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ERIE READER

February 4th - February 17th, 2015 / Vol. 5, No. 3 / ErieReader.com


**THE 2015
INDUSTRY
INNOVATION
&
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
ISSUE**

**THE STATE OF
INDUSTRY IN ERIE**

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The *Erie Reader* is the local voice for news, arts, and culture, and is Erie's only independent, alternative newspaper. Founded in 2011, the *Reader* has quickly become the region's award-winning source for arts coverage, a strong cultural compass, and a dynamic resource for news and opinion. With a dedication to long-form journalism and a commitment to provoking thoughtful discussion, the *Reader* tells the stories of the people and places making and shaping Erie, while highlighting the events and issues influencing life in northwestern Pennsylvania. The *Erie Reader* is published every other week at The Corry Journal, 28 W. South St., Corry, Pa. 16407. The *Erie Reader* is distributed at over 250 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, *Erie Reader* adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 901, Erie, Pa. 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct inquiries to 814.314.9364 or contact@ErieReader.com.

CONTENT – FEB 4, 2015**Features****10 – The State of Erie Industry***Examining The Region's Industrial Forecast***12 – Velocity Welcomes Erie to the Fiberhood***Erie Could Become the First City in Pa. to Have Gigabyte Fiber to the Home***14 – Spotlight on Industry***A Look at Erie businesses***31 – ECGRA's Ignite Erie***Fostering the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Erie***News & Opinion****4 – Exile On State Street***DevelopErie's New Direction of Small-minded Thinking Yields Small-minded Results***5 – Erie At Large***Erie's Self-Image Problem***6 – Street Corner Soapbox***"The Paths Forward" and What It Takes to Become Innovative***9 – Just Toyin' Witcha***It's a tug-o-war in the County***9 – News of the Weird by Chuck Shepherd****34– ER Sports****Culture****18 – Calendar****26 – Confronting Injustices***A review of the Cummings Exhibit***27 – Music Reviews****25 – Geeked Out***The Future of West Erie Plaza Theatre***From The Editors**

Industry defines Erie. It is our proud past and remains a vital component of our future. And it is something we must examine in order to understand our present and address our future.

We welcome you to the Industry, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Issue, what will become a perennial look at the climate of industry in Erie. To examine, understand, and predict our industrial forecast, we've turned to the experts and profiled various local businesses.

In his feature, "The State of Erie Industry," Jim Wertz interviewed both Kenneth Louie, director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie, and Bruce Katz, vice president of the Brookings Institution and director of its Metropolitan Policy Institute.

While Jim's research and writing reveals much, it's of significant note that the nature of industry in Erie has changed dramatically during the past half-century. While Erie's yesteryear pride was rooted in manufacturing, we've witnessed a notable increase in non-manufacturing jobs while also seeing the manufacturing sector experience a steady decline. Today, non-manufacturing jobs make up more than 80 percent of the regional workforce.

But such growth isn't without its own unique problems, as non-manufacturing jobs tend to offer lower wages and less opportunity for personal growth than manufacturing jobs. And although manufacturing's on the decline, it remains the second largest employment sector in Erie, still accounting for Erie's greatest financial return, with more than 23 percent of the county's industrial income accounted for here. Which places Erie's income from manufacturing at more than twice the national average.

But positioning ourselves to compete in a century just fifteen years young remains a paramount concern. In one word, most sum it up as "tech."

While Erie remains below the national average in the creation of tech sector jobs, it's grown at a faster clip than most in recent years. And that growth is about to get a boost with the introduction of fiber to the home in Erie.

Velocity Network, a company with a quarter-century history in our region, has big news for Erie, which simply put, is a game changer.

John Lindvay reports about Velocity's plan to welcome Erie to the fiberhood — something few cities and regions can boast. While Google's been at the forefront of fiber rollout throughout the United States, the increase in Internet capacity isn't limited to the tech giant. As it turns out, Velocity — who's been running fiber throughout the county to businesses already, boasting nearly 400 miles of fiber optics — is taking the next step by introducing Fiber To The Home.

Rather than spell it all out for you here, we encourage you to read Lindvay's fea-

ture to experience the same excitement our regular tech and geek culture correspondent felt when he first heard the news. In short, it's a big deal for Erie — a very, very big deal.

And while Erie has a penchant for planning its next plan to study a plan on how to plan future plans, we need more attention to be paid to innovative entrepreneurs ready to hatch their ideas and cultivate their growth. The quick answer of how to accomplish this is capital, or the unlocking of investment through economic development.

Ben Speggen covers the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's Ignite Erie Initiative, something that began back in 2013. As 2014 drew to a close, ECGRA put forth the second phase of that initiative

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with significant means of jumpstarting Erie's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The key word here is *collaboration*. The key notion is that ECGRA is endeavoring to fund that collaboration, acting as the catalyst to spark growth and development amongst Erie's small-business sector.

Lastly, we offer several spotlights on local businesses not just surviving but thriving in our region as proof that Erie remains open for — and good place to start — business. While the list remains far from exhaustive, it's our first look at companies playing a vital role in Erie's Industrial, Innovative, and Entrepreneurial landscape.

These selected businesses and features serve as examples to everyone in the region, embodying the gritty, resilient work ethic that echoes Erie's proud manufacturing and commercial heritage, and exemplifies the bright future to come. In the coming years, we look forward to featuring many more businesses, many more innovators, and many more entrepreneurs, both the existing mainstays in our industrial culture as well as the ones that haven't even opened doors yet and remain drafts of ideas waiting to be developed right here in Erie, Pa.

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Exile On State Street

DevelopErie's New Direction of Small-minded Thinking Yields Small-minded Results

By: Rick Filippi

As you read this current issue of the *Erie Reader*, you'll notice that we are taking some time to honor Erie's industrial past, sort of the DNA that has defined this region for more than a century. Vestiges of that past are alive and well and still driving our economy. General Electric remains a vital component of Erie's economy, as do many smaller and lesser-known manufacturing companies.

However, more importantly, we are also taking a look at where industry stands at the present time in terms of innovation, investment, and entrepreneurship. And, from my perspective, I believe it is necessary to take a critical look at what we are doing here in the region to promote industrial investment, growth, and ultimately what matters the most, jobs.

In this regard, it was quite disheartening to hear of the "new direction" Erie's primary economic development agency, DevelopErie, is taking after the recent departure of its executive director, John Elliott. As you may recall, Elliott resigned from the organization rather abruptly after it was announced by DevelopErie that the innovative Inland Port project was essentially dead in the water.

You will recall further that the project attempted to address the logistical shipping needs of primarily local manufacturers by a creative intermodal use of such regional assets as our port, highway system, and rail. The project had the potential to create a significant number of jobs, and, just as importantly, put the Erie region on the radar screen as an innovative place to do business.

Unfortunately, the project was derailed essentially by well-intentioned NIMBYs in Harborcreek Township due to the claim that they would be exposed to increased truck traffic and noise.

Recall also, that rather than stand up and support this man who had the guts to reach for high hanging fruit, most of the elected leadership pandered to the complainers. And now, there has been a collective attempt, both by elected officials and to some extent, the media, to blame Elliott for the failure of this project.

In a recent interview with the *Erie Times-News*, the new chairman of DevelopErie, Mark Denlinger, was quoted as saying "[w]e pissed some people off." And that "[w]e need to take a step back...[w]e can't always be at the forefront. It is not for us to be in the forefront thumbing our nose, saying we can do this better than anyone else."

Bob Glowacki, chairman of the Greater Erie Industrial Development Corporation, a related DevelopErie entity added: "We tried for six years under [Elliott's] leadership to be transformational. My feeling is let's get



NIMBY – Not In My Backyard – derailed the potential for an in-land port in Erie. Whether it will halt or stall other initiatives in the future remains unseen.

the real blame for the failure of this project lies with the fact that the Erie region has no collective economic development plan or strategy. This is further compounded by the fact that there is no leader advocating for a plan. Instead, we have pandering township officials and elected officials

STEPHEN WOODS

back to hitting singles and doubles, not the grand slams with two outs in the ninth."

I could hardly believe what I was reading. Pissed some people off? So what. Not in the forefront? Well who is in the forefront leading the Erie region's economic development efforts? Thumbing our noses? It seems to me that any leader who gets out in front is accused of the same thing. Singles and doubles? That's fine in a close game where the Erie region remains competitive. But folks, from an economic standpoint, the Erie region really is in the bottom of the ninth with two outs. The Inland Port project represented a chance to win the game with the bases loaded and two outs. Instead, we struck out and basically fired the manager.

Now, I don't profess to know the inner workings of DevelopErie's board or its financial issues. What I do know was that John Elliott was an innovative and courageous leader, the type we need so desperately to turn the tide on Erie's forty-year slide into economic depression. And when someone like Elliott comes along and presses for an innovative and creative investment in our region, one that could produce fruit for generations, we instead pander to a group of complaining neighbors and then blame Elliott for not kissing enough ass to get the job done.

