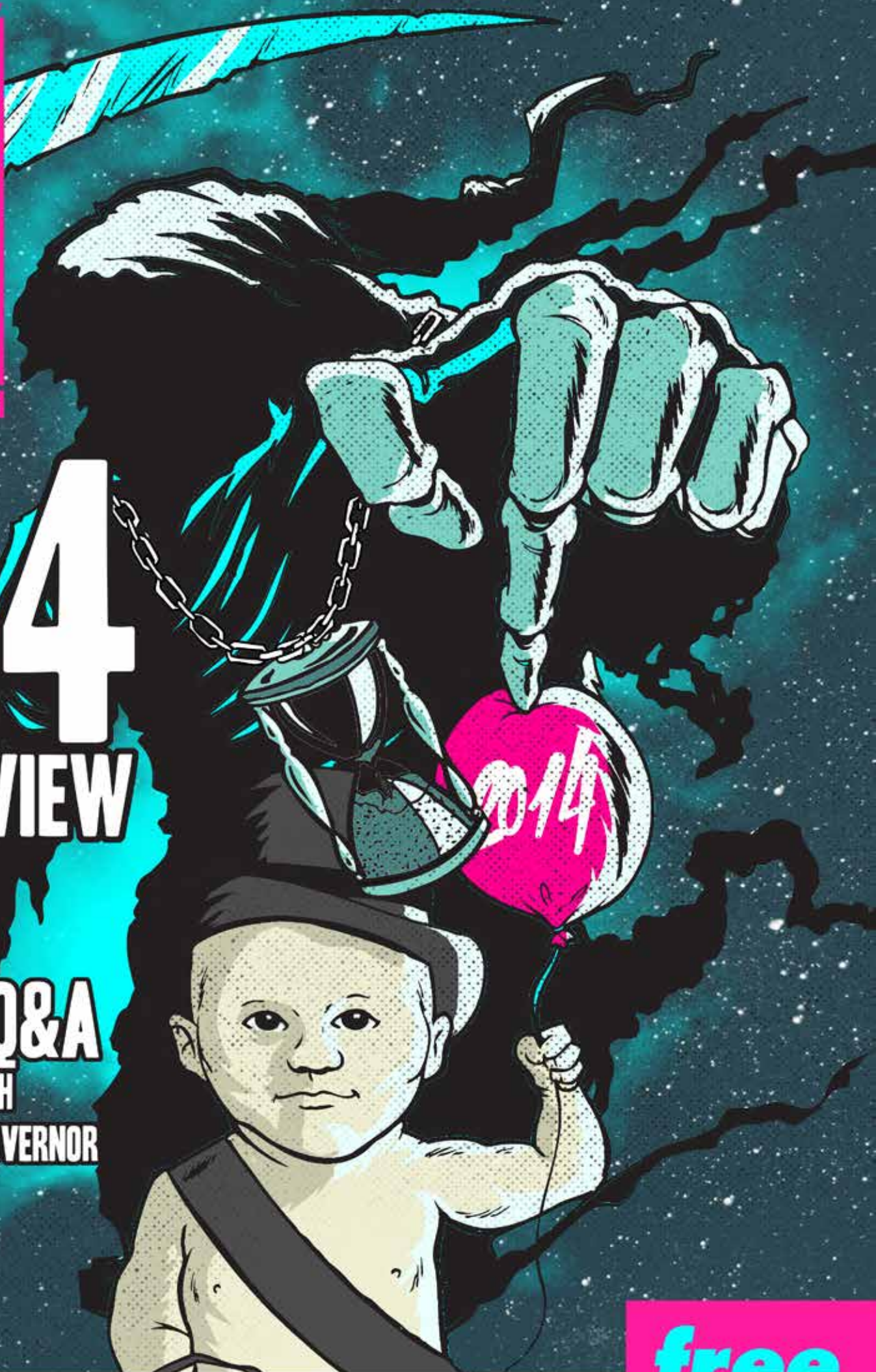
December 24, 2014 - January 6, 2015 / Vol. 4, No. 26 / [ErieReader.com](http://ErieReader.com)

# 2014

## YEAR IN REVIEW

### TOM WOLF Q&A


AN INTERVIEW WITH  
PENNSYLVANIA'S NEW GOVERNOR



NEW YEAR'S EVE ROUNDUP LADYFEST SNOWTOWN THROWDOWN

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## From the Editors

Year's end always seems to be a time of reflection and analysis — a measuring of both the last twelve month's high and low points, an opportune time to evaluate the last 365 days to make sense of them as a collective whole. So as 2014 draws to a close and we put the final touches on the fourth volume of the *Erie Reader*, you'll find such contemplation and consideration in the final issue of this volume.

For starters, Arts & Culture Editor Alex Bieler takes us through 2014 in this issue's year-in-review feature, examining the biggest stories — both nationally and locally — to measure their impact. Nationally, stories like the Ebola outbreak, the shooting deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, the legalization of marijuana, and the challenges to the Affordable Care Act standout amongst the many stories that shaped how we've lived 2014.

In Erie, headlines went to the closing of the Kanzius Cancer Research Foundation, the derailing of the proposed rail terminal, continued Bayfront development, the increase in heroin-related deaths, the establishment of a quasi-community college, and the results of this year's midterm elections. Alex also details the ebbs and flows in the local entertainment scene, noting the closing of a landmark venue and the emergence and reemergence of others.

In his column, Contributing Editor Jim Wertz dubs 2014 "The Year Of The Gun," as violent crimes continue to plague our city and challenge our neighborhoods while many stand idly by with feet planted firmly in the ground and hands stuffed in pockets. In short, The Year Of The Gun casts a pall over the good nature, the good stories, and the progress of Erie, and as 2015 knocks on the door, we can wait no longer to peel back the veil and stare the problem down to know how best to search for solutions.

Contributing Editor Rebecca Styn re-evaluates the topics she covered during the last 52 weeks to address chief issues still facing like the city and region — like relocating a school into an unused school building, along with putting a potato chip plant in an already existing but vacant potato chip plant. While 2014 saw a fair share of accomplishments, much work is left unresolved and is still in need of solutions.

Year-end reflection often revolves around the holidays, and in "Exile

On State Street," Rick Filippi ruminates of the City of Erie's Christmas gift — or lump of coal depending on how you look at it: A tax increase to the tune of 7.3 percent, bringing the total percentage increase since 2012 to more than 21 percent.

To deal with an increasing budget, raising taxes is the easy answer, but as we continue to burden those choosing to live within the City, is it the right one? Shouldn't our political leaders be looking for more creative answers, ones that don't solely raid the taxpayers' bank accounts? Rick — in addressing what he calls a Christmas present we did not ask for — looks for those alternatives in hopes of challenging leadership to be bold, not just to be bankers.

The final days of December are a

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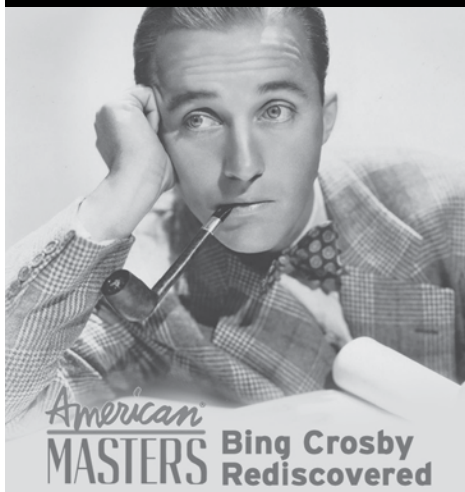
good time for Top-10 lists and for assessment. Alex Bieler and John Lindvay reminisce on the best albums and best moments in geek culture, respectively here, while James R. LeCorchick takes grading literally, issuing mid-season scores to local university basketball teams, as he looks at both the past and the future.

And perhaps the future is where the lion's share of our attention ought to go and this time of the year. We know — when adjusting our future based on our past — that hindsight's 20/20. Now that we've inspected our recent past, it's time that we turn our sights to the future.

While it's easy to see clearly our most recent action, envisioning the future takes truly audacious perception. 2015 needs to be the year we look to call upon the inspirers, the dreamers, the visionaries who dare not only to see and wish for a better Erie, but to endeavor and labor to make that vision a reality. Otherwise, we'll be right back here writing the same From The Editors twelve months later.



## Schedule Highlights



**December 26 at 9pm  
on WQLN-TV 54.1**



**December 25 at 8pm  
on WQLN-TV 54.1**



**January 4 at 9pm  
on WQLN-TV 54.1**

## NEWS & OPINION

### Exile on State Street

#### A Lump of Coal from the City of Erie for Christmas this Year

By: Rick Filippi

Well, it looks like the citizens and taxpayers of the City of Erie can once again break out the eggnog to celebrate the recent Christmas present we received from Mayor Joe Sinnott and five members of City Council. In the face of decreasing revenues and increasing costs, the mayor and a majority of City Council came up with a truly innovative and creative way to deal with the City's budgetary problems.

Their solution? Raise taxes once again on the citizens and taxpayers who are already overburdened and underserved.

Recently, City Council voted 5-2 to approve the mayor's budget, which included another 7.3 percent tax increase. To their credit, Councilmembers Dave Brennan and Jessica Horan-Kunco voted against the budget. This latest increase is on top of the 14 percent tax increase the City delivered to taxpayers in December 2012 – more than a 21 percent increase in just three years!

These people just don't get it, do they? As I have illustrated in past articles, the City's tax environment is down right abysmal, particularly when compared to our "competition," the metro suburbs.

Frankly, with a shooting nearly every day, it really takes gall on the part of the city administration and council to shove this tax increase down the throats of its citizens. Council never even lifted a red pen to the budget, making not a single cut. And, to add insult to injury, the City claims to be sitting on top of over \$8.5 million in reserves.

Back in the day, Mario Bagnoni would be pounding his fist and demanding cuts. I never thought I would say it, but I truly wish we had a Mario Bagnoni on City Council. At least someone would be looking out for the interests of taxpayers. But not these guys. It's business as usual in a void of leadership that is bereft of any creative ideas to handle the City's fiscal problems. In fact, this action shows how utterly clueless the city administration and council is to the negative tax environment that exists in the City.

And does anyone even seem to care? It appears that most people who can do so have already left the City. Our neighborhoods are in an unrelenting downward decline, which underscores the City's primary budgetary problem. That is, that the City is no longer attractive as a choice of residence or as a business investment, largely due to its tax environment. When people no longer believe that it's worth investing in the city, flight occurs and property values decline. And with the City piling on even more taxes, the vicious cycle continues relentlessly.

So we have a City with extraordinarily high taxes, low property values, and a glut of tax-exempt property. Folks, there is no way the City can get out of this problem by raising taxes. It's really not even a short-term fix because it compounds the problem long-

term.

Wouldn't it be refreshing if the people that are supposed to be representing us actually came up with some unique and even radical ideas to stop this vicious cycle? Even if only a few of our elected officials had some starch in their backbones and brought some ideas up for discussion, some realistic alternatives that focus on increasing other sources of revenues and cutting costs might be found.

So, as the administration and council have delivered us a lump of coal for Christmas, I thought about a few things that might be on my New Year's resolution list for the City. Here are a few ideas the City could resolve to explore in the new year to address its budgetary problems. None of these are new, and you've heard me mention them before. But let's at least get a conversation going.

For starters, we get the same tired responses from the administration and council. Pensions and employee costs are at the root of the expense side of the equation and declining taxes are the cause of the reduction on the revenue side and there's nothing that can be done. No fat in this budget we always hear. Let's look, then, at two major components on the expense side that are within the power of the City to affect.

First, employee costs, including pensions. When I was in office, we formulated an innovative retirement package to encourage long-time workers to retire. These workers could be replaced by new employees at reduced salaries, or not replaced at all. It was called the Deferred Retirement Option Plan, or "DROP".

We used an employee's own pension funds to create an incentive for retirement, not tax dollars. The result: More than a hundred City employees, at the time only fire and police, accepted the plan. Coupled with other incentives, we were able to reduce the total City work force by about 200 employees, virtually all through retirements.