Well folks, true change, and for that matter, innovation and entrepreneurship, comes from risk taking, not from conservative, test-the-waters thinking. To be sure, the risks need to be calculated. Nevertheless, the Erie region is not going to grow and prosper when we search for the perfect project, or the perfect location for a project, so that it won't offend anyone. Heck, in Erie, we have practically raised NIMBY to a constitutional right.

In the instance of the Inland Port project,

throughout the region who failed to get behind this project. As I have written about previously on this very subject, why in the world do we allow what are truly regional development projects to be subject to the whim of a few township supervisors? And, because of the lack of driving leadership from elected officials, we need to rely on people like Elliott to stick their necks out and pursue these opportunities. But when they do, and when they invariably "piss some people off," then we cut their head off, run into a corner and retreat.

Folks, DevelopErie is, or was, the region's leading economic development organization. The County doesn't even have an economic development office any more. And the City, all it does is manage grant money. So when Denlinger states that the organization was a little "overzealous" in the pursuit of this project, I say that they were not zealous enough. Certainly the region's elected officials lacked any zealotry, except in the way they climbed over each other to pander to the complainers.

Thus, as we critique the current status of industry in the Erie region with an eye for growth in the future, certain conclusions are undeniable. First, we need a collective strategy, a plan of action. Second, we need the endorsement of elected officials and their support of the plan, even in the face of opposition from their constituents. And finally, we need real leaders, men like John Elliott to put the plan into action, come hell or high water.

This might get the Erie region's industry into extra innings and maybe even win the game.

Rick Filippi can be contacted at atty.filippi@gmail.com.

Erie At Large

Erie's Self-Image Problem

By: Jim Wertz

Erie has a self-image problem. It's the kind of self-loathing teenage girls have when they look in the mirror, seeing only the worst in their reflection without being able to harness all that is beautiful and righteous about themselves. They think everyone is looking at them, seeing what they see. Watching. Judging.

In reality, just as it is true for the teenager, nobody outside of this community is watching what happens in Erie.

We should embrace this reality rather than resist it. It means we can take risks.

Now that we've taken care of the revelation, let's begin our recovery.

When the Milken Institute released its annual economic index, *2014 Milken Institute Best-Performing Cities*, the social media braintrust declared Erie all but done.

"We're the second worst city in the United States," some cried.

Not so, I counter. That honor – according to the Milken Institute's top 200 "large cities" list – belongs to Youngstown, Ohio. Atlantic City, N.J. is by all measures the worst performing city in America for the second

just fine. Its technology and medical sectors are flourishing. Its creative industries are growing, and it's closer to peaking than it is bottoming out. Nevertheless, it dropped 48 spots in the Milken rankings, making it one of five Pa. metros on this list.

But if Pittsburgh is content to do well, Erie is just content.

Now let's be clear here. The Milken Institute is using Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), not cities, which in this case means Erie County was analyzed, not the City of Erie. So referring to "Erie, Pa." as the "city" with the second greatest decline is a bit of a misnomer.

This geographic designation is how we came to share a list with major metropolitan areas like San Francisco, Ca. and Austin, Texas, the Milken report's top-two best performing large metros, respectively.

Pitting Erie against the San Francisco Bay Area feels a bit like putting Alfred E. Neuman in the ring against Mike Tyson. Nevertheless, this is the reality that has been created for us.

The list would be more precisely titled "The Best-Performing Metropolitan Statistical Areas," but that just doesn't have the snappy appeal of "Best-Performing Cities." So we've sacrificed some objectivity for branding purposes.

Metropolitan Statistical Areas, though, are not cities. Rather, they are geographic regions with an urban core and a surrounding area that are economically married together for better or worse in economic sickness and in health.

If you consider the City of Erie as an independent entity, it contains a little more than one-third of the total population in the MSA, making it smaller than many of the Milken Institute's best-performing small "cities" that have no substantial suburban markets to speak of. By population alone, the City of Erie would be one of the largest urban cores on Milken's list of small metropolitan areas.

The Erie MSA had a population of 280,294 in 2012, the census year used by the Milken Institute, making it one of the smallest "large" metros on the list. There were 200 large MSAs and 179 small MSAs included in the Milken study.

On the small MSA list, there were thirty metros with populations greater than 200,000. Three of those regions had populations more than 250,000. The Milken methodology is not fully disclosed in the report or on the Institute's website, but it appears that its researchers have drawn the line between small and large MSAs at a population marker of 260,000, making Erie the 16th smallest large MSA on the list.

Now that we've put this thing in perspec-

tive, let's be honest with ourselves about what it means: Erie can — and must — do better.

Even if the comparative measures in the Milken report don't mean much (i.e. dropping 85 spots from the middle of the list to the bottom of the list isn't such a big deal), there remains a great deal to be gleaned from the Erie MSA data by itself.

The Milken index rewards job growth, wage growth, high-tech economic growth and connectivity, and the number of high-tech industries in a given locale.

Erie, both city and county, could improve in all of these areas.

The index also favors locations with a strong technology center, which creates stability for the region, and a low cost of living that attracts new talent and spurs population growth.

Erie has the low cost of living. It's one of the reasons that Forbes.com ranked the Erie MSA 86th in the nation for its "cost of doing business."

Moreover, the Milken study found that Erie has strong wages and salaries over the past

five years. The down side of that analysis is that wages and salaries are not as strong in the past year as they were five years ago which means that if wages continue to decline, our next five-year snapshot won't hold quite as much promise.

The Milken study should serve as a note of caution, not a verdict handed down on the future of our region or even its current state.

When Bruce Katz, vice-president of the Brookings Institution, was here in November, he warned that "your biggest risk is to do nothing."

If nothing else, the Milken Institute's "Best-Performing Cities" report should sound a shotgun start.

It's time to take on something challenging, something risky.

Go ahead. Try it. Erie may stumble. It may even fall from time to time. That's okay.

You don't have to worry. No one is watching.

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The Milken study should serve as a note of caution, not a verdict handed down on the future of our region or even its current state.

year in a row.

Yes, Erie is on the bottom half of the list, but things aren't nearly as bad as they seem.

Erie suffered the second greatest decline from 2013 to 2014 based on the statistical measure of the Milken Institute. A big part of Erie's decline on that list is relative growth in other regions related to the recovery of the housing market, and the economic impacts of the oil and gas boom. Erie wasn't hit as hard as other places during the recession and it hasn't attracted nearly as much attention from oil and gas prospectors as regions in the U.S. South and West.

In short, Erie is more rapidly feeling the effects of *stagnation* than it is experiencing an actual decline.

We're not alone.

Pittsburgh was No. 14 on the Milken Institute's list of fastest declining cities. If you haven't heard the news, Pittsburgh is doing

Do you know someone **under 40** who is **shaping the future** of **Erie**?

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Street Corner Soapbox

The Paths Forward and What It Takes to Become Innovative

By: Jay Stevens

I want to be optimistic. I want to believe. There's another plan for Erie's future. Maybe you've seen it: "The Path Forward." Actually, there are two plans to "The Path Forward." The eponymous first whitepaper is authored by the Council of University Presidents, the four top administrators from Gannon, Mercyhurst, Penn State Behrend, and Edinboro universities. The second – titled, well, "The Path Forward: Chapter II" – is written by a group of local political leaders, headlined by Erie Mayor Joe Sinnott, Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, and our local state senator, Sean Wiley. The gist of the two documents is that our local educational and political leaders are planning on working together to advance some goals – namely, to encourage an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit in the city through "agile collaboration."

Okay. Yes. It's full of buzzwords. *We're headed toward a vibrant future!* Still, the reports do point out some good and interesting initiatives currently in place.

There's Knowledge Park, the Technology

place they love to live. And, Erie has a lot of colleges and college students. Yes.

There are good and positive things here. So, yes, I want to believe. I want to feel the level of excitement that the vibrant, forward-thinking, innovative marketing buzzwords wish to foster in us. I want to believe that here in this whitepaper is evidence of the hope, optimism, competence, brilliance, and energy of our local leaders balled up into a tidy little report pointing the, well, path forward towards economic prosperity and social and economic justice for all.

So I want to believe.

And yet.

I'm not alone when I roll my eyes at another report, am I? I mean, it seems hardly a season goes by without some well-funded study of Erie's future. I feel like we've seen blueprints and plans and reports, but not enough, you know, *action* or *result*.

Isn't Erie still full of vacant lots, abandoned property, and decaying factories? Isn't your child still attending an underfunded school? Aren't there still shots fired daily? Isn't GE still pulling out? Isn't the property tax of the city still a mess? Isn't the city still caring for the entire region's homeless, mentally ill, its refugees, and recent immigrants? Would you *really* call Erie a college town, even though there are schools and students here?

And while our civic leaders are calling for collaboration and recognition for all they accomplish... well... there's a lot to be said about the *lack* of vision from our institutions.