A similar plan should be offered to the blue-collar and AFSCME employees. The immediate benefits are apparent, and this gift keeps on giving in terms of reduced employee costs over the long-term.

Also on the expense side, the City should finally adopt and implement an automated payroll system. Yes, folks, believe it or not, the time clock actually came and went as a piece of technology, passing the City by.

When I was mayor, we attempted to implement the automated payroll system to reduce time theft and uncontrolled overtime. Council fought me on it, and it was never adopted.

Nine years later, the City still does it the old-fashioned way, essentially an honor system, particularly for police and fire. Folks, before we raise taxes, let's at least get the City's payroll system out of the 19th Century and at least into the 20th Century.

The revenue side presents more problems, but at least the City could be working on it. Recently, the *Erie Times-News* published a great story on the salaries of CEOs of some of the major tax-exempt organizations, particularly the colleges and hospitals. The amount of money these people are being paid is obscene in the sense that they argue they are "charitable organizations."

If the legislature refuses to address this issue, then the City needs to take legal action against these entities to ensure that they are paying their fair share of taxes. Can anyone justify a "charity" paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in executive compensation when we don't even have enough cops on the streets to prevent violence?

At least the threat of such action might get these organizations to the bargaining table. And I am not talking about donating a police car. I am talking about paying at least a 50 percent payment in lieu of taxes or more.

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**Council never even lifted a red pen to the budget, making not a single cut. And, to add insult to injury, the City claims to be sitting on top of over \$8.5 million in reserves.**

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These entities can afford it. How about the retired homeowner on a fixed income living in the central city? These folks are paying more than their fair share of taxes while these "charitable organizations" essentially get either a reduced rate or a free ride.

There are other revenues the City should be after. The hotel room tax comes to mind. The mayor should be at every Convention Center Authority meeting demanding a cut of the room tax to pay for increased police protection and City services. Instead, when the county hotel issue surfaced earlier in the year, not a whimper was heard from this administration, and the City got zilch.

The beauty of this tax is that it's truly regional; in fact, it's beyond regional because the vast majority who pay it are from outside the county. It's really a form of countywide revenue sharing. But instead of getting these people to pay their share, this administration and council goes back to the same well.

Unfortunately, my friends, the well has all but run dry. We are in a downward spiral that will require radical action to turn the tide.

The administration and council delivered us a Christmas present we did not want. My resolve for the new year is to continue to drive these ideas in the hope that maybe, just maybe, a leader will rise to the surface and grapple these issues head on. There is still hope for the City, but as the year winds down, it's clear that that hope for this once proud city is disappearing just as quickly.

Rick Filippi can be contacted at [atty.filippi@gmail.com](mailto:atty.filippi@gmail.com).



Erie At Large  
The Year of the Gun

By: Jim Wertz

Many people who live in the city love their neighborhood. It becomes part of the individual and collective identity of the community and its residents.

Coming of age in a particular neighborhood is like knowing a secret handshake or speaking a foreign language when you meet someone who is also from that part of town.

Growing up in Little Italy or the lower East Side is how many Erie natives would prefer to be identified, instead of simply saying, “I’m from Erie.”

But neighborhood fealty is also at the heart of our city’s gun problem.

In case you slept through 2014, we have a gun problem.

The Erie Police Department received more than four-hundred calls for shots fired this year. There were more than sixty gun-related injuries.

The shooting death of Jaree Warren near the corner of 18th and

Raspberry streets brought the city’s 2014 homicide count to eleven. Ten of those were homicides by gun.

The investigation into the Warren murder is ongoing, but it’s likely that Warren knew his assailant.

“The majority of all the shootings we see are not random acts of violence. They are not random victims. They all know each other,” says Erie Police Dept. deputy chief of administration Don Dacus.

Neighborhood disputes are often at the core of these shootings. Sometimes it’s drugs. Sometimes it’s over a girl. Sometimes it’s about nothing at all.

Whatever the root, it’s killing our city.

Don’t get me wrong. Erie is, for all intents and purposes, a safe city. But a laissez-faire attitude toward insidious acts of violence will quickly become the defining characteristic by which our neighborhoods, and eventually our city,

are measured.

Since 2004, the City of Erie has experienced a steady increase in violent crime, each year exceeding the overall national average.

Erie ranked ninth in violent crimes in Pennsylvania last year, according to the FBI’s uniform crime reporting statistics. In contrast, we had nearly half the violent crime of Reading, Pa. and less violent crime than Lancaster, two cities with smaller populations and bigger problems – high rates of drug addiction, low employment rates, and gang violence – than those we experience in Erie.

So while there is reason to be optimistic heading into 2015, it seems important to talk about the problems that exist in our neighborhoods because much of the violent crime and almost all of the gun violence in the city is territorial in nature.

Wannabes from the lower East Side end up at odds with a disparate band of thugs from the upper East Side or the West Side of town and the powder keg has been lit. Soon everyone’s taking matters into their own hands and meting out their own forms of justice.

“They’re pretty much groups of neighborhood friends who have banded together based on geo-

graphic location,” says Dacus. “A lot of it starts with one of them getting shot or shot at, which causes this to escalate and continue where the only sense of justice for them is to shoot at or shoot one of their opposing neighborhood

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The shooting death of Jaree Warren near the corner of 18th and Raspberry streets brought the city’s 2014 homicide count to eleven. Ten of those were homicides by gun.

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enemies that they’ve created.”

The problem is, there’s no justice in street justice. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy by which the subjective execution of one in-

evitably leads to an objectiveless war of many.

In some respects Erie is experiencing, on a micro scale, the type of crime that plagues larger cities across the United States. Territorial disputes are nothing new in episodes of crime and violence, but there’s usually a hierarchy or someone with whom authorities can reestablish sensible lines of communication. Erie lacks that type of organized crime.

This puts greater value on the role of neighborhood alliances and community leaders who understand the problems unique to a neighborhood, a block, or even a single home.

An honest discussion between citizens, elected officials, and the police who are charged with regulating violent crime, begins the process of eradicating, not managing, the problem.

2014 may go into the books as the year when gun violence and petty quarrels overshadowed the better nature of our city.

2015 should be the year we figure out what went wrong.

*Jim Wertz can be contacted at [jWertz@ErieReader.com](mailto:jWertz@ErieReader.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @Jim\_Wertz.*

The Way I See It  
Looking Back at 2014

By: Rebecca Styn

While 2014 saw great change, it unfortunately also witnessed much animosity and little peace throughout the world, and across our great nation. In my final column of 2013, I touched upon the hope for a simpler and kinder life for all of us – embracing the then-new Pope Francis as the hopeful mascot of the change I hoped to see.

However, as we all know, the best-laid plans can often go awry, and this year, I believe we experienced more complexity and strife. My columns over the last 52 weeks touched upon many of these issues – some of larger proportions that had indirect consequences on each of us here locally and many of smaller proportions with larger consequences with direct ties to our community.

Looking back, each one of these issues still exist today. Some with even fewer answers.

In short review, globally, I touched upon the Ebola virus, the ensuing epidemic and the fear of reaching the United States. Today, after its brief encounter with our nation, it’s no longer found in the States but still remains very much alive in West Africa. I wrote about ISIS terrorist group and whether the U.S. should get involved (we have), I remembered Robin Williams and the stigma of mental illness (which still exists today), and I welcomed LeBron James home to Cleveland (cautiously).

Most importantly, though, of all the issues I touched upon, the ones that hit home took the lot of my arguments. Looking back on each of them, I took a pragmatic stand on most topics. While I generally don’t approach personal issues in a cut-and-dry manner, when it comes to our community, the way I see it, it seems the best approach is the one that affects the greater good of society – and not just a select few.

Looking back locally then, doesn’t it make sense that if people aren’t paying their garbage bills, then we stop pick-

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In 2015, I hope that as a community, we educate ourselves more about the candidates running for office before blindly voting them in.

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ing up their trash for them? That a school should be able to relocate into a school building? That we should overhaul a public radio system if it saves lives? That if people want to see change in government, then they need to vote? That a new potato chip plant should be able to go into an old potato chip plant if it’s creating business? That if we have an opportunity to exploit our assets as a community (roads, rails, and lakes) and that would have created an environment that would have attracted other industries – then we

should exploit those assets (read: rail terminal)?

These were some of the main issues in 2014, and they remain problems that still plague our community today.

As a society, we must begin to realize that every decision our government makes will always have a positive and negative effect – depending on your perspective. Our elected officials’ job is to determine where the outcome will make the most positive profound effect on the majority.

In 2015, I hope that as a community, we educate ourselves more about the candidates running for office before blindly voting them in; that we conduct more research to have a better grasp on the issues that afflict us in order to make better decisions in changing the outcomes; that our leaders and decision-makers become better communicators so that we can realize that the simplest answers might in fact be the best ones; and finally, to know that the best outcomes may not always make each of us happy but that they just might create a greater good for society as a whole.

And in the end, when decisions made don’t go the way we personally want, we – as informed citizens – must either step up and help change it – or be willing to evolve our perspective.

The world doesn’t revolve around us individually. If we took a moment and stepped away from ourselves to realize this, then life in our community will become just a little easier to live and the progress needed for our region will become easier to see.

*Love? Hate? Agree? Disagree? I want to hear from you. Email me at [rStyn@ErieReader.com](mailto:rStyn@ErieReader.com) and follow me on Twitter @rStyn.*



## News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

### Language of Love

People advertising for love interests via online dating sites have apparently become picky about how they describe their sexuality. To the usuals (male, female, gay, heterosexual) have been added recently (as reported by NPR in December after surveying OkCupid.com) “asexual,” “androgynous,” “genderqueer” (evidently not the same as “gay”), “queer” (not quite “gay,” either), “questioning,” “trans man,” “transsexual,” “transmasculine,” “heteroflexible” and “sapiosexual” (turned on by “intelligence”). Still, some users of the site found the choices inadequate. One young woman described her sexual orientation as “squiggly,” and the reporter cited others who thought highly of that term. [NPR, 12-4-2014]

### Bright Ideas

Britain's Home Office revealed in November (by releasing archived documents from 1982) that among the contingency suggestions for worst-case nuclear attack on the country was commissioning “psychopaths” to help keep order. They are “very good in crises,” an advocate wrote, because “they have no feelings for others, nor moral code, and tend to be very intelligent and logical,” and thus could do quite well at containing the vigilante survivalist enclaves that might develop in the event parts of the kingdom became lawless. (After an

apparently thoughtful debate, the suggestion was not agreed to.) [The Independent, 11-1-2014]

**G**reat Art! At a recent art show at Paris' Palais de Tokyo, Italian artist Sven Sachsaber, for his provocative piece, brought in a large haystack on Nov. 13, dropped a needle into it, and gave himself two days to find it. Late the next day, he picked it up. (Palais de Tokyo calls itself an “anti-museum par excellence.”) [Daily Mail (London), 11-14-2014]

### Ironies

**T**hree homes on the Pacific Ocean near Grayland, Washington, were washed away by violent rainstorms in early December, but the residents had seen it coming. The longtime local name for the area is “Washaway Beach.” Said one, “I knew it was going to happen sooner or later, but I had hoped it wasn't this soon.” (2) In November, an airline's advertising staff created the catchy slogan (to attract impulse travelers), “Want to go somewhere, but don't know where?” and convinced management to send it, via Twitter, to the airline's thousands of followers. (Spoiler: The airline was Malaysia Airlines, whose Flight 370 still has not been found.) [KO-MO-TV (Seattle), 12-11-2014] [Malta Independent, 11-28-2014]

**H**ide the Show Program Inside the Porn: A theatrical producer in Madrid found a way around Spain's recent steep sales tax increase on certain entertainment venues (sports, movies, live theater): It sold back issues of vintage

pornographic magazines for the equivalent of \$20 -- with a “free” ticket to its latest stage production by noted director Pedro Calderon de la Barca. (A show ticket would carry a 21 percent tax, but a pornographic magazine is still taxed at 4 percent.) [Bloomberg Business Week, 12-1-2014]