After all, it was Penn State Behrend that killed a proposed Environmental Studies program because it would cost too much. And Mercyhurst recently cut a number of positions from its staff in response to declining enrollment – and with tuition heading rapidly towards \$30,000 a year, is that surprising? And Gannon is planning to start an occupational doctoral program on its own satellite campus...in Florida. Yes, the schools do contribute mightily to the community, but you still get the sense they're hedging their bets.

Also, consider local government and area power brokers, the same people who came



SHEILA MCCLUNE

So what would it take to turn Erie? Oh, I don't know – maybe a Denver-like complete revitalization of the city's downtown area?

Incubator, Mercyhurst's Institute for Arts and Culture; the advanced degrees focusing on applied sciences, health care, and plastics; and the partnerships with area elementary and secondary schools. The Erie Innovation Fund. The library's "Idea Lab." The (often fulfilled) promise that local leaders will find grant and state monies for deserving projects. The mentorship, space, and other aid offered individuals and people looking to do cool things. There are tax credits and revitalization projects.

They also tout Destination Erie. And, (coincidentally?) they vow to "tackle local perceptions that elected officials in the Erie area are ineffective."

And, yes, as the paper claims, it is true that employers love settling down in college towns where there is a young, educated workforce eager to bring all that enthusiasm and training to that workforce, and in a

up with the idea that building a convention center and hotel in our harbor would bring visitors flocking to Erie. It hasn't. So now we're doubling down and building *another* hotel under the assumption that there simply wasn't enough room in the first hotel to attract conventions. And maybe they're right. But it seems unlikely.

We're still waiting for the cruise ships.

Meanwhile, an ambitious plan that *would* have transformed the local economy – the "inland port" plan, which would have beefed up the area's transportation network and turned Erie back into a working port – fizzled after a few people worried that their morning commute would be delayed by construction. Never mind that a *vibrant, healthy, robust* and *entrepreneurial* economy likely comes with the traffic.

So what would it take to turn Erie? Oh, I don't know – maybe a Denver-like complete revitalization of the city's downtown area? That city turned its district and 1980s-blighted area, Lower Downtown, or "LoDo," into a thriving center of the city through a \$240-million project that centered on historical preservation. There's also Pittsburgh as an example, which cleaned up its environment and renovated its downtown area, and built cutting edge medical institutions. Portland became popular because of its transportation plans, its advanced light-rail system, the biking trails. And so on.

Halifax, Canada, recognized that innovation and economic success shouldn't be a top-down game, and is rewriting its "social contract," and getting a third of its residents to sign a pledge to work towards a better fu-

Denver revitalized the city's downtown area, turning its district and 1980s-blighted area, Lower Downtown, or "LoDo," into a thriving center of the city through a \$240-million project that centered on historical preservation.

ture. Trickle-down economics doesn't work for economies, why should trickle-down innovation?

But what handicaps Erie the most, I believe, is that it can't save itself. Former (!) Gov. Tom Corbett's massive education cuts targeting the state's poorer districts revealed how much Erie relies on state money. That's understandable given the city's poverty rate and the fact that more than 30 percent of city property is controlled by nonprofits, who are not obliged to pay property taxes. The county's outlying communities have served as a haven for businesses to avoid paying taxes to the city – but have thrived off of Erie's position as port, rail hub, and financial center. To really save Erie would require a countywide collaborative effort that sees a more equitable tax policy and a strong county manager. All of Erie County – and Western Pennsylvania – thrives with a revitalized Erie.

In short, to become innovative, you have to be innovative. And not just city government, but all of us.

Jay Stevens can be contacted at Jay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Snevets_Yaj.



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News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

The Project Theater Board at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, decided in January to cancel its upcoming annual presentation of the feminist classic “Vagina Monologues.” The all-women’s college recently declared it would admit males who lived and “identified” as female (regardless of genitalia), and the basis for cancellation of “Vagina Monologues” was that the unmodifiable script is not “inclusive” of those females — that it covers only experiences of females who actually have vaginas. [MassLive.com (Springfield), 1-16-2015, citing CampusReform.org, 1-15-2015]

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

Kathi Fedden filed a \$30 million wrongful death lawsuit in December against Suffolk County, New York, police after her 29-year-old son, driving drunk in 2013, fatally crashed into an office. She reasons that the son’s death is the fault of the police officer who stopped him earlier that evening and who must have noticed he was already drunk but did not arrest him. The officer, who knew the son as the owner of a popular-with-police local delicatessen, merely gave the son a lift home, but the son later drove off in his mother’s car, in which he had the fatal crash. [WNBC-TV (New York City), 12-18-2014]

A generous resident (name withheld by KDKA-TV) of

South Oakland, Pennsylvania, in seasonal spirit the week before Christmas, invited a pregnant, homeless woman she had met at a Rite Aid store home with her for a hot shower, a change of clothes and a warm bed for the night. The resident was forced to call police, though, when she went to check up on her guest and discovered her engaging in sexual activity with the resident’s pit bull. The guest, enraged at being caught, vandalized the home before officers arrived to arrest her. [KDKA-TV, 1-6-2015]

The New Normal

The website/smartphone app Airbnb, launched in 2008, connects travelers seeking lodging with individuals offering private facilities at certain prices. About a year ago, entrepreneur Travis Laurendine launched a similar smartphone app, “Airpnp,” to connect people walking around select cities and needing access to a toilet, listing residents who make their utilities available, with description and price. Laurendine told the New York Post in January that New York City is a promising market (though his two best cities are New Orleans and Antwerp, Belgium). The prices vary from free to \$20, and the facilities range from a sweet-smelling room stocked with reading material to a barely maintained toilet (with no lavatory), but, said one supplier, sometimes people “really need to go, and this will have to do.” [New York Post, 1-18-2015]

Government in Action

Kentucky, one of America’s financially worse-off states, annually spends \$2 million of taxpayer money on salaries and ex-

penses for 41 “jailers” who have no jails to manage. Research by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting in January noted that Kentucky’s constitution requires “elected” jailers, notwithstanding that 41 counties have shut down their jails and house detainees elsewhere via contracts with sheriffs. (Though the jailers may be called upon to transport prisoners from time to time, the 41 counties are mostly small ones with few detainees.) Several jailers have full-time “side” jobs, and one jail-less jailer employs five deputies while another has 11 part-timers. [Courier-Journal (Louisville), 1-2-2015]

A.K. Verma was an “assistant executive engineer” working for India’s central public works department in 1990 with 10 years on the job when he went on leave — and had still not returned by the end of 2014, when the government finally fired him. He had submitted numerous requests for extensions during the ensuing 24 years, but all were denied, though no agency or court managed to force him back to work. (India’s bureaucracy is generally acknowledged to be among the most dysfunctional in Asia.) [The Guardian (London), 1-8-2015]

Ironies

Timothy DeFoggi, 56, was sentenced in January to 25 years in prison on child pornography charges — unable to keep his illicit online transactions hidden from law-enforcement authorities. Before his conviction, he was acting director for cyber security in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and, one would assume (wrongly), an accomplished user of security software.

[Washington Post, 1-6-2015]

After a heavy snowstorm in Frankfort, Kentucky (the state capital), in November, with many absences reported, the state labor policy agency (called the Labor Cabinet) was among the agencies needing snow removal at its headquarters more promptly than overworked cleanup crews could provide. A call was circulated for volunteers to go outside and shovel snow, but that job was apparently too laborious for the labor agency; there was only one taker. [Associated Press via Yahoo News, 11-21-2014]

The Tampa Bay Times (formerly St. Petersburg Times), reeling financially as many newspapers are, pledged several properties it owns (including its downtown headquarters) to borrow \$30 million last year from a distressed-property lender and now announces an intention to pay back that loan by selling the properties. As reported by the local St. Petersburg website, the sore-thumb loan was almost exactly the amount the Times paid in 2002 for “naming rights” to the Tampa concert-and-hockey venue, the Ice Palace (which became the St. Petersburg Times Forum and is now Amalie Arena). Thus, St. Petersburg wrote, “do the math,” concluding that the Tampa Bay Times was pressured to sell its own headquarters building in order to pay for the 12-year privilege of being able to name someone else’s building. [Tampa Bay Times, 1-16-2015; SaintPetersblog, 1-15-2015]