### Compelling Explanations

**C**reative: Eric Opitz, 45, who was indicted on 13 counts of fraud in Philadelphia in October, had explained that the reason he needed human growth hormone (that he would resell) despite being 6-foot-3, 450 pounds, was that he was really a dwarf and feared he would recede if he stopped the medication. [NJ.com, 10-10-2014]

**B**ungling Cinematographers: Zak Hardy, 18, and Terrill Stoltz, 41, were arrested recently in separate incidents and charged with photographing women in bathrooms without their permission. Hardy, caught in a public restroom in June in Exeter, England, pointing his phone from one stall to another, explained that he was just trying to see whether his phone was waterproof. Stoltz professed his innocence, as well, claiming the camera he set up in his ex-girlfriend's bathroom in Billings, Montana, was solely to have a photographic record of him when he cleaned his chickens in the bathtub. [Exeter Press and Echo, 10-27-2014] [Billings Gazette, 11-25-2014]

### The New Normal

**A**n Oceanside, California, couple was surprised in November

to discover that buying a purebred bichon frise on credit meant they were only leasing the dog for 27 months and would have to make a 28th payment to actually “own” Tresor. Furthermore, the lease, under a “repo” threat, required “daily exercise,” “regular bathing and grooming” and “immediate” disposal of Tresor's “waste.” A spokesperson for the store, Oceanside Puppy (which works with four finance companies), told the San Diego Union-Tribune that the arrangement is fairly standard now for expensive pets. [San Diego Union-Tribune, 11-28-2014]

### First-World Problems

**N**BC's “Today” show reported in December the “heartbreak” parents are feeling when they learn that the supposedly unique name (“wonderful, distinctive, rarely heard”) they had given their infant in the last year or two (e.g., “Mason,” “Liam,” “Lily”) actually appeared on BabyCenter's annual list of most popular names of 2014 (6th, 3rd and 8th, respectively). (2) After hearing tenants' complaints, the New York City Council is now considering a regulation requiring landlords to post notices if a common area or amenity is unusable for 24 hours or more -- which applies of course to elevators and laundry rooms, but would also extend to any air hockey or foosball facilities in the building. [NBC News, 12-2-2014] [Crain's New York, 12-8-2014]

### Perspective

**A**lthough elephants, rhesus monkeys, cobras, cows and water buffalos are regarded as sacred

by many of India's Hindus, the animals most certainly do not live idyllic lives, according to a November BBC News dispatch. As “growing populations are swallowing up habitat,” the divine symbols are forced to the cities, where they must dodge traffic, forage garbage for food, and endanger themselves encountering people less certain of their holiness (such as in the November report of the cobra harassing customers at an ATM in Delhi). As representatives of Lord Ganesha, elephants live well only during religious festivals, but otherwise must navigate asphalt and potholes that tear up their hooves. In another November incident, some Hindu leaders protested a drive to kill rats that had infested the Maharaja Yeshwantrao hospital in Indore -- because Ganesha was depicted riding a mouse. [BBC News, 11-15-2014, 11-6-2014]

### Police Report

**I**n a 2012 incident in Cleveland (where a white police officer recently shot to death a black teenager holding a toy gun), 13 officers chased two unarmed black homeless drug users at high speeds and fired 137 shots at the pair, killing them. (A car had supposedly backfired, suggesting a gunshot at the cops.) As a result of “communication” failure, the 13 were placed on limited “desk duty” for 16 months and subjected to continuing investigation. Recently, nine of the 13 officers sued the city, charging that non-black officers are historically and illegally disciplined more harshly for mistakes when victims are black. [The Daily Beast, 12-2-2014]

## JUST TOYIN' WITCHA – BY: B. TOY

### THE REASON IT'S CALLED “WHITE” COLLAR CRIME





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# Tom Wolf Q&A

## An Interview with Pennsylvania's New Governor

By: Jim Wertz

On Jan. 20, 2015, Tom Wolf will become the 47th Governor of Pennsylvania. Wolf defeated incumbent Republican Gov. Tom Corbett in November with one of the few Democratic victories of the 2014 midterm election cycle. He is the first challenger to unseat an incumbent governor in Pa. since the legislature established a second gubernatorial term in the 1970s.

Wolf is a self-described "citizen politician." His background is in manufacturing, although he was Secretary of Commerce in the Rendell administration and was appointed by Gov. Bob Casey to an economic development board and the Legislative Commission on Urban Schools. He's also one of the few governors, indeed one of the few politicians, of the modern era whose professional experience is not that of an attorney.

Wolf will enter his first term facing huge budget deficits and a Republican legislature. The culmination of these forces present a significant challenge to the reformist agenda that garnered him electoral support in both the primary and general elections.

I spoke with Gov.-elect Wolf about these challenges and what it means to the future of the Commonwealth, as well as the future of Erie.

**Jim Wertz:** Take me back to 8:01 p.m. on election night. Yours was the first race to be called in the country and one of the few Democratic victories of the night. How did that feel?

**Tom Wolf:** It felt great. I was still on my way to the York Fairgrounds when the election was called. I was very surprised it was called so early.

**JW:** It's going to be a difficult transition for you. You recently announced that Pennsylvania was facing a \$2 billion budget shortfall. How do we close that gap and how does that \$2 billion deficit affect the Wolf Administration's agenda?

**TW:** That's the big question. I'm going to be dealing with that after I become governor. Right now, I really want to understand better what the nature of the deficit is and how big it is. I think before we get into specific solutions we're going to have to understand the magnitude of the hole we have. That's why I actually went to the extent of creating a separate budget task force, not the transition team, but a very important budget task force chaired by a former budget secretary, co-chaired by the president of the county commission of Montgomery County, and then some really good people from the private and public sectors to look into it.

Before we get to solutions and possible solutions, of course, I'm going to have to work with the legislature to come up with those solutions. We all have to be on the



TOM WOLF FOR GOVERNOR

same page of understanding the nature and magnitude of the problem. So that's what I'm focused on right now.

**JW:** During the campaign, education was the top priority and you still are committed to education, as it remains a priority for the transition. Erie City public schools were significantly impacted by the education cuts under Tom Corbett. How quickly can school systems like ours expect to see some restoration of state funding under Gov. Tom Wolf?

**TW:** Every step starts with the budget. But the answer to your question is as quickly as possible. That's going to be determined in part by how quickly we can find the money in the budget. This budget deficit problem is really important.

In terms of education in a place like Erie or York or Philadelphia, part of that also gets to a broader set of questions about how we treat cities. When you talk about schools in Erie or schools in York, you're talking about an educational issue, but you're also talking about the broader disparity that exists between municipalities in Pennsylvania. So we have to address that. But it all starts with understanding the budget challenge we all face.

**JW:** You've said that you'd like to fund education and its restoration with an extraction tax on the oil and gas industry, but you are facing a Republican-led General Assembly. What if the motion to establish this tax

**Pa. Gov.-elect Tom Wolf (left) plans to capitalize on his manufacturing background to address Pa.'s budget concerns.**

doesn't pass the General Assembly? What would an alternative funding model look like?

**TW:** I am hoping that I can go through with the Marcellus Shale tax. That, in and of itself, is probably not enough to bridge the budget gap, so I'm going to have to work with the legislature to figure out broader, more comprehensive solutions to this problem. But that's certainly a priority. I campaigned on that, and I continue to be a strong advocate of a Marcellus Shale tax.

**JW:** Let's say that you get the Marcellus Shale tax. Oil and gas prices are down. Are you concerned that the extraction will slow or cease and thereby impact the amount of money you bring in even if you get the tax?

**TW:** The extraction tax is based in part on production times the market value at the wellhead, so any downturn in the market price is going to be a mathematical impact on the shale tax. But beyond that, it also concerns me because it also impacts the health of the industry.

I want this industry to be healthy. I want the industry to do what it does correctly, from a health point of view, from an environmental point of view, and I want it to produce good

jobs for Pennsylvania. So yes, any downturn in the price, or anything that affects the health of that industry, should be a concern for all of Pennsylvania.

**JW:** You've mentioned the collateral health effect of the oil and gas industry in Pennsylvania. What are your thoughts on New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's decision to ban fracking in light of the N.Y. state health inspector's concerns about the viability of the data that's been produced on groundwater contamination?

**TW:** I'm sorry New York took that step. But it's just one more reminder that we've got to get this right. If we don't get it right, if there are health problems associated with this industry, it's not going to work. So we've got to get it right. I think what happened in New York is a reminder that we do have to do this correctly. I've heard that throughout the campaign, and it's a concern that I share. I believe, however, that with the right oversight, with the open exchange of information, we can get it right. We don't have to go the route that New York went.

**JW:** You have a number of people affiliated with Marcellus Shale on your transition team, particularly on the environmental group. But if this doesn't work out, or if there is some kind of disconnect between the work they're doing and the health of the citizens of Pennsylvania, is a ban on fracking, like the one in N.Y., something that's on the table in Pa.?

**TW:** I want to make this work. On my environmental team there are also very strong environmentalists, like Pat Lupo, from your area, so I'm not sure what you mean that there are people from the Marcellus Shale industry on my team.

**JW:** You have a member of the Marcellus Shale coalition and other folks affiliated with extraction on the committee.

**TW:** I want to make clear that I want to hear all sides. I'm not trying to bias the outcome of the deliberations of this group or any group in the future in terms of what this industry could mean for Pennsylvania. I think we have to be very objective about it. That means we've got to look clearly and objectively at the health risks, but it also means we need to look objectively at the economic possibilities, the potential of this industry. I think the right thing to do is to try to make this work.

From an environmental point of view, I don't want to make any compromises. From the health point of view, no compromises. And from an economic development point of view, no compromises. So that means we've got to be open to the objective evidence that says if you don't do it right, you have problems. But I also want to make sure that we understand that if we do it right, we could get some benefits from this.

**JW:** Many people are hoping that your background in manufacturing is going to translate well into the Pennsylvania economy. Manufacturing in the 21st century is going to look a bit different than it did in the 20th century. What does manufacturing in Pennsylvania look like moving forward



in your perspective? How do we help communities like Erie that were devastated by the loss of more traditional manufacturing to transition in a meaningful way to a new economy with sustainable living wage jobs?

**TW:** Good questions. Starting with the point that I've actually created manufacturing jobs in the United States and not necessarily in leading edge industries, but in very traditional industries. I've done that by recognizing one central truth: We can't compete with low-wage countries in different parts of the world. We cannot compete with countries that play games with currencies or regulations. We can't. We shouldn't.

But we have a few really important strengths. We have a great workforce, maybe the most productive workforce in the world. Second, we have a supply line that is tight. We are right at the richest market in the world. It's no accident that the places that are creating these new manufacturing jobs in East Asia are actually creating products and services for the U.S. market. We're right here, and one of the things I did to create manufacturing jobs in the United States was to take advantage of the fact that we are right in the market. So we have a tight supply chain.

The final thing is that we have great universities here. There is an intellectual capital here that is unique in the world. So if we combined those things, there really is no shortage of things we can do in manufacturing to create family-sustaining jobs, and that's what I've done. I'd like to push this forward and take advantage of the good workforce, the tight supply chain, and that's why my manufacturing plan calls for things like outright incentives for companies, entrepreneurs, who are willing to create good family sustaining jobs in Pennsylvania.

In the United States, states like Oklahoma have had success with things like cash-back programs. I'm talking about that. I have been talking throughout the campaign, and I continue to study ways to connect our universities more closely with the world of work. Some of the good ideas that come out of our laboratories' hard drives or filing cabinets should go into an industrial park. We need to do things like that, and I think the government can play a role in nudging the economy in ways that can actually take full advantage of what I think are the things that actually make us a natural for manufacturing.

**JW:** One of the challenges facing manufacturing and economic development is the age of the infrastructure in the state, everything from roadways and bridges to municipal infrastructure, like water systems and sewage systems. In this economic climate, facing the budget deficit, will we be able to continue funding for programs, like PENNVEST, that help subsidize infrastructure improvements in order to support new business?