Least Competent Criminals

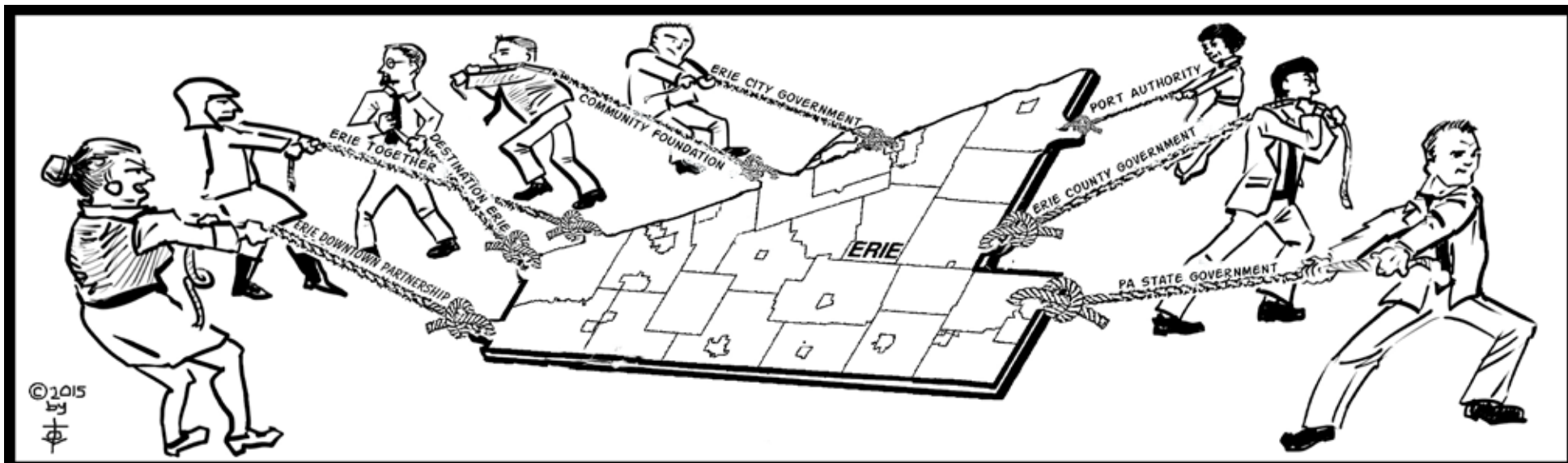
Not Well-Thought-Out: (1) Shane Lindsey, 32, allegedly

robbed the Citizens Bank in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, on Jan. 14 and ran off down the street, but was arrested about 15 minutes later a few blocks away, having stopped off at Eazer’s Restaurant and Deli to order chicken and biscuits. (2) Jeffrey Wood, 19, was arrested in the act of robbing a 7-Eleven in Northeast Washington, D.C., on Jan. 10 — because two plainclothes detectives were in the store at the time (though the police badge of one was hanging from a chain around her neck). As soon as the man announced, “This is a stickup,” the detective drew her gun and yelled, “Stop playing. I got 17” (meaning a gun with 17 bullets). [Pittsburgh Tribune-Gazette, 1-14-2015] [Washington Post, 1-12-2015]

Recurring Themes

In weird-news (and medical) literature, the rectum is a place for storage of contraband (and, occasionally, for getting things undesirably lodged). In what a National Post of Canada reporter believes is a brand-new example of the former, a gastroenterologist at Vancouver’s St. Paul’s hospital found a vial of urine inside a man who reported to the ER with abdominal pains. According to the doctor’s medical journal case description, the rectum was chosen in order to keep the urine at body temperature for an imminent methadone clinic drug test, which, if the urine passed “clean,” would have entitled the man to the privilege of “take-home” methadone that he could either bank for later use or sell on the street. (He feared the loss of privilege, though, if the urine tested at room temperature.) [National Post, 1-1-2015]

JUST TOYIN’ WITCHA – BY: B. TOY



The State Of Erie Industry

An Examination of the Region's Industrial Forecast

By: Jim Wertz

Those who like to look back nostalgically on the state of labor and industry in Erie County might want to take a second look.

Erie lost nearly 10 percent of its total employment during the 1950s and 15 percent of its workforce in the early 1980s.

But by the end of the Clinton era, employment in Erie County rose to an all-time high of nearly 138,000, according to a study by the Economic Research Institute of Erie.

Since 2000, local employers have battled a global recession and volatile markets for durable goods, which destabilized employment and sent the local workforce on a proverbial roller coaster ride in search of stability and economic safe haven.

The nature of industry in Erie has also changed dramatically during the past half-century. Since 1965, there has been an increase in non-manufacturing jobs, as manufacturing has steadily declined. Today, non-manufacturing jobs make up more than 80 percent of the regional workforce.

This is problematic because non-manufacturing jobs tend to offer lower wages and less opportunity for personal growth than manufacturing jobs.

"We're moving toward more services, although manufacturing remains strong in a different kind of way," says Dr. Kenneth Louie, director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie and associate professor of



TAKOMABIBELLOT

"Manufacturing is clearly one of the most innovative sectors of our economy. It's technologically one of the most sophisticated sectors of our economy. It's not a big job generator itself, but it has all of these reverberating effects, very positive multiplier effects, for the rest of the economy."

economics at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College. "Manufacturing in high-tech areas suggests a policy implication for Erie, which is that we want to emulate that trend toward a more high-tech kind of manufacturing environment. Just relying on old manufacturing sectors will not allow us to boost prosperity and growth as much as if we were

to attract, cultivate, and nurture high-tech sectors."

Since the end of the last recession, however, more than 2,500 manufacturing jobs were created. It was the first increase in the number of local manufacturing jobs in decades.

"That reflects the solid manufacturing base we have here," says Louie. "It's likely to continue, although the transformation to services will also continue. But our manufacturing base remains strong."

The recession of the early 1980s and the most recent recession ending in 2010 had a more devastating effect on local manufacturing than other recessions since the end of World War II because it meant the permanent loss of jobs as opposed to temporary slowdowns in the rate of growth within the manufacturing sector, which had been routine throughout the late 20th century.

"We had a cataclysmic drop in manufacturing during the first decade of the 21st century," says Bruce Katz, vice president of the Brookings Institution and director of its Metropolitan Policy Institute. "Manufac-

turing is clearly one of the most innovative sectors of our economy. It's technologically one of the most sophisticated sectors of our economy. It's not a big job generator itself, but it has all of these reverberating effects, very positive multiplier effects, for the rest of the economy."

Manufacturing in Erie County has been replaced as the top local industry over the course of the past four decades as health care and non-manufacturing industries like retail, leisure, and professional business services filled the void left by the scaling down of traditional manufacturing like machinery, transportation equipment, and furniture production.

The rise of non-manufacturing industries is also due, in part, to a shift of legislative priorities at the federal level that positioned metropolitan regions across the U.S. as equals to one another, when in fact the unique manufacturing profiles in each region created and exacerbated the problems of industrial decline in different ways.

"Both Democrats and Republicans undercut the commitment to manufacturing in

Although Erie's manufacturing sector has declined, it still boasts the greatest financial return, accounting for 23 percent of the county's industrial income.

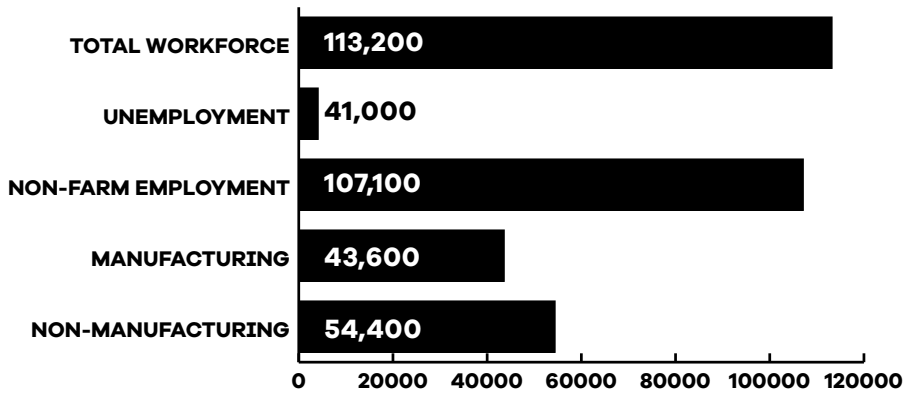
the United States and probably reinforced the offshoring that went on for quite some time," Katz says.

Today, health care and social assistance agencies comprise more than 16 percent of employment in Erie, making it the largest sector in the region.

Although manufacturing remains the second largest employment sector in Erie, it still boasts the greatest financial return, accounting for more than 23 percent of the county's industrial income and placing Erie's income from manufacturing at more than twice the national average.