**TW:** PENNVEST currently has a net worth of \$3 billion and cash-on-hand of almost \$1 billion. Infrastructure is really important to me. We did have passage of a transportation

bill, which means that we do have funding for infrastructure projects that are long overdue, but it will also help to make that supply chain that I mentioned more efficient. I think those are things that we really ought to look at in a more fulsome way. Just fixing, repairing, and expanding our infrastructure creates jobs.

But an infrastructure investment is one of those investments that has a strong multiplier effect and especially in a place like Pennsylvania, the Keystone State, right in the middle of the richest market of the world. Infrastructure investment has to be a key priority and will be in my administration.

**JW:** Pennsylvania has so many great resources in places like Philadelphia, York, and Erie, but Erie is removed from the other urban centers in the state. What role do you see the development of northwest Pennsylvania's waterfront playing in the future of the Commonwealth?

**TW:** First of all, you're right that Erie is sometimes forgotten by a lot of people in

People talk a lot about the ports in Philadelphia, but Erie is one of the greatest freshwater ports in the world. We need to take advantage of that. Transportation infrastructure is a big part of that.

Pennsylvania, and it shouldn't be. After all, Erie is the Riviera of Pennsylvania. It's our waterfront. And it's also one of the three great ports in Pennsylvania. People talk a lot about the ports in Philadelphia, but Erie is one of the greatest freshwater ports in the world. We need to take advantage of that. Transportation infrastructure is a big part of that.

A lot of the problems that Erie faces are problems that every city, every urban area, faces. We've had the same problems facing Erie schools in school districts around the state. But one thing that I think would help everyone in Pennsylvania is for all of us to take fuller advantage of great places like Erie, and for our state to have a better more robust transportation and telecommunications infrastructure. Especially transportation.

If you could get from Erie to Philadelphia in a couple of hours instead of the six, seven, or eight hours it takes now, we'd be in really, really good shape.

**JW:** Thank you Gov-Elect Wolf. We look forward to hearing from you as your administration moves forward.

Jim Wertz can be contacted at [jWertz@ErieReader.com](mailto:jWertz@ErieReader.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @Jim\_Wertz.



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# Considering the City

## The Legacy of Wilbur Henry Adams

By: Civitas Members Lisa Austin and Stephen Sonnenberg

**S**treamlining America, currently on display at the Erie Art Museum, will remain open until March 29, where visitors have three months to discover the work of Erieite Wilbur Henry Adams (1906-1958). Wilbur Henry Adams, once a student of George Ericson at Academy High School, took courses in Pittsburgh at the future Carnegie Mellon, and earned a degree from MIT. He worked in Pittsburgh, Erie, and Cleveland, producing designs for domestic, commercial, and industrial products, as well as interiors, buildings, and even a bridge.

Despite this, Adams isn't well-known today. His early death cut short a prolific career, and his decision to work independently, without a team of other designers in a large firm, resulted in much of his work being discarded over the past half century.

With this exhibit, curator and historian Alexa Potter is placing Adams among the fathers of American industrial design, including Walter Dorwin Teague, Raymond Loewy, and Norman Bell Geddes, and she describes the designer as having "had his own vision" yet being "very practical" knowing that "at the end of the day" his job was "to move forward the sale of a product."

On display in this well-researched exhibit are some of Adams' notebook sketches, finished drawings, commercial posters, and designs for toilets, stoves, a car and a bus, toys, a city hall in Perry Square, a floating bandstand, and an airport and a futuristic landing field. The show includes one of Adams' fashionable bikes, a retro gas pump and toy models of tractor designs.

But the collection is more than solely his work - it is a triumph. Local animation studio MoreFrames has created an animated celebration of Adam's work. Kids will love the free "styled by Adams" tattoos. The tiny illustrated exhibition brochure, a gem, is also free with admission.

In the show, a copy of a 1938 publication,



JILL KAMBS/ABIGAIL ADAMS GREENWAY

PM Magazine, provides "before" and "after" images showing how Adams updated products. PM praised Adams' aesthetic improvements of tractors and air compressors noting that "manufacturers now realize that appearance design is a valuable sales asset."

Okay, good design makes business sense, but how do designers make products look "better"?

First, designers learn to "see" - usually by drawing. Skilled artists and designers "see" better than the rest of us. Try this: Pick up a flower, a shell, or a branch. Look at it for a minute. Then, continue looking and draw the object for ten minutes. You will be frustrated, but you soon will see more than your first glance revealed.

Designers learn about materials. One particular photograph in *Streamlining* shows Adams shaping clay; in another he turns and carves wood on a lathe. Designers model, bend, fold, weave, sew, carve, cast, rivet, weld, solder, and glue things together. While today's designers embrace digital modeling and 3D scanners and printers, they still benefit by working directly with their hands.

**In one of Adams' presentation drawings, a speeding bus with thin, red lines running the length of the vehicle, emphasizing a forward movement through design.**

Designers consider the "job" of each object. In well-designed products the form (the shape of the object) is inspired by its function (the object's job.) Paola Antonelli, curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art, describes the elegant functionality of "simple" paperclips, Post-it notes, LEGOS, and M&Ms in her book, *Humble Masterpieces*.

In addition to art and engineering, industrial designers need business skills. Knowledge of marketing, patents, budgets, billing and project management is necessary to become commercially successful. While our regional universities offer degrees in art, business, and engineering, no school has an industrial design program.

According to the Industrial Designers Society of America, of the 7,000 higher-education degree-granting institutions in the

United States, only 65 schools have Industrial Design programs. Luckily, almost half of these are within an eight-hour drive of Erie - the closest being 100 miles west, at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Unlike Adams, however, when some students go away to school, they don't return to Erie - or if they do return, they may not find design work. Observing the lack of design opportunities, local industrial designers Bob Smith and Mike Yurkewicz helped found the InnovationErie design competition in 2008.

While InnovationErie has helped a dozen new products come to market, the Erie Community still need to work to foster design excellence. Let's establish an Erie County Industrial Designer Laureate to attract Erie-born industrial designers to make a visit home - or - to showcase the designers already here. These industrial designers could visit our schools and offer workshops. Perhaps the Manufacturers' Association could commission the Erie County Industrial Designer Laureate to work with a local industry.

In 2011 in Detroit, a few people decided to take a risk and embrace the city's manufacturing legacy. They founded Shinola, a company specializing in watch, journals, bicycles, leather goods, and more. Shinola's design excellence - from the logo to the portraits of "craftspeople" on the website - helped to sell great products.

A few weeks ago, the Brookings Institute VP, Bruce Katz, visited Erie. Katz believes Erie will flourish - if we foster a "vibrant sense of place," with "no barriers" for new businesses, and we "connect this to manufacturing." Katz encouraged Erie to "set a vision" based on our "distinctive legacy." Inspired by the legacy of Wilbur Henry Adams' industrial design and Detroit's Shinola, it's time - now more than ever - to set a new, bold vision of design excellence for Erie manufacturing.

Civitas members can be reached at their website [www.civitaserie.com](http://www.civitaserie.com), via Facebook at CivitasErie, by emailing [Lisa@civitaserie.com](mailto:Lisa@civitaserie.com), or by scheduling a Friday morning meeting at the Civitas office in the Masonic Building, 32 W. Eighth St.



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# 2014 Year in Review

## A Look Back So We Can Get Moving Forward

By: Alex Bieler

It seems as if it was just yesterday that people were still getting used to writing 2014 on official documents, angrily scrapping deposit notes and other slips when “13” managed to make its unwanted presence known. Like many years, 2014 flew by, but there were plenty of important moments that will be remembered for years to come.

Colorado didn't wait long before legalizing the purchase of marijuana for recreational purposes, doing so on Jan. 1, the same day that the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act went into effect. Donald Sterling was banned for life by the NBA following leaked recordings in which the former Los Angeles Clippers owner made numerous racist comments, an event that nearly led to a boycott by Clippers players and coaches during the playoffs.

Pennsylvania became the 19th overall state in the nation to recognize same-sex marriage back on May 20, with same-sex marriage legal in 35 states total by year's end. Seattle, Wash. made news when its city council voted to raise minimum wage within the city to \$15 an hour.

The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that Hobby Lobby, a retail arts and crafts chain, and other “closely-held” stock corporations can choose to be exempt from the Affordable Care Act for religious preferences. American attention on the World Cup continued to grow as the United States survived longer than expected in the “Group of Death” only to be eliminated by Belgium.

The Ebola virus made people freak out across the nation after a patient with the disease was taken to Emory University Hospital in Atlanta and other citizens caught the deadly virus. Robin Williams' suicide led to a push for greater mental health awareness. Bill Cosby came under fire after more than 20 women came forward accusing the iconic comedian and TV star of sexual assault.

And most of the nation heard more about grand juries than ever before, after police officers Darren Wilson and Daniel Pantaleo were not indicted for the deaths of unarmed African-Americans Michael Brown and Eric Garner, respectively, while we still wait for a decision for 12-year-old Tamir Rice's death in Cleveland.

Erie also had its fair share of big news items. Here are some of the most important, interesting, and amusing topics that came to be in 2014, like the snowpocalypse, Tom Corbett's defeat, and a tale of two hotels.

### The 2013-14 Snow Season

We're No. 1! At least, that's what the city of Erie was ranked in terms of overall snowfall during the 2013-14 snow season. The

Golden Snow Globe Contest, a website that tracks just how much of the white, fluffy stuff comes down in cities of more than 100,000 people, had The Flagship City ranked first in the nation, as Erie nudged out fellow Rust Belt city Syracuse, N.Y. 138.4 inches to 132.

It's not surprising that Erieites were treated to a long, cold winter, but the 2013-14 season was notable in that The Gem City received an additional 37.5 inches on top of its average of 100.9.

Erie wasn't alone when it came to winter misery, caused by the intense Polar Vortex, as cities in the Midwest and New England were hammered with frozen precipitation from December to March, with at least 21 deaths being blamed on the extreme cold wave. It makes this current season seem pretty tame in comparison, but don't worry, it doesn't take long for the forecast to change in Northwest Pennsylvania.

As of Dec. 15, Erie was ranked third for total snowfall in the current snow season, but something tells me that Erieites would be fine with not taking the top prize this time, especially given that Buffalo has already received eight feet of snow.

### Bayfront Hotel Development

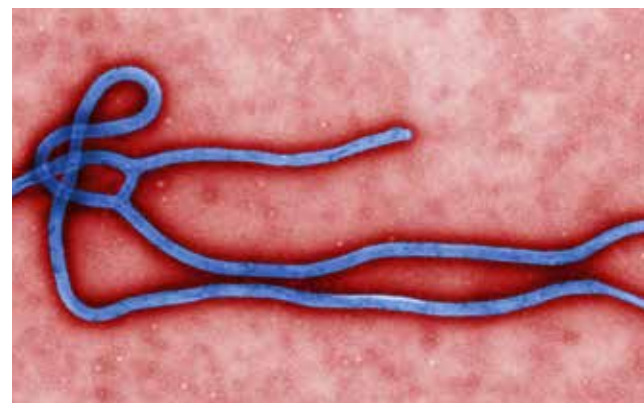
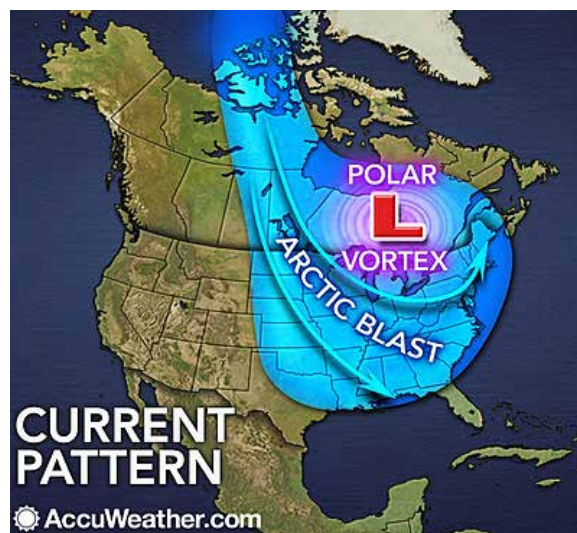
The topic of Bayfront development was not a new story in 2014, but was certainly one that received a lot of attention throughout the year. Last year, we saw both publicly- and privately-funded plans for new hotels on Erie's waterfront announced, with the Erie County Convention Center Authority and Scott Enterprises offering up separate ideas for the community.

The ECCCA received a \$25 million state grant in 2013, but Scott Enterprises lost out

when the state denied Erie's application for a City Revitalization and Improvement Zone designation, putting a damper on the Scott's “Harbor Place” mixed-use plan, a vision of publically-accessible areas like a park, a sky-bridge, and even a floating entertainment barge, although the development did not completely shelve the project. Local officials,

Not everyone was happy with the announcement, like S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie Vice President Ed Kissell, a local advocate for waterfront access. Kissell decried the lack of direct access to Presque Isle Bay in the hotel project's plans.

Another source of grumbling was that the proposed 61-foot-tall hotel – which was



including Sen. Sean Wiley, pushed the Pa. House of Representatives to speed up and expand the CRIZ program in September, and Scott Enterprises President Nick Scott, Sr. told the *Erie Times-News* that Harbor Place is “shovel ready,” but that a CRIZ designation would be crucial for its future.

Erie County Council voted 4-2 to issue a bond guarantee for the construction of the publically-funded hotel, allowing the ECCCA to move forward with its plan – only after councilmember Jay Breneman brokered what Jay Stevens described as a “nuanced credit enhancement deal” that required yearly payments of \$65,000 from the ECCCA to make up for the tax revenue lost from the property's tax-exempt status. As Stevens continued to point out in a February Street Corner Soapbox, the council was never likely to turn down the public hotel, as it's hard to pass up on a \$25 million state grant.

**2014 began amidst the Polar Vortex storm (clockwise from top-left) but many national headlines reported the Ebola virus outbreak and gun violence. In local news, the derailing of the proposed rail terminal reflected the power a community had to state: Not In My Backyard.**

granted a height-related variance by the Zoning Hearing Board so it could exceed the Bayfront's 50-foot height limit – would be another building to mar Lake Erie's shoreline, a complaint that *Reader* contributor Bryan Toy encapsulated in his regular cartoon *Just Toyin Witcha* back in August.

However, the Zoning Board did include a condition that it would allow the height variance in exchange for increased public space.

Councilmember Dave Brennan also proposed a condition that the Convention Center Hotel include an 800-square-foot landscaped plaza in addition to the already-required walkway in order for the council to sign off on the design plans for a \$30 million hotel and parking garage.

The latter of those two buildings wasn't without controversy, either. Civitas members Lisa Austin and Stephen Sonnenberg railed against the parking garage based on its specific location on the former GAF site in an op-ed written for *The Erie Reader* in September, blasting the decision for wasting waterfront space that could be used for more than 2,000 parking spots.

Development of the Bayfront is a major factor in Erie's future, and it's a news story that will continue into the next year and beyond. But for now, the council has spoken on the subject, and as Stevens wrote in February: There will be hotel.

Porreco College

The debate of having a community college in Erie has been a subject of discussion for years, but in 2014, it finally became a reality.

Edinboro University announced in March that it would help fill an educational void with Porreco College, where full-time tuition for students working toward an associate degree or certificate program can cost less than \$2,500 per semester with endowment funding.

Porreco College, with the tagline: "The Community's College," is not a traditional community college; instead of being publicly funded, the school will be supported privately, meaning that the community will not see added taxes. Donations, including a \$1 million gift from Louis and Debbie Porreco, will be used toward \$3,000 per full-time student seeking a degree per year scholarship called the "Porreco Promise," allowing students to work toward one of four associate degrees and one certificate program on a 26-acre former estate and working farm on West 38th Street.

The 180 students who started classes in the fall – whether they pursue further degrees or not – will help make Erie a smarter county thanks to The Community's College.

Heroin Hits Erie

Western Pennsylvania was the scene of several tragic deaths this year, as heroin overdoses frequently made the news in 2014. Earlier this year, Erie County Coroner Lyell Cook was quoted by the *Erie Times-News*, saying that he believed heroin-related accidental deaths would be even higher in 2014 than in 2013, when 60 percent of fatal overdoses were attributed to the highly-addictive drug after 2012 had a rate of just 20 percent. Cook's predictions weren't far off, as 29 out of 54 confirmed drug-related deaths – 54 percent – were from heroin.

The surge of heroin use and related overdoses led some locals to create outlets for people

who are either struggling with addiction or know someone who is to reach out to one another. Facebook pages like HOPE – Heroin Overdose Prevention in Erie – and FOHAT – Friends of Heroin Addicts Talk – have given those in need a place to share stories and raise awareness for this issue.

Still, the heroin problem continued to persist, causing Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane to form a new multistate taskforce in October with officials from New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, as the fight against heroin reached much farther than just Erie County.

2014 Midterm Elections

A trade of Toms highlighted the 2014 Midterm Elections in Pennsylvania, as Democratic challenger Tom Wolf defeated Republican incumbent Tom Corbett by more than 300,000 votes this past November, the first time that an incumbent Pa. governor did not win in a reelection attempt. It was a small victory for Democrats nationwide, as Wolf unseated a governor who had one of the lowest approval ratings in the United States while the GOP picked up 12 spots in the House and took a majority in the Senate. But still, the elections marked the end of the Corbett.

Elsewhere in Northwest Pa., 26-year-old Democratic challenger Dan LaVallee was defeated by incumbent Mike Kelly, a man 40 years his senior, after Kelly stormed back for a 21-point victory. Kelly's fellow Republican Glenn Thompson easily took care of Kerith Strano Taylor in the fifth congressional district.

State Rep. Ryan Bizzarro kept his spot in the third legislative district seat without much of a sweat, trouncing challenger Luke Lofgren nearly two to one, while Republicans Curt Sonney and Brad Roae won back their seats.

Democrats Flo Fabrizio and Pat Harkins didn't have much trouble with Mickey Mouse in uncontested races, although 346 people voted for a write-in candidate (potentially the aforementioned Mr. Mouse) against the silver-haired Fabrizio.

Roughly 41 percent of voters did their civic duty this election cycle, which wasn't as high as Erie County Clerk of Elections Doug Smith's prediction of 45 percent, but at least it was better than the 31.2 percent of people who reported back in November 2013. Also, Erie ranked higher than the national average of 36.4 percent voter turnout, so at least we can pride ourselves on being slightly less bad at voting than the rest of the country.

Entertainment Update

The Erie entertainment scene didn't disappoint in 2014, although they're some notable standouts. Jr's Last Laugh experienced a revival, as owners Dave Litz and Rob Neville, the latter of whom bought into the business last year, helped rejuvenate the comedy club. The two have brought an impressive number of talents to the Jr's stage all year that's too long to list in full, but it

included such names as Bobcat Goldthwait, Gilbert Gottfried, Judah Friedlander, Louie Anderson, and Darrell Hammond of *Saturday Night Live* fame.

The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture had a banner year with its Live Performance Series, including a sold-out Snarky Puppy show at the crooked i in March for the tail end of its 2013-14 season. MIAC's current season has seen acts as diverse as the "queen of modern folk" Anais Mitchell, the health-care drama *Mercy Killers*, and Ben Sollee. Another great part of the Live Performance Series is that, unlike 2014, it won't be ending this month, as you'll still have an opportunity to see more entertainment ranging from jazz fusion trios to live action graphic novels in 2015.

Best Summer Night returned in 2014 after a year off. The Presque Isle Partnership followed up 2012's successful event featuring Crosby, Stills & Nash with the influential jazz-rock duo Steely Dan, providing audience members plenty of memories of that everlasting summer night that certainly won't be fading fast.

The Erie Otters completed what could be described as one of their best seasons earlier this year. Actually, it probably would have been known as the franchise's finest season, but the junior hockey squad fell in the Western Conference Finals to eventual Ontario Hockey League Champions, the Guelph Storm.

In the following offseason, it was announced that team owner Sherry Bassin was in negotiations with two groups to sell the Otters franchise. The NHL's Edmonton Oilers also wanted to have a say in the sale of the Otters, pushing for the forced sale of Erie's team at an auction to help recover a \$4 million-plus debt from Bassin after a failed move to Hamilton, Ontario in 2011. A federal judge ordered a halt to the forced sale, making Bassin's hold of the franchise safer at the moment, but the future of the Otters in Erie is still in doubt depending on the fallout from further legal action.

A pair of former Erie high school athletes made national headlines. Villa Maria Academy basketball star Kayla McBride came one win away from a national championship with Notre Dame before being taken third overall in the WNBA Draft by the San Antonio Stars, while McDowell High School running back James Conner was named ACC Player of the Year in just his sophomore season at Pitt and has been getting Heisman buzz already for the 2015 season.

Finally, it was a sad day when the aforementioned crooked i shuttered its doors at the end of March. The venue had become a staple in the local music scene, providing an outlet for music fans to see talented bands from in and out of state every week, like Black Flag, Dead Prez, and Larry and His Flask.

The development of two other locations has been instrumental, though, in keeping the music scene alive and well in Erie. The King's Rook Club and Basement Transmissions' new location have picked up some of

the slack for the local music scene's loss.

The Rook's owners bursted onto the scene with an emphasis on live music and with a newly renovated basement space, becoming the place to see several of the bands that used to play at the i.

Although not new to the scene, Basement Transmissions' move out of the old 1501 State St. location and into the old Roadhouse Theatre space at 145 W. 11th St. was big news this year. By moving into the spot, BT Founder Bob Jensen was able to not only increase capacity to pack in bigger audiences and attract bigger names in the touring world, but also provide new types of events, such as film screenings.

Honorable Mentions

After 130 years of serving the community, the Erie Business Center announced that it will officially close, ceasing academic operations Dec. 31, 2014.

The Erie Bluffs were the source of some debate, as critics decried the use of signs for businesses and institutions as shameless marketing in an area which advertising is not allowed due to zoning laws, and proponents called the 23-acre strip part of a larger plan.

Erie was featured on AMC's *Game of Arms*, which covered the underground sport of arm wrestling.

More than 3,000 people, including some local officials, were found on a list of people who decided that garbage-pickup bills were a load of trash. Some hadn't paid the fees in more than a decade.

While we still await word as to when human trials will take place and what will follow if they're successful or not, The Kanzius Cancer Research Foundation nonprofit ceased operations in June after a cancer-killing radio frequency device was approved for said human trials.

Summer Jobs and More helped 122 at-risk youth find part-time employment – appropriately, during the summer.

The Erie Rail Terminal was scrapped after Harborcreek Township was deemed unsuitable for the project. Later, DevelopErie President and CEO John Elliott – who championed the aforementioned terminal – resigned in October, while the Port Authority announced Brenda Sandberg as its new executive director.

And the closing of Bradley's Shur Fine on West Eighth Street led Civitas members to call Erie a "food desert" in a November issue of the *Reader*.

Also, 2014 marked another milestone for everyone at the *Erie Reader*, as the 100th issue of our paper was published in October. It's been an honor to be the local voice for news, arts, and culture for the people of Erie since 2011, and we have you fine readers to thank for helping us reach this point. Onward to 2015!

Alex Bieler can be contacted at aBieler@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Catch20Q.



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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



venue and upped his game by bringing in more national bands than he was able to at the old venue, all while effectively expanding his audience and doing his part to help the local scene grow.

On Dec. 27, BT is celebrating their last show of a very successful 2014 by going back to its roots in a sense, hosting a lineup featuring strictly local and regional bands – just like the good old days on State Street.

This all-metal show features Erie’s Bail Easy and Agathist, New Castle’ Tuesday’s Too Late, and Oil City’s Apollo’s Last Breath.

Despite all of the bands falling under the umbrella term that is “metal,” each group covers a different aspect of the metal spectrum, with Bail Easy and TTL being melodic metalcore, Agathist leaning more toward death metal, and Apollo’s Last Breath describing themselves as “on the fence between hardcore and metalcore.”