"Improvements in labor productivity locally reflect a national trend," Louie says. "So while we need fewer human resources in manufacturing, we're continuing to produce greater and [Cont. on Page 28]

1970



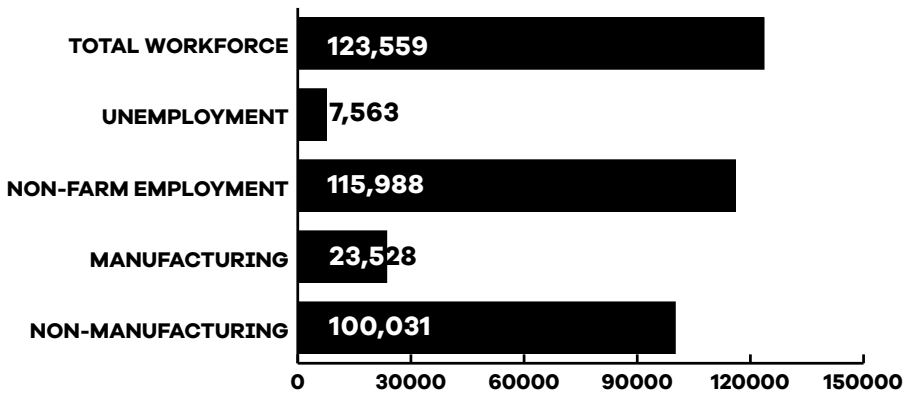
TOP INDUSTRIES



TOP EMPLOYERS

1. GE Transportation
2. Hammermill Paper Co.
3. American Sterilizer Company
4. National Forge Company
5. Smith Meter Systems Division
6. Erie Technological Products Inc.
7. Bucyrus-Erie Co.
8. Corry Jamestown Corp.
9. Energy Division of Zurn Industries Inc.
10. Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp.

NOW



TOP INDUSTRIES

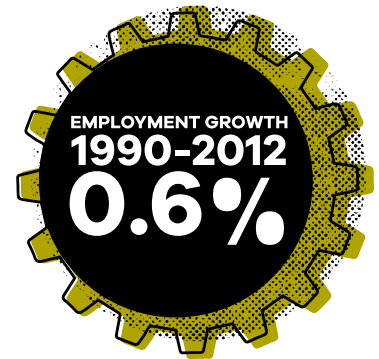
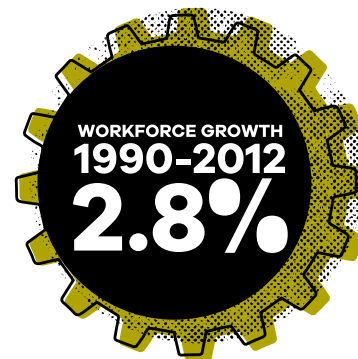
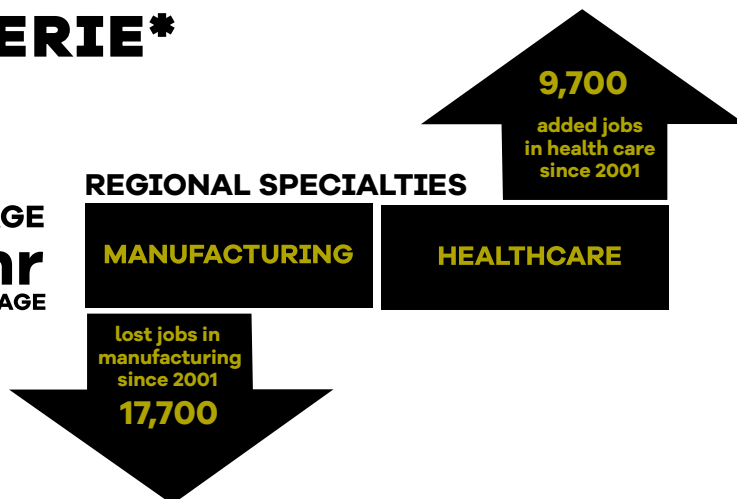


TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

1. GE Transportation
2. UPMC Hamot
3. Erie Indemnity Co.
4. Saint Vincent Health Center
5. PA State Government
6. Erie School District
7. Wal-Mart
8. US Government
9. Erie County Government
10. Millcreek Township School District

destinationERIE*

AVERAGE REGIONAL WAGE
2012: 16.90/hr
 19% BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE



* data gathered from Destination Erie Plan

The Federal Government redefined its official industry classifications during the late 1990s and early 2000s to better reflect the realities of the contemporary economy. Items like cell phones and personal computers were the stuff of science fiction when the previous classification system (SIC) was designed in the 1930s. The new system is production-process oriented, rather than product oriented. The previous classification system was the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC, pronounced ess-eye-see) and the new system is called the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS, pronounced "nakes"). While this redefinition will help in the analysis of the contemporary economy, it causes some problems in analyzing data through time (time-series analysis) since data in the NAICS format are often not comparable to earlier SIC data.

Velocity Welcomes Erie to the Fiberhood

Erie Could Become the First City in Pennsylvania to Have Gigabyte Fiber To The Home

By: John Lindvay

If Erie was holding its breath, waiting for Google to bring it fiber, it can breathe easy now and wait no more.

Erie's own locally-owned and operated Internet Service Provider, Velocity Network, is announcing plans to bring fiber to the home. With all the hubbub around ISP utility classification and the abysmal speeds our country boasts compared to other First World nations, Fiber To The Home initiatives like this are a *big deal*, a *very big deal*.

For context, I remember back when I was in grade school and my father switched us from standard 56k dial-up Internet to Velocity DSL, bringing all of the corners of the Internet to my fingertips in ways I'd never experienced before. But the kind of jump we're talking about, from Internet service over cable to the holy land of fiber is of far greater magnitude.

To put it into simple terms, fiber boasts 1 gigabyte, or 1,000 megabytes, per second. Typical "high-speed" cable connections offer speeds between 5 to 30 megabytes per second. That's a potential 200-times speed increase. That's entire HD movies downloaded to your computer, iPad, TV, XBOX, PS4, whatever – in seconds.

Although known more in the business-sector, Velocity Network is no stranger to residential Internet service.

Fiber boasts 1 gigabyte, or 1,000 megabytes, per second. Typical "high-speed" cable connections offer speeds between 5 to 30 megabytes per second. That's a potential 200-times speed increase.

Matt Wiertel, director of sales and marketing at Velocity, which has been around since 1990, explains that Velocity was one of the first dial-up ISPs in the region, with a total residential clientele of about 15,000 at its peak. The company was also one of the first to offer an affordable rate of \$9.95/month when prepaid for a year, compared to AOL's \$24.95 monthly charges.

But while Velocity did at one point have a large residential service, the decision was made to transition services to business and away from residential because the viability of DSL seemed fruitless due to its speed caps compared to cable. Since that time, they now operate nearly 400 miles of fiber optic cable throughout the city of Erie, out to Fairview, up to North East, and to the edge of Edinboro, with Wiertel referring to the company as "a regional ISP that continues to reinvest in our community."

However, the cost of deploying fiber has decreased since Velocity began focusing



GROMAN 123

their energy on the business sector, and getting it into our neighborhoods has become a real possibility for them. That "last mile," running the fiber to each individual home, has always been the most expensive piece of a project of this scope. But since they started working on connecting businesses and schools together in 2005, the price has dropped, and they acquired the technology to help make this final gap crossable.

That expansion and growth back into the residential sector is leading Velocity to establish new offices in Millcreek.

"Velocity has submitted an offer to purchase the former Ridgefield School site from the Millcreek Township School District," Wiertel says. "As a Millcreek-based employer and company for more than twenty years, Velocity is excited by the opportunities and potential the Ridgefield property will provide to both Velocity and the Erie region as a whole."

For Velocity to move into the Ridgefield School building, though, the property would need to be re-zoned for commercial use, which is something still in the works.

"We are in that process with the school district and township," Wiertel adds. "The Ridgefield location will enable our company to deliver the next generation of high-speed Internet communications via a new technology facility."

But not being able to operate out of Millcreek would be a major setback.

According to Wiertel, without the ability to expand into a new Millcreek facility, "Velocity's plans to deploy fiber optic service to the Millcreek neighborhoods will be delayed indefinitely."

"We believe our latest conceptual plans for the former Ridgefield site will provide us with the space we require, while at the same time maintaining the park and the greenspace the public has come to know and appreciate," he adds.

The needs for bandwidth are ever-increasing – and not Erie-specific. Between video streaming, cloud applications, and online

business, whether it be start-ups or simple file sharing, high-speed Internet is a necessity.

"And in the Erie market for residential services, you essentially have a choice of one," Wiertel says.

It's true. During the DSL days there was competition between Velocity and Verizon, but now, Erie has only one cable provider and that's Time Warner, which doesn't offer fiber to residential customers. With this new speed, there are countless benefits to a burgeoning city like ours, which is also home to multiple universities and higher education facilities, and faces the real problem of brain drain. In short, fiber is a way to help Erie quickly become more attractive, and more innovative.

In most cases, if you've heard about Fiber To The Home, it's mostly likely due to Google rolling out their fiber neighborhoods, or "fiberhoods," in select cities around the country. The first three cities were Austin, Texas, Kansas City, Mo., and Provo, Utah. But the company recently announced it would soon be adding Atlanta, Charlotte, N.C., Nashville, Tenn., and the Raleigh-Durham, N.C. markets.

There are tangible advantages already seen by these cities with the introduction of FTTH. Among the most interesting is the increased property value by \$5,000-\$6,000 for homes in neighborhoods where fiber is accessible. Additionally, in each city where Google has rolled out fiber, the other ISPs, like Comcast and Time Warner, were forced to compete and begin offering cheaper and faster packages, fighting for market share. Competition is a great thing not only for business but also for consumers.