As stated before, it has been a great year for Basement Transmissions, so let’s send off the last show of the year with a (head)bang. – Tommy Shannon

**DECEMBER 27 // BASEMENT TRANSMISSIONS // 145 W. 11TH ST.  
DOORS AT 5PM // PRESALE TICKETS \$6, \$8 DAY OF SHOW**

MUSIC

**Christmas Night with TJ the DJ**

Dec. 25 – 8 p.m.  
**Sherlock’s, 508 State St. facebook.com/ sherlocksparkplace.**

**Hair Nation**

Dec. 26 – 9 p.m.  
**Sherlock’s, 508 State St. facebook.com/ sherlocksparkplace.**

**Jake Banta**

Dec. 26 – 6 to 9 p.m.  
**Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US HWY 6 & 19, Venango 398.2885**

**Losl**

Dec. 26 – 6 p.m.  
**St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, 236 E. 11th St. 456.4011.**

**Next of Kin**

Dec. 26 – 8 p.m.  
**Doc. Holliday’s, 7425 Schultz Road. dochollidays.net.**

**Tara Graves with Ion Sky**

Dec. 26 – 9:30 p.m.  
**Peek’n Peak Ski Resort, 1405 Old Road, Findley Lake, NY 716.355.4141.**

**Rodger Montgomery Blues Band**

Dec. 26 – 9:30 p.m.  
**King’s Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. 456.6439**

**UNORDAINED**

Dec. 26 – 8 p.m.  
**Last Shot Bar and Grill,**

**3064 W. 12th St. 833.7106**

**Case In Point Reunion Show**

Dec. 27 – 9:55 p.m.  
**Sherlock’s, 508 State St. facebook.com/ sherlocksparkplace.**

**Leather and Lace**

Dec. 27 – 9 p.m.  
**Peek’n Peak Ski Resort, 1405 Old Road, Findley Lake, NY 716.355.4141.**

**Next of Kin**

Dec. 27 – 8 p.m.  
**Doc. Holliday’s, 7425 Schultz Road. dochollidays.net**

**Sean Patrick McGraw**

Dec. 27 – 6 to 9 p.m.  
**Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US HWY 6 & 19, Venango 398.2885**

**The Newgrass Revolution**

Dec. 27 – 9:30 p.m.  
**King’s Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. 456.6439**

**Sektor vs. Bobby J Show**

Dec. 27 – 5 to 11 p.m.  
**Basement Transmissions, 14 W. 11th St. basementtrans@gmail.com.**

**Chris Higbee**

Dec. 31 – 9:30 p.m.  
**Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy 860.8999**

**Dine**

Dec. 31 – 8 p.m.  
**The Beer Mug, 1108 Liberty St. 454.4753.**

**Eric Brewer and**

**Basement Transmissions Closes Out the Year Strong with Lineup of Local and Regional Metal Stars**

It’s been one hell of a year for music in Erie, especially for the underground hotspot Basement Transmissions. Moving from the small but tight-knit spot on State Street to the bigger, more extravagant building on West 11th Street was no easy task; yet BT Founder Bob Jensen kept a steady stream of shows at the new

**12073 E. Main Road, North East. 725.5509.**

**Peek’n Peak Brunch**

Dec. 28 – 10 a.m.  
**Royal Court Dining Room, Peek’n Peak, 1405 Old Road, Clymer, New York. 716.355.4141.**

**Sunday Brunch at Presque Isle Wine Cellars**

Dec. 28 – 11 a.m. or 1 p.m.  
**Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Road, North East. 725.1314 ext. 215.**

**GE Employee Customer Appreciation Days**

Jan. 5, 6 – all day  
**Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 West Main Road, North East. 725.1314.**

FILM

**Great White Shark**

Ongoing – noon, 4 p.m.  
**Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.**

**Mysteries of the Unseen World**

Ongoing – 2, 5 p.m.  
**Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.**

**Wonders of the Arctic**

Ongoing – 11 a.m., 1, 3 p.m.  
**Tom Ridge Environmental**

**Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.**

**History of Computer Hacking**

Dec. 26 – 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**Dead Alive**

Dec. 27 – 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**New Year’s Eve Music Video Jukebox**

Dec. 31 – 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**Starring Adam West**

Jan. 2 – 6 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

VISUAL ARTS

**Focus Fiber: 2014**

Ongoing – All Day  
**Bacon Gallery, Erie Art Museum. 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477**

**Higherglyphics: Annex Stairwell Project**

Ongoing – All Day  
**Annex Stairwell, Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St.**

**Styled by Adams: Streamlining America**

Ongoing – All Day  
**Main Gallery, Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St.**

**Sanctuary of Illumination, An Installation By Lucy Slivinsky**

Ongoing to Dec. 31 – All Day  
**McCain Family Gallery, Erie Art Museum. 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477**

**NPAA’s Holiday Art Exhibit and Sale**

Ongoing to Jan. 3 – 7 to 10 p.m.  
**Urraro Gallery, 135 W. 14th St.**

**Ceramic Constructions by Ron Mazinowski**

Ongoing to Jan. 6 – Monday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday noon to 4 p.m.  
**Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St.**

**Paintings by Joyce Perowicz**

Ongoing to Jan. 6 – Monday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday noon to 4 p.m.  
**Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St.**

**Pattern Recognition: Works By Jamie Borowicz**

Ongoing to Jan. 11 – All Day  
**Hagen Family Gallery, Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St.**



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Ladyfest Erie Returns for Second Year**

In a society often all-too-eager to tear women down or pit them against each other, it’s paramount for ladies everywhere to lift each other up. It’s important to celebrate our work, our creativity, our survival. It’s important to celebrate ourselves.

Enter Ladyfest. Last spring, the international music and culture event made its Erie debut. Ladyfest got its start in 2000 as a not-for-profit event focusing on music, the arts, and general women’s rights activism. Now, organized by Rebel Girl HQ, Ladyfest Erie is entirely community-based – and aims to benefit the community, too. Though this time there’s a cover fee – \$5 at the door – all proceeds

will benefit the Crime Victim Center of Erie County. In short, the focus of the one-day event is to shine a light on women in the Erie community: Women who are working to make the area a better and more equal place for everyone.

The day includes music from Amanda Lynn Barton and Sara Rafaloski, planet claire, RIDE OR DIE, Roulette Waves, Life(Liss) & The Graveyard Orchestra, Jessica King, The Off-Color Fragments of Britches, and Dysmorphia; speakers Karley Miller and Danie Watson; and vendors from across the region.

So if you’re in the need for an empowering day of strong women from all walks of life – let’s face it, after a holiday spent with grandparents and drunk uncles, you probably will be – get down to the PACA for a celebration of all things lady. – Sara Toth

**3 P.M. TO 10 P.M. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27// 1505 STATE STREET // PACA1505.COM**



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In addition to having a well-rounded legal education, Rick Filippi has secured access to serve before the U.S. Court of Appeals (3rd District) and the United States Supreme Court. He also has experience in local politics, having served on Erie's city council from 1998 to 2001. Additionally, he was elected Erie mayor from 2001 to 2005.

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TON BLAY

## New Year's Eve Roundup

By: Alex Bieler

It won't be long before 2014 is over, but you still have one big night to commemorate the memories made in the past year and welcome the new possibilities of 2015. New Year's Eve is a special occasion all across the nation, and Erie has several celebrations planned for Dec. 31. To help make your choice of evening activities a little easier, we've come up with a list of some of the best New Year's Eve parties to be found in The Gem City.

### Boogie on the Bay at the Bayfront Sheraton Hotel

Planning on a long night this New Year's Eve? It sure would be convenient to be able to head straight to bed after a night of adult beverages, tasty treats, and live music from The Chosen Few Band. That's exactly what the Bayfront Sheraton Hotel offers with Boogie on the Bay, allowing you to celebrate responsibly and with class with a room package that includes three drink tickets, hors d'oeuvres, and a champagne toast.

**9 p.m. to 1 a.m. // 1 Sassafra's Pier // [erieevents.com](http://erieevents.com) // \$45 per person or \$199 for a hotel room package**

### Brew Year's Eve at the Brewer

Craft beer fans should consider heading to the Brewer Dec.

31 for Brew Year's Eve. Celebrate the end of 2014 with live music in the concourse with Jackson Station and a dance party in the rotunda with DJ John, as well as an open bar and hors d'oeuvres.

**9 p.m. to 1 a.m. // 123 W. 14th St. // [brewerie.com](http://brewerie.com) // \$45 per person**

### The Gatsby Gala

The Masonic Temple on West Eight Street will play host to an exclusive Roaring '20s-themed shindig New Year's Eve. Make sure to wear your best flapper or dapper don attire to this event, as the United Service Corps fundraiser will provide an open bar and hors d'oeuvres all night long, as a live big band, casino-style gambling, and a Chinese raffle.

**8 p.m. to 1 a.m. // 32 W. Eighth St. // [unitedservicecorps.com/gala](http://unitedservicecorps.com/gala) // \$100 per ticket, \$150 for VIP**

### The King's Rook New Year's Eve Party

What better way to end 2014 than with a rockin' show? The King's Rook will host Eric Brewer and Friends with openers Dag Nabit to provide some sonic bliss at the venue's New Year's Eve party. Even better, there's no cover!

**8 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](http://facebook.com/kingsrookclub) // Free!**

### New Year's Eve Gala – Nine in Concert

Those looking for a little more drama with their New Year's Eve festivities will love this option. The Erie Playhouse is putting on a one-night-only run of Nine in Concert, with The Rev. Shawn Clerkin charming the audience in the role of Guido, an Italian film director struggling to start a new project, letting you see a fabulous show and still be home – or elsewhere – by the time the ball drops.

**7:30 p.m. // 13 W. 10th St. // [erieplayhouse.org](http://erieplayhouse.org) // \$30**

### New Year's Eve Party at the Ambassador

The Ambassador's New Year's Eve Party is almost like two separate events in one, with DJ Matt Barnes working his magic in the Crystal Ballroom and American Ride Band rocking out in the Garden Atrium. Overnight packages are available and there will be an open bar until midnight for partygoers.

**9 p.m. to 1 a.m. // 7794 Peach St. // [ambassadorerie.com/newyear](http://ambassadorerie.com/newyear) // \$56 per person or \$239 overnight package**

### New Year's Eve Show at Sherlock's

Transport yourself back to '80s and '90s at Sherlock's this New Year's Eve. The rock 'n' roll-loving venue is hosting '80s glam-metal crew French Kiss and '90s cover artists The I-90s on the final day of 2014.

**9 p.m. to 2 a.m. // 508**

From live music to dancing to theater, many Erie venues are open for business the big night the ball drops.

**State St. // [facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace](http://facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace) // Cover**

### Noon Year's Eve at ExPERIENCE Children's Museum

Those looking for a more kid-friendly affair on Dec. 31 should check out Noon Year's Eve. This family affair runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and features a DJ dance party, a special balloon drop and countdown, bubble stomping, and an apple juice toast.

**10 a.m. to 4 p.m. // 420 French St. // [eriechildrensmuseum.org](http://eriechildrensmuseum.org) // \$6 admission or free with membership**

### PACA's New Year's Eve Masquerade Ball

If you like options for your year-end celebrations, PACA has the event for you. The New Year's Eve Masquerade Ball provides live music with hip-hop-rock group The Lower Eastside Connection, poetry readings, a cash bar, raffles, movies, hors d'oeuvres, and a 1 a.m. breakfast buffet. What's more is that the night acts as a fundraiser for PACA so that the venue can continue to provide plenty of great events for the community.

**8 p.m. to 2 a.m. // 1505 State St. // [paca1505.com](http://paca1505.com) // \$15 advance, \$20 at door, \$30 for a couple**

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## 1201 Kitchen's Ramen Lunches

Innovative and Traditional Takes on the Japanese Noodle-based Soup Offer a Distinct Dining Experience

By: The Reader Eater

Unless you're a bit of a world traveler with several stamps on your passport to Japan, or are someone who frequents bigger U.S. cities, like New York or LA where chefs have reached peak ramen experimentation with things like ramen fries, ramen egg rolls, and ramen hot wings, your experience with the Japanese noodle-based soup dish most likely comes by way of a block of dried noodles wrapped in a plastic satchel accompanied with a spice pack found on the bottom of grocery store shelves.

Forget momentarily the desire of some chefs to make something as simple as a boiled egg not a boiled egg with Frankenstein trials behind their kitchen doors to remember that there remains a basic but fundamental continuity between both the artful and commercial approach to ramen: The slurping devouring of savory broth and slightly chewy noodles.

Which now is being adroitly approached by Executive Chef Dan Kern and company at 1201 Kitchen – and is far, far better than what you may have been used to nuking in your college dorm room.

Known for their contemporary take on Asian and Latin cuisine, 1201 Kitchen is now dishing out both distinct and traditional takes on ramen by way of its intended origins: Salty soup built from the broth up.

Typically pork- or seafood-based, a rich, luscious broth serves as the backbone and foundation of any good ramen. From there, the canvas of this Japanese art is framed in with wheat-based noodles, which most often are thin or wavy. Beyond that, the ramen palette remains largely open to fresh experimentation while certain interpretations

pay homage to the regions from which they hail.

1201's Sapporo ramen harkens to its roots – named after the capital of Hokkaido, a city celebrated for its ramen – featuring a piquant red miso broth richened by the roasted chāshū pork shoulder that's rounded out with bean sprouts and corn – yes, corn, an ingredient most likely introduced to ramen after the arrival of U.S. soldiers during WWII – for a pleasant crunch.

Other 1201 ramen dishes benefit – to a carnivore's delight – from intense meat flavor combinations, like the Kumamoto ramen, which features a pork bone-based broth, crispy pork belly, and roasted chāshū pork tempered by shiitake, mayu garlic oil, pickled mustard greens, and scallion.

Already known for being innovative without bending food to the breaking point of near-absurdity (read: ramen hot wings), 1201 serves a deliciously sound variation to mostly meat-oriented ramen by way of the vegetarian option, stocked with a sweet soy-milk broth and loaded with soft tofu, mustard greens, pressed garlic, shiitake, mayu garlic oil, and scallion, with the mushrooms – which are more subtle and subdued in the Kumamoto dish – giving it a surprisingly brawny boldness as a key feature.

Unlike Vietnamese pho, a noodle-based

soup that offers diners the chance to construct their own experience by adding various ingredients from a plate placed in the middle of a table, ramen often comes to the table mostly completed by the chef's rendering of the canvas and the chosen materials; 1201 is no exception. But the menu does allow for eater-driven creativity with the option to add extra noodles, seasonal pickles, a soft-boiled egg, pork shoulder, and pork belly to any menu item – yes, even the vegetarian bowl, because, well, why not.

Each bowl is available in full or half-size,

the latter option leaving room for any one of the well-paired appetizers, amongst which various – and oft rotating – takes on donburi (a traditional Japanese rice bowl dish that focuses on the resulting interplay between a protein and vegetables served over rice) stand out. The crispy fried egg version offers a spicy bite – from chili oil – calmed with the silky texture of the soft egg, creating a harmonious balance of savor and spice softened by the sticky bed of sushi-style rice.

The simplicity coupled with creativity of the ramen at 1201 has brought the Japanese tradition to Erie – and with an authentic yet novel approach, here's hoping that this soulful satiation is here to stay.

The Reader Eater can be contacted at [ReaderEater@ErieReader.com](mailto:ReaderEater@ErieReader.com). More information on 1201 Kitchen, which is located at 1201 State St., can be found at [1201Restaurant.com](http://1201Restaurant.com).

**Clockwise from top: 1201 Kitchen's Kumamoto Ramen with a soft egg, gyoza (foreground) with complementary rooibos served to every table, and crispy fried egg donburi.**



PHOTOS BY JIM WERTZ





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# 2014 ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

Another year, another crop of memorable music. There were plenty of excellent releases since January, but only a chosen few made it into Arts and Culture Editor Alex Bieler's year-end list. Here are his **Top 10 albums of 2014**, as well as some honorable mentions.

## 1. Run The Jewels, *Run The Jewels 2*

I had high expectations for *Run The Jewels 2*, and the hip-hop super-duo of El-P and Killer Mike easily exceeded them. If songs could bruise you, the titanic twosome's second album would leave you black and blue after a furious 40 minutes of hard-hitting tunes. El-P and Killer Mike don't hold back on *RTJ2*, taking on crooked cops, and trading verses with Rage Against The Machine's Zach de la Rocha, all while sounding like they're having more fun than anyone in the business.

## 2. St. Vincent, *St. Vincent*

It's appropriate that Annie Clark's fourth album as St. Vincent was self-titled, because it was on her latest release that she fully evolved into a rock goddess. The sweet-yet-sinister-sounding artist has always impressed with her stunning vocals and ripping riffs, but *St. Vincent* really grabs your attention on an album that is, as I wrote in a review back in March, "a musical marriage of earthly desires in a digital age." In 2014, Clark treated us to a hypnotic balancing act, pairing rough sonic textures with soothing coos and robotic rhythms with very human emotions, and the results are wonderful.

## 3. Strand of Oaks, *HEAL*

Timothy Showalter always had a knack for storytelling in his earlier Strand of Oaks material, but he only had to look in the mirror for his autobiographical turn on this year's *HEAL*. The former folkie turned up the volume on his latest album, both emotionally and sonically, taking an unflinching look into his personal life to provide one of the most honest albums in 2014. Each song seems perfectly placed, from the rip-roaring lead track "Goshen '97" to the hopeful closer "Wait For Love," making for an album that you can't help but connect with.

## 4. Sun Kil Moon, *Benji*

After watching Sun Kil Moon's Mark Kozelek one-sided feud with The War on Drugs' Adam Granduciel play out over the latter half of the year, it would be easy to disregard *Benji* as the work of a mean-spirited bully. However, doing that would be a disservice to Kozelek's album, which was one of the most heart-breakingly open works this year. Kozelek's world-weary voice and gentle finger-picked guitar make for a gorgeous soundtrack to various details in his life, from the tragic death of his second cousin to standing in line at Panera Bread.

## 5. Future Islands, *Singles*

Samuel T. Herring put Future Islands on the map with a memorable performance of song-of-the-year candidate "Seasons (Waiting on You)" on The Late Show with David Letterman. Herring's memorable dance moves made for a meme-worthy showing, but it was the combination of his bellowing vocals, shifting at times from a confident croon to a guttural growl, and the band's sparkling synth-pop that shone brightest in 2014. *Singles* is, like the name suggests, packed full of tremendous songs, with Herring's passionate delivery leading the way.

## 6. Cloud Nothings, *Here and Nowhere Else*

Cloud Nothings' transformation from a sugary pop-rock band into a gritty rock outfit was remarkable, but the Cleveland crew's job following up the excellent *Attack on Memory* with latest album *Here and Nowhere Else* might be its most impressive yet. Cloud Nothings main man Dylan Baldi continued to pump out intense tracks, producing squalling rockers like "Pattern Walks," while keeping just a touch of his pop background to turn glorious closer "I'm Not Part of Me" into one of the most rousing songs of the year.

## 7. The War on Drugs, *Lost in the Dream*

Listening to The War on Drugs' *Lost in the Dream* is almost like watching a movie scene where the proverbial good guys take the long drive out through the American heartland: Just plug in some headphones, close your eyes, and you're there. Drugs' frontman Adam Granduciel (yes, the victim of the silly Kozelek feud from album No. 4) channels Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen on *Lost in the Dream*, adding a touch of psychedelia for good measure on the excellent, cinematic album.

## 8. Cymbals Eat Guitars, *LOSE*

Cymbals Eat Guitars showed plenty of promise over the course of its first two albums (see: "...And the Hazy Sea"), but it's on *LOSE* that the New Jersey band really come together into something special. Joseph D'Agostino and his band mates have matured since Cymbals Eat Guitars was founded back in 2007, and it shows on the album's sprawling nine tracks. There's a resilience to *LOSE*, an album that deals with death and depression, and that sense of strength turns *LOSE* into a triumph.

## 9. Saintseneca, *Dark Arc*

It took me a few months to realize it, but Saintseneca's *Dark Arc* is a bit like a roller coaster. You get strapped in, experience the slow build that is the beginning of opener "Blood Bath," and just over a minute in, you experience the rush, this time in the form of harmonies and thundering foot stomps. After that, you experience exhilarating twists and turns as you follow Zac Little's mesmerizing lyrics and the band's stirring arrangements.

## 10. Owen Pallett, *In Conflict*

Owen Pallett received a lot of press for his work on the Oscar-nominated score for the film *Her* with Arcade Fire's Will Butler, but it wasn't much of a surprise to fans of the Canadian musician. He continued his streak of excellence on 2014's *In Conflict*, where Pallett continued to show off his gift for lush, beautiful compositions, swells of strings supporting the personal, and, at times, ominous songs on his latest album.



## HONORABLE MENTIONS



### Protomartyr, *Under Color of Official Right*

Protomartyr's *Under Color of Official Right* is not a happy album, but that doesn't mean that it's not fun. Despite having created an album with themes of indifference, corruption, and violence, the Detroit post-punk band still manages to make these songs fun. Joe Casey and his band mates aren't surprised by misfortune – hell, they're expecting it – but that doesn't mean that they can't make bleak messages be pretty damn enjoyable.



### Flying Lotus, *You're Dead!*

*You're Dead!* is not an album meant to be digested in small doses. Apart from the fantastic Kendrick Lamar-featured "Never Catch Me," it would seem odd to dissect each piece, as each of his free-wheeling sections add up to an intriguing mix of hip-hop, jazz, and drum 'n' bass. What results is a fascinating sonic experience, as Steve Ellison, the man behind Flying Lotus, examines life after death.

### Aphex Twin, *Syro*



Richard D. James may be a sonic architect, but he's also demolition man. The massively influential electronic artist behind Aphex Twin has made a career breaking down genres, using those broken-down sounds to reconstruct mind-bending structures of sound. On *Syro*, the first Aphex Twin album in 13 years, he's tearing down the genre he helped create, assembling songs that seem simplistic at first, but keep providing new surprises after every listen.



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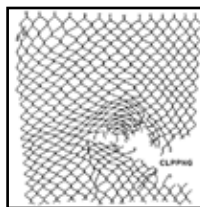
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## YEAR IN MUSIC



### clipping., **CLPPNG**

CLPPNG is one of the more fascinating albums I listened to this year. From the very start, you're treated to the minute-long "Intro" featuring rapper Daveed Diggs ripping through rhymes over high-pitched feedback, the beginning of an uncompromising trip into experimental hip-hop. It's too uneven to make the top 10, but CLPPNG goes big on songs like the alarm clock-aided *Get Up* and the speed *Story 2*, making for some of the most creative and original songs in 2014.



### Spoon, **They Want My Soul**

Now on album No. 8, it's not shocking that Spoon would put out a good release. In fact, expectations have become so high that 2010's *Transference*, a very solid album, was met with some disappointment because it didn't quite reach the same heights as past efforts. That's not a problem for *They Want My Soul*, as the detail-loving band shows how good it is at capturing a mood, particularly the meditative contentment of the shimmering gem that is "Inside Out." There's a safety in Spoon's music, and that's because the band knows how to reach your soul through song.

## 2014 LOCAL ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

Every musician has to start out somewhere, playing on hometown stages while honing his or her craft. Luckily for Erie, there are myriad talented artists that call Northwest Pennsylvania home, giving locals a chance to see something special whenever they go out and support the scene. Some petty great music came out of Erie County this year, and the *Erie Reader* is proud to present the best local albums of 2014.



### C. Brown, **The Charles Brown Project**

Powerful and provocative hip-hop, *The Charles Brown Project* packs tense urgency with gritty, intelligent lyrics and overflowing passion that all result in an album grounded in introspection that demands reflection without any alienation – all unfurled in an intensity of his sharp observation that leaves listeners breathless.