According to Wiertel, Velocity plans to follow a similar approach to how Google identifies potential neighborhoods in which to begin the roll out, which will be shovel-ready in 2015. Since Velocity already boasts nearly 400 miles of fiber throughout the county, they'll look at areas and neighborhoods that would be the geographically

Currently an Internet Service Provider delivering fiber to the business sector, Velocity Network is planning to unroll Fiber To The Home in Erie this year.

easiest to start the process.

This process typically begins with a petition offering residents the chance to sign up by declaring that if fiber was available to them, they would subscribe to this new service. This speaks loudly to business owners, Internet mega surfers, or those simply looking to be able to use the World Wide Web and all emerging applications in ways few will be fortunate enough to experience.

I have to reiterate, fiber Internet, a gigabyte of data per second, is a big deal. It's akin to when telephone lines first started popping up on city blocks. Looking at the newly selected Google Fiber cities of Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte, these cities have transformed into the Silicon Valley of the East Coast. Much of the business we see in cities like San Francisco, Austin, and Raleigh are web-based startups that work exclusively on the Internet.

I've said it many times before that Erie has so much potential for becoming the home of more tech savvy or new media companies. FTTH would be an immediate and real draw to tech-based entrepreneurs looking for somewhere to settle, grow, and thrive. There is an entrepreneurial spirit in Erie, one that generates brilliant, energetic, and eager young entrepreneurs.

Erie has affordable housing and great events, and is nestled in-between larger cities that are a quick drive away. To keep pace with our Rust Belt brethren, attracting new businesses must be a priority. Velocity's offer of fiber is one of the quickest ways to do that, because high-speed fiber Internet entices not only smaller startup businesses, but big, exciting businesses, and Velocity has made its name by providing large scale enterprises with this speed for years – a speed that can now be used by everyone.

In short, Erie can put a fine feather in its cap for being the first gigabyte fiber city in Pennsylvania – and in this region. And not only that, it will have been done by a company that lives in our community and is looking to help our community grow, which is something serious to consider, as most major ISPs operate across state borders and aren't tuned into the specific needs of a community, because, well, they simply aren't there. Velocity, on the other hand, has been in Erie for 25 years.

John Lindvay can be contacted at jlindvay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Fightstrife.



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SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PART 1



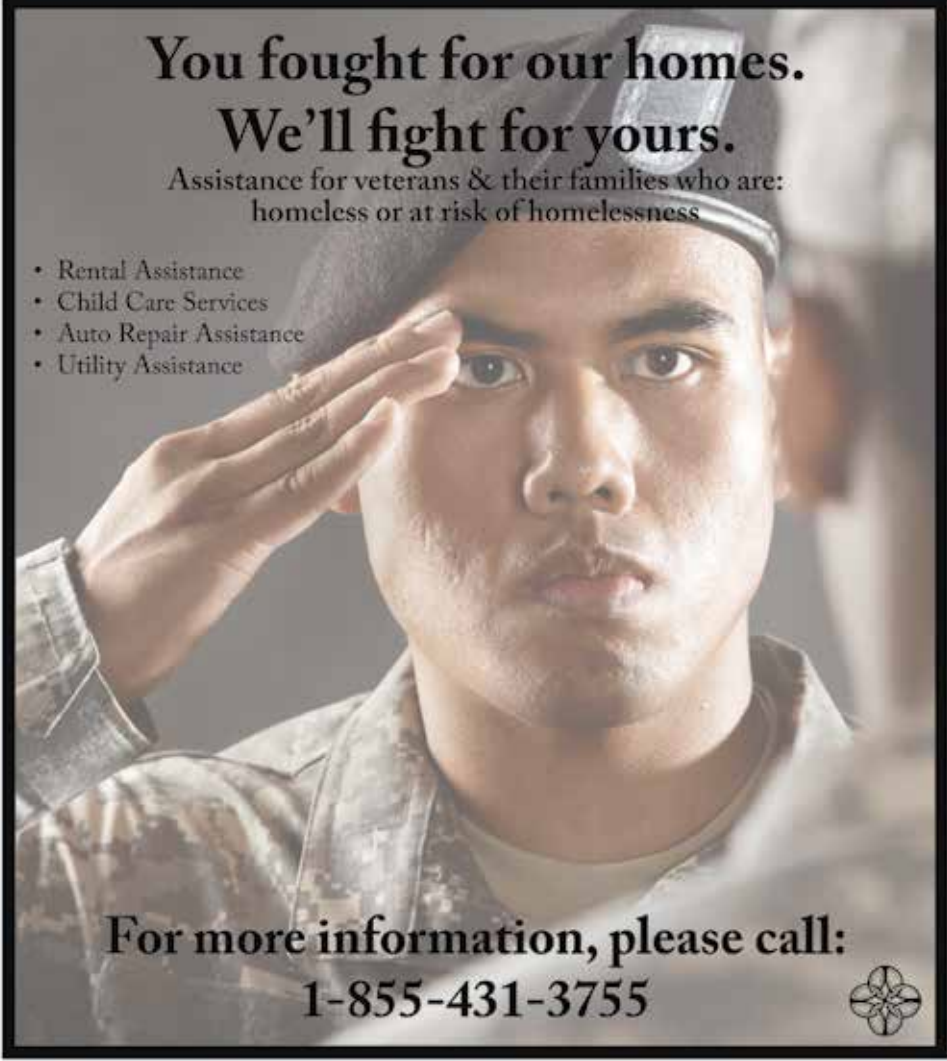
Companies these days are using the internet to advertise and promote their products at a cheaper rate than it would cost to advertise traditionally. Consultant Amanda Kochirka will cover the following topics in this session: creating a social media marketing plan that fits your business or organization, measuring the return on your activities. You won't want to miss this opportunity to have our well-established staff assist you.

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Spotlight on Industry

Some work in plastics — others in aluminum. Others ship things half way around the globe while also remaining active throughout the Erie region. Some have been hard at work, evolving and thriving for decades — others are nascent, fresh in development and growth.

Yet all play a vital role in Erie's Industrial, Innovative, and Entrepreneurial landscape. While clearly not an exhaustive list of Erie institutions, these selected businesses serve as an example to everyone in the region, embodying the gritty, resilient work ethic that echoes Erie's proud manufacturing and commercial heritage and exemplifies the bright future to come.



Logistics Plus Inc. founder Jim Berlin

logistics companies in the United States.

With nearly half of its total number of employees in Erie at 1406 Peach St. with downtown's historic Union Station as its global headquarters, Logistics Plus continues to call the Gem City its home.

Back in 2004, when company CEO Jim Berlin decided to make the permanent move to Union Station, there was a lot of talk — “some say visionary ... I say delusionary,” he quips, about a coming resurgence (a renaissance, even) of unique, and relevant, inner-city commerce and cultural activity.

But now, a decade later, “you can see a big difference,” Berlin says. “Griswold Park looks great. The Post Office building has a new owner. Union Station is filling up with local retailers” — a restaurant, a hookah café, a wine room, an art gallery, a hair salon, and, soon to come, a distillery — and “bigger and better things are in the works,” he says.

“If I take any personal pride in one thing here, it is having created a very cool place to work for a lot of good people here in Erie,” says Berlin.

VITAL BECAUSE:

Logistics Plus' commitment to being a place where people want to work hasn't gone unnoticed. Just recently, the business was recognized as the 2014 Employer of the Year by DevelopErie — the region's leading economic development agency — in the non-manufacturing sector.

Logistics Plus “creates jobs, provides services to the community, and provides a home for people to come and work and live and raise a family,” says Berlin. “That's pretty much what this is all about, and so we'll keep doing what we do.”

And what they do is handle with care the variety of various products and packages they ship. Evident from the many complimentary comments found on Logistics Plus' website from past and current customers, working with Logistics Plus means working with a reliable company that can be trusted with the business of delivering any of the items that other businesses need to be successful.

Logistics Plus, Inc.

KNOWN FOR:

Whether it's delivering parts for a major power plant to Iraq, locomotives to Indonesia, or wind turbines to Finland, Logistics Plus Inc. has spent the last 20 years showing that, in the world of moving things globally, it knows how to get from Point A to Point B — wherever, and whatever, that may be.

Founded in Erie in 1996, the company has grown to include a total of 350 employees in 36 offices, spanning 20 different countries around the world. Last year, with its annual sales surpassing the \$100 million mark, Logistics Plus was recognized by *Inc. Magazine* as being one of the fastest-growing transportation and

Logistics Plus “creates jobs, provides services to the community, and provides a home for people to come and work and live and raise a family.” - Jim Berlin, CEO

Viking Plastics



KNOWN FOR:

Since 1972, Viking Plastics — a privately-held, family-owned company in Corry — has been using its decades of expertise in the field of specialized plastic injection molding to produce millions of parts for automotive air-conditioning systems.

But when a then-crumbling regional economy (and a larger, and even more crumbling, national automotive industry) brought about a major downturn in business around 2009, Viking didn't

fold. Instead, like other manufacturers determined to survive (and even thrive), it took on lean-culture business practices, and worked toward diversifying product lines to meet new and different demands from customers worldwide.

VITAL BECAUSE:

According to DevelopErie — the region's leading economic development agency — Viking is further known “for a continuing investment in [its] workforce through in-house and specialized training, as well as continuing education with a focus on individual employee and company improvement.”

That focus, according to Viking spokesperson Shawn Gross, includes encouraging (and sometimes even requiring) employees to share new ideas, to voice critiques, and to take pride in their work as an individual, and part of the company-at-large. “Our movements are not management-directed,” says Gross — instead, “they are employee-driven.”

And those investments, in implementing new practices, in motivating people, and brainstorming new ideas, have been paying off big for the company and its 115 local employees. Viking is currently in its fourth record year of sales revenue, according to Gross, and has achieved a 102-percent improvement in profitability over 2013.

Being noticed for all that good work, Viking was recently named the 2014 manufacturing-sector Employer of the Year by DevelopErie, having been nominated by numerous parties, including some of its own employees.

The growth continues, but, when it comes down to it, “Viking is a small-town manufacturing company,” says Gross, and “we know none of it would be possible without our hard-working and driven workforce.”

Plastikos, Inc.

KNOWN FOR:

One word: Plastics. The 1967 movie *The Graduate* certainly nailed the thought that the plastics industry would be a big player in the American economy. Erie's own Plastikos, Inc. emerged on the scene when it was founded in the



Mike Durfee (Micro Mold) provides detailed, hands-on training to the next generation of toolmakers at Micro Mold.

top two spots for Best Places to Work in 2014.

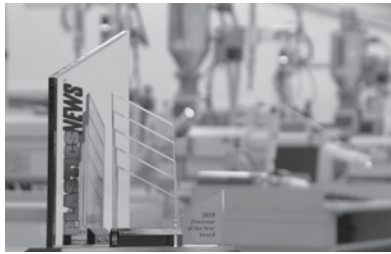
“It's pretty exciting to see that little old Erie, Pa. still today has a huge presence on the plastics scene in a multi-billion dollar industry across the globe,” Plastikos President and Gen-

spring of 1989 to help complement its sister company Micro Mold.

Together, the two privately-owned entities produce plastic products for a variety of clients across the globe, with roughly 30 to 40 percent of their products being shipped overseas. The pair of businesses employs roughly 130 people between them, the majority of which work at Plastikos. Micro Mold builds and designs molds from a conceptual drawing or sample part into initial samples by its skilled workers. Plastikos's team then perfects and samples these molds and turns it into an actual plastic product, fulfilling orders ranging from a few thousand pieces to upwards of tens of millions of parts over the course of a year.

VITAL BECAUSE:

It may come as a surprise, but Northwest Pennsylvania is a hotspot for the plastics industry, and Plastikos is a major reason for that. The terrific twosome of Plastikos and Micro Mold are so well-respected in business circles that they took home *Plastics News'*



eral Manager Philip Katen says of the region's rich history in the field. "We pride ourselves on being an industry leader and on the cutting edge, continually investing in new equipment and technology and investing in our people."

Plastikos mainly serves clients in the electronics and medical fields, although it has experience working with everything from automotive pieces to making parts for fellow Erie business reCAP Mason Jars, and its quality of work has earned plenty of praise.

"Plastikos is not just a supplier...they are truly a partner," says Brent Nettles, the senior program manager, supply chain at Tandem Diabetes in San Diego. "They have not hesitated to invest in capital equipment to ensure that our programs are successful. Their employees are considered members of our team and bring a lot of technical expertise."

Katen and his companies have helped keep Erie relevant in the international scene and it's all thanks to one thing: Plastics.



cares.

"I have had a 15 year relationship with Modern and we enjoy this partnership and would like to see it continue to grow as our business grows," says a representative from Napoleon Engineering Services based in Olean, N.Y.

With happy clients, Modern Industries has been able to expand the company, providing openings for skilled laborers within the Erie community and making competitors and customers aware of The Flagship City as a presence in industrial products and services.

"We've been around since 1946 and we're now providing over 200 good-paying jobs," Sweny says. "We're loyal to our community and we plan on being able to provide those jobs for generations to come."



Modern Industries

KNOWN FOR:

The Sweny family may not have ties to Iron Maiden, but there's no denying that the clan has a strong affinity for metal. Originally founded by Herbert Sweny in 1946, Modern Industries is a big player in industrial products and services. The business, which can be found on the corner of West 11th and Cherry streets and covers a large portion of a city block, started off in contract machining assembly. More than 60 years later, the business has expanded to four divisions, adding a commercial heat-treating facility, a custom product division, and a materials testing lab, a variety of services that have helped endear Modern Industries to its clients.

"There are very few companies out there that have world-class heat-treating facilities in the same city block as a world-class machining operation," Modern Industries Co-president Tim Sweny says. "The customers view that as a strategic advantage."

"There are very few companies out there that have world-class heat-treating facilities in the same city block as a world-class machining operation, the customers view that as a strategic advantage." -Tim Sweny, Co-President

VITAL BECAUSE:

Modern Industries has grown steadily since its early days, partially because of the ability to offer services from four separate divisions and because of the high quality it provides, something that has earned them customers that have worked with the company for de-

Process Data and Automation

KNOWN FOR:

Barely 13 years old, Process Data and Automation, founded in 2002, is an industrial control systems integration firm. Based on West 36th Street (and with a small satellite office in Jamestown, N.Y.), the company employs 28 people. Owner Joseph Snyder said that back in the early 2000s, the business's founders were just "a handful of engineers," providing automation services in the food industry across the nation, when they decided to "go more local" and start Process Data and Automation. They now provide services for both public and private sectors.



In other words, Process Data and Automation handles everything from the plant floor to business operating systems. "We don't build machines, but we essentially take 10 machines and put them together in one system," Snyder said. "If you require a custom processing system, and you can't just purchase it from a vendor, if it has to be custom-built, we get involved in that." For example, people see water towers from miles away, but they may or may not see the plumbing systems that work together to move that water to peoples' taps. "We're the ones that link all that together to behave as one lone system," Snyder said.

VITAL BECAUSE:

Process Data and Automation have hands in nearly every industry – food and beverage, water and wastewater, metal processing, chemical, pet food, refractory, and lumber. "Everything from grape juice to pet food," Snyder said. So, the company provides recipes – literally. "Imagine baking a cake at home," Snyder said. "You use so many pounds of something, so many ounces of another, so many drops. It's the same thing on a larger scale. It's not as easy to pick up a spoon – it takes a screwfeed that requires a 50-horsepower motor."

While they're not making equipment, Snyder and company are a key part of Erie manufacturing. "Anybody who's looked at anything with manufacturing knows you've got to be more efficient, you've got to streamline and produce more product with less manual resources," Snyder said. "A factory floor that has a lot of people pulling levers and pushing buttons – they don't design factories like that any longer. They couldn't afford to be in business if that was how they were still doing manufacturing. Someone has to come in and help optimize. That's what our company does."



Accuride

KNOWN FOR:

Accuride Erie traces the history of its local facility as far back as the 19th century, though the company's most significant contributions to Erie industry began in 1998 when Accuride purchased the Kaiser Aluminum plant. The facility has been a steady producer of aluminum wheels ever since, and has seen a number of groundbreaking advances in the manufacturing process over the years. Though Accuride produces a variety of commercial vehicle components, the company has been most notably recognized as a North American supplier of quality aluminum wheels.

Accuride's Erie operation is one of only two Accuride operations in the United States that is dedicated solely to the manufacture of forged aluminum wheels, and for years has been a contributing factor to Accuride's success as a North American supplier in this market. The facility, located at 1015 E. 12 St., boasts a fully modernized facility complete with new automated material processing equipment plantwide. In comparison, Accuride's Camden, SC operation is slightly smaller in size, and models its processes after the advances of the Erie plant.

VITAL BECAUSE:

In November 2011, Accuride launched one of its highest technology aluminum wheel production lines in North America at its plant in Erie. This development has since become an industry benchmark in process technology, and has boosted Accuride's total wheel manufacturing capacity by 42 percent. Developments such as this have further established Accuride's Erie operation as one of the foremost wheel production facilities in North America, and the Erie facility specifically has set the standard for Accuride's operations as a whole, which has provided their customers with a higher level of product quality and consistency.

“What's more, its products are in demand in the North American trucking industry, and that means stability of employment and plenty of challenging work to do to serve customers.” -Greg Dauer, Director of Operations

When asked why Accuride is critical to the continued success of Erie's manufacturing sector, Director of Operations Greg Dauer was quick to credit his employees, the corporate culture, and product demand.

“Accuride is an employer of choice for Erie, with a good work environment for employees, a great relationship with the United Automobile Workers that led to a collective bargaining agreement through 2018, a culture focused on continuous improvement and the adoption of LEAN manufacturing principles, and investment in process and production technology that has allowed the plant to remain at the forefront of its industry,” Dauer explains. “What's more, its products are in demand in the North American trucking industry, and that means stability of employment and plenty of challenging work to do to serve customers.”



Roberts Trucking-Warehousing-Logistics

KNOWN FOR:

Founded in 1978 in Edinboro by Bill and Jody Roberts, Roberts Trucking was initially focused on transportation – specifically the delivery of food and related products, like “swinging beef into New York City” for Gartner and Harf, said CEO Kari Moore. They started with one truck and one trailer, but since then, the company has grown to provide nationwide transportation services for numerous other consumers and products.

In 1997, Roberts expanded, adding the Roberts Warehousing Company, which now also includes Roberts Logistics Service. As of 2014, Roberts Trucking now includes Roberts Sand Division. Roberts' operations are headquartered in North East, off Route 89, but they have six locations – five of which are in the Erie area – and 250 employees.

Because of a growing customer base – the trucking division now serves the entirety of the lower 48 – and their storage needs, warehouses were set up in '97 to receive, store, and distribute goods. Kirk Hill, trucking manager, said clients range from manufacturers and distributors to retail and oil field service clients. Roberts Logistics Service offers even more services to the shipping community, like van, flatbed, inter-modal and rail delivery in an expedited time-sensitive manner. The Sand Division (now based in Eighty Four, Pa.) was established primarily in response to the growing presence of hydraulic fracturing in the United States. And their service offerings are continuing to increase, Hill said.

“Our company operates on the belief that we can service most any need a client might have. We provide solutions,” -Kirk Hill, Trucking Manager



“As an established employer in the Erie market, we continue to reinvest in the community through investment in infrastructure and hiring our neighbors,” he said. Moore echoed that sentiment. “A number of our customers are from the local area and we help each other out. ... We are a family-owned and -operated company that tries to fulfill all the needs of our customers,” she said. “We are a company that strives to provide quality, on-time service with no failures.”

VITAL BECAUSE:

Whatever you need when it comes to trucking, warehousing or logistics, Roberts can do it. “Our company operates on the belief that we can service most any need a client might have. We provide solutions,” Hill said. “If another provider tells you ‘no,’ give us a call.”

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1/29/15	Essentials in HTML & CSS Workshop: Learn to Code	8:30 - 4:00
2/12/15	Influencer Marketing: The new PR	10:00 - Noon
2/12/15	Twitter for Marketing & PR	1:00 - 3:00
2/19/15	How to Produce a Product Video	9:00 - Noon
2/19/15	Creating & Promoting Your Branded YouTube Channel	1:00 - 4:00
2/26/15	Big List Email Marketing	10:00 - Noon
3/12/15	Google My Business: How to Setup Your Business Page	9:00 - 11:00
3/19/15	Getting Ready for Ecommerce	9:00 - 11:00
3/26/15	Digital Salon Night: Blogging for Fun & Freedom	5:00 - 7:00
4/9/15	Ecommerce Day: Sales & Marketing Conference	8:30 - 4:00
5/21/15	Content Marketing	10:00 - Noon

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PIERCE MARTIN

LEAF Presents Tenth Annual Winterfest

Sometimes, the winter months here in Erie can seem like a drag. It's easy to confine yourself to the indoors, venturing outside only when absolutely necessary in an effort to avoid the cold, harsh weather. However, the Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park (LEAF) would like to offer an alternative.

Sunday, Feb. 8, LEAF will be hosting its tenth annual Winterfest, a celebration of all things snowy and outdoors. Hosted at Frontier Park,

events will begin at noon and last until 4 p.m., giving you plenty of time to enjoy any or all of the activities—such as horse-drawn sleigh rides, ice carvings, an ice fishing demonstration, and a scavenger hunt. Also scheduled is a rubber duck race at 3:15 (\$1 per duck) and a recycled sled contest at 2:30.

Participants in the sled contest will be split into three age groups (5 to 8, 9 to 12, and 13 to 18) and are encouraged to build sleds out of as many recycled materials as possible. Suggestions include cardboard, plastic containers, and wood, so consider it an opportunity for creativity that also clears up a bit of accumulated clutter. Prizes will be awarded for the sleds that go the furthest and those that use the widest variety of materials.

If you're worried about spending four hours outside, there will also be several fun indoor activities available. Kid's yoga goes from 12:30 to 1:30, singing and dancing activities run 1:30 to 2:30, and indoor games start at 2:30. Additionally, there will be hot food and beverages available for purchase to warm your insides if you get too cold.

Let's face it: winters in Erie can sometimes get the best of us. But the fact remains that winter is here and it will continue to be here for a few more months, so we might as well try to have some fun with it. Head down to Winterfest to clear all your winter blues away with fun for the whole family. – Chris Sexauer

Noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 8 // 1501 W. Sixth St. // leaferie.org

MUSIC

Frank Singer Duo w/ Richie Cole, Friday Night Jazz

Feb. 6 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Fred Oakman, Josh Travis, Company Townes

Feb. 6 – 9 p.m.

Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Mike Edgerly

Feb. 6 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Dr. uglytunatavern.com.

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Feb. 7 – 12:55 p.m.

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu/events.

Exploring the Border (Words and Music)

Feb. 7 – 8 to 10:30 p.m.

Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

The Erie Philharmonic Presents: Heroes & Villians

Feb. 7 – 8 p.m.

Warner Theater, 811 State St. eriephil.org.

Juvenile Characteristics

Feb. 7 – 6 p.m.

Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 U.S. 6, Venango.

sleepingchainsaw.com.

Mike and Marie Acoustics, Saturday Night Pop, Folk, & More

Feb. 7 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

So Long Solo

Feb. 7 – 8 p.m.

Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. mercycyhurst.edu.

Small Town Revolution

Feb. 7 – 8 p.m.

South Erie Turners, 2663 Peach St. southerieturners.com.

Stratospheerious with Special Guest Eric Brewer & Friends

Feb. 7 – 9 p.m.

Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Tyler Smilo

Feb. 8 – 8 p.m.

The Empty Keg, 129 Erie St., Edinboro. 734.1221

Adam's Ale, John Welton, Cliff Starbuck

Feb. 13 – 9 p.m.

Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

The Bastards are Back, Friday the 13 Edition

Feb. 13 – 10 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Honey Bee

Feb. 13 – 8 p.m.

Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry Highway. presqueisledowns.com.

JD Jazz and Blues, Friday Night Jazz

Feb. 13 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

John Halmi

Feb. 13 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Dr. uglytunatavern.com.

Levi Stephens

Feb. 13 – 9 p.m.

The Knight Club, 162 W. Fourth St. facebook.com/theknightclubGU

Dine

Feb. 14 – 9 p.m.

The Beer Mug, 1108 Liberty St. reverbNation.com/venue/168390.

Bryan Andrew and Dirt Track Racing

Feb. 14 – 9 p.m.

Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Fred Ardillo w/ Frank Singer, Saturday Night Blues & Jazz

Feb. 14 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Jack Stevenson Acoustics

Feb. 14 – 6 p.m.

The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Dr. uglytunatavern.com.

Preach Wit Connect, Mosaic Foundation

Feb. 14 – 7 to 10 p.m.

Dockside's, 1015 State St. facebook.com/Docksidebar

Stravinsky's Soldier's Tale

Feb. 15 – 4 p.m.

Cathedral of Saint Paul, 134 W. 7 St. facebook.com/eriechamberorchestra

The Romantic Era: Mardi Gras 2015

Feb. 17 – 9 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

DANCE

Line Dancing at McCoy's Barrelhouse

Feb. 4, 11 – 8 p.m.

McCoy's Barrelhouse, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com.

Erie Festival of Dance

Feb. 14 – 2 & 7 p.m.

Mercyhurst Institute of Art and Culture, 501 E. 38 St. lakeerieballet.org.

FOOD & DRINK

Ales for Sails

Feb. 6 – 6 to 9 p.m.

Bayfront Maritime Center, 40 Holland St. 456.4077.

Cupcake Pairing

Feb. 6 – 6 p.m.

Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main St., Northeast piwine.com.

Erie Station Dinner Theater Presents: 'Murder Among Friends'

Feb. 6, 13 – 7 p.m.

Erie Station Dinner Theater, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

Bottle Share/Swap Party - Spring Edition

Feb. 8 – 1 p.m.

Lavery Brewing Company, 128 W. 12th St. laverybrewing.com.

Wine and Chocolate Weekend

Feb. 12 – 12 to 5 p.m. Feb. 13 & 14 – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Courtyard Wineries, 10021 W. Main St., Northeast courtyardwineries.com.

Skate Corry Beer Fest

Feb. 13 – 5 p.m.

Corner Bar