### NatasK, **I Keep It Moving**

*I Keep It Moving's* high-end production and thoughtful genre blending set it apart, as NatasK showcases his talents as more than an EDM artist, displaying fresh perspective on where electronic music's headed – not where it's already been. The album spins cleanly front to back, demanding listeners to bask in and absorb its layered richness.



### Tyler Smilo, **Blood Into Sound**

Nifty studio effects can be nice, but sometimes simplicity is the best weapon a musician can have. Tyler Smilo embraces the concept on *Blood Into Sound*, wielding his guitar and passionate vocal delivery to create a stirring 10-song album that hits you right in the gut with its earnestness.

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## Geeked Out

### 2014's Top 10 Moments of Geek Culture

By: John Lindvay

As the days become longer and the nights become shorter, it's that time to look back across the passage of the last twelve months that were 2014. While I am not always a fan of lists – the kind that all too often litter websites – I am fond of thinking back on all the great things that happened in a year. So as we close this year and this volume of the *Reader*, let's look back at all that was awesome, geeky, nerdy, and amazing in 2014.

#### 10. Star Wars

This Thanksgiving, our table conversations all revolved around *Star Wars*. With the release of the trailer, everyone quickly dusted off their copies of the venerable series and sat down and washed in the waves of nostalgia. This new trailer converted us all back into our former adolescent selves as we remembered what it was like when we watched *Star Wars* for the first time.

Just think about that trailer for a minute. It was perfect – the first few shots were that of people, and it wasn't until moments later when the CG kicked in that we all got chills as we watched the Millennium Falcon soar through the sky.

The hype is palpable.

#### 9. Flappy Bird

*Flappy Bird* wasn't released this year, but it definitely ended up on everyone's radar in the early part of 2014. *Flappy Bird* was the phenomenon of Dong Nguyen, an independent game designer from Vietnam. It was a phenomenon in the truest sense. Nearly everyone was talking about *Flappy Bird*, gaming publications were blindsided by the skyrocket of interest in this game, and many game designers were split on whether to celebrate its simplicity or cry foul.

Regardless of what you thought of the matter, *Flappy Bird* highlighted a known issue in the game development community to the outside world: Cloning. In the wake

of *Flappy Bird*'s success, the App store was FLOODED with knock-offs of the original. In the end, all the attention and debate surrounding the game resulted in Nguyen pulling the game down – even though it was a runaway success, earning him tens of thousands of dollars every day, from a free game serving ads.

#### 8. Serial

Look, I am a podcaster myself, so maybe this is self-aggrandizing, but *Serial* is literally the best use of podcasting to date. We are all familiar with the standout podcasts like *This American Life*, *The Nerdist*, and *Planet Money*, but *Serial* was such a huge success that it helped reinvigorate the medium and make us remember why storytelling in a radio/podcast format can be so powerful.

It has become a ritual for me on Thursdays to sit down and find out the next turn to Adnan's story.

For those not in the know and not tuning in regularly, *Serial* reexamines the case against Adnan Syed, who was convicted for the murder, by strangulation, of his ex-girlfriend Hae Min Lee. Most of the trail was based on a sole testimony by Adnan's friend Jay. All of this took place over 15 years ago back in 1999 when they were all in high school.

In a world where investigative reporting has been snuffed out of major cable news, Sarah Koenig and *Serial* remind us that sometimes a story takes time to properly formulate, and even then it can still be a mess.

#### 7. Comic Books

Yes, comic books! While they aren't new by any means, this year was an amazing year for comic books' ever-growing diverse fan base. Who would've know that in 2014 we would see Captain America's shield passed to a black man, Thor's mighty Mjolnir wielded by a woman, and have a Spider-Man who

is Puerto Rican? This was an incredible year to see comic books begin to address these larger issues and begin to give a better representation for the incredibly diverse world in which we live. Also, you can factor in that Marvel also announced a Black Panther movie!

#### 6. Local Multiplayer Games

Holy crap, people – this year was incredible if you like playing games with other people in the same room. Nintendo was killing it with releasing *Mario Kart* and *TWO Super Smash Bros.* games. Add in the wealth of indie games such as *Lethal League*, *Sportsfriends*, *Crawl*, *Gang Beasts*, *Nidhogg*, and *Towerfall*. Heck, I've already sunk countless hours into the multiplatform *Plants vs Zombies: Garden Warfare*, an amazing spin off from the critically acclaimed tower defense game.

#### 5. Guardians of the Galaxy

Before 2014, I would be hard pressed to believe that one of the best movies I would see would, one, be a comic book movie, two, feature a team of four people with no super powers, and three, feature a soundtrack comprised of old pop hits from the '80s. But it's obvious now to anyone who has seen *Guardians of the Galaxy* that all those above statements are absolutely true. With this film, Marvel has completely established themselves as a major player in Hollywood. For better or worse, prepare for a LOT of comic book movies coming out in the next twenty years.

#### 4. The Lego Movie

*The Lego Movie* was an unexpected pleasure. With very little idea of what a Lego movie would be like or even about, I was stunned. *The Lego Movie* not only captures the essence of what the act of playing with the iconic toy is like, it also has such a soft touch on dealing with much more real interpersonal issues we as humans face. And the end, where it pulls back to a story about a father and son, is deftly executed.

#### 3. 3D Printing

3D Printing continues to amaze me in every conceivable way. This year we are begin-

ning to see the fruits of the maker movement finally take grasp in mainstream. From the President of the United States himself acknowledging the importance of this manufacturing revolution to the many startups/documentaries/production breakthroughs that have been appearing, the future will forever be shaped by this new movement.

#### 2. Net Neutrality

2014 also featured the largest defense of the Internet to date. Net Neutrality is slowly becoming a household term, as the battle for how we use and regulate the Internet continues to be waged. It has been a busy year for this particular sortie since the Supreme Court struck down the loose structure the FCC had in place to regulate the utility of the 21st century. Now the battle rages on for how we classify it and decide who gets to control it. The fight isn't over, and for the benefit of all, we must continue to work toward keeping the Internet free for all who want to work and do business on the most important technology of our lifetime.

#### 1. SPACE!

I've said it once, but let me say it again... WE ARE GOING TO MARS! This year has been incredible if you geek out about outer space. From all the amazing discoveries from the Curiosity Rover – including water and organic compounds on Mars – to the European Space Agency's Rosetta Comet Landing mission, space geeks like me have been all a twitter. Factor in the new Orion space vessel and the amazing new rockets of the Space Launch System and we space nerds can barely contain ourselves. The future is now and deep space exploration is almost at our fingertips. It is an incredible time to be alive, knowing that in twenty years a human will walk on the surface of Mars and will then come home to tell us all about it.

John Lindvay can be contacted at [jLindvay@ErieReader.com](mailto:jLindvay@ErieReader.com). You can follow him on Twitter @Fightstrife.

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ER Sports

Mid-Season Report Card for Local Men’s College Basketball Teams

By: James R. LeCorchick

THE 2014-15 MEN’S COLLEGE basketball season has been extremely exciting, and if the 2015 segment is half as entertaining, this will be something special. As we head into the holiday break, the *Erie Reader* will take a glimpse back and hand out mid-term grades for the four squads. Please take note the schools are listed alphabetically, so there can be no whining about playing favorites due to placement. Keep in mind, too, that the winner of the PSAC West will host the state tournament this season. And these games are going to be amazing.

**EDINBORO UNIVERSITY** – The Fighting Scots enter the holiday break with a 5-5 mark overall and a 3-4 chart in the PSAC West. The Boro squad has several excruciating losses on their record, but are still in a position to make a strong run at the playoffs. The charges of Coach **Pat Cleary** have four setbacks by a combined 16 points, including league losses to California (69-63), Slippery Rock (69-65), Mercyhurst (67-65), and Shipensburg (57-53). Edinboro has shown it can play with anyone in the league and will have two meetings af-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ter the first of the year with hoop leader Gannon and a solo contest with second-place Mercyhurst. Making the Scots so dangerous is the one-two punch of junior **Henri Wade-Chatman** (19.3) PPG and General McLane redshirt freshman **Jaymon Mason** (15.2 PPG), the ex-Lancer in the hunt for PSAC Freshman of the Year honors. He has been named PSAC Western Division Freshman of the Week twice already.

Bench strength is aided by local products **Mike Beck** (McDowell) and **Jeremy Lynch** (Cathedral Prep). Cleary has put together a team that is getting better every outing and plays an exciting brand of hoops. Look for them to be in the playoff chase right down to the final game. This is a tough team to grade, but the close losses do hurt. A couple of key hoops would have them hovering near a solid A, but facts are facts. MID-TERM GRADE: C+

**GANNON UNIVERSITY** – The Golden Knights’ **John Reilly** celebrated his 400th victory recently, but he’s looking to add a lot more in the win column, and his team is poised for a strong run after the holidays as The Golden Knights are playing some of the best-ever-seen basketball at the Hammermill Center. GU is allowing a meager 56.3 PPG while posting an overall record 8-4 with six straight wins. Gannon is the lone undefeated team in the PSAC, East or West, with a 7-0 chart. Leading the scoring charge is the senior dynamic duo of four-year starter **Adam Blazek** (16 PPG) and **Girbran Smith** (14.4 PPG), while powerful **Raphael Thomas-Edwards** is close to averaging a double-double with 10.8 PPG and 9.6 RPG. **A’Darius Porter** contributes a healthy 6.7 PPG and 8.1 RPG. The Golden Ones are close to an A+ but also close to a D. If you attend one of their contests, you are probably going to see a contest go down to the wire. The four losses could’ve been wins, but several of the wins – including a pair of OT contests – could’ve gone the other way, too. GU should be in every remaining game, just on its unbelievably intensive defensive effort. MID-TERM GRADE: A

**MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY** – Coach **Gary Manchel** has one of the top surprise teams in the PSAC, as the Lakers show an overall record of 8-4 and a conference chart

**Edinboro University women’s basketball coach Stan Swank (center) celebrated his 500th win recently. Joining him were Boro Athletic Director Bruce Baumgartner and VP of student affairs Kahan Sablo.**

of 5-2, despite being a team that was decimated by injuries at the beginning of the season. The Hurst will be a factor in the new year, as Manchel’s teams are always strong on defense and this year’s edition is no exception. Manchel, in his 12th season on the hill, saw the Lakers give up just 60.3 PPG last season, second best in the country, MU winning 17 games and advancing to the PSAC final four for the second time in three seasons. As is the case with most PSAC teams, close games are a way of life, but the setback that stung the most was the defeat to Gannon when the Lakers led 41-26 with 10 minutes left. Gannon’s Adam Blazek hit a three-point-er with seconds remaining to give his team the two-point win. However, Manchel’s team is in a great position and will be fighting to best the host team in the PSAC post-season playoffs. MU is definitely doing much better than expected. MID-TERM GRADE: B+ **PENN STATE BEHREND** – Coach **Dave Niland**’s crew has roared out of the starting gate with seven straight wins, the Cubs topping Thiel (74-63), Westminster (80-74), Allegheny (63-51), D’Youville (67-57), LaRoche (57-40), Fredonia (71-48), and Penn State Altoona (71-43). The Cubs are 4-0 at home, 3-0 on the road and 3-0 in conference play. PSB is averaging 69 PPG and allowing just 62 PPG while limiting the opposition to a field goal percentage of 37 percent. Coach Niland’s crew has four players averaging double figures, senior **Nick Delisio** leading the way with 14.7 PPG, junior **Zane Hackett** in with 12.9, sophomore **Wes Davic** at 10.7, and senior **Keith Wallace** tossing in 10.9 PPG. Sophomore **Malquan Pullium** contributes 9.4 points every outing. Davic leads the work on the boards with 12 RPG and Hackett grabs seven missed shots every contest. The Cubs are solid at both ends of the court, and Niland could have one of his better teams ever. The PSB boss is in his 21st season and has compiled 394 wins, including seven NCAA appearances. MID-TERM GRADE: A

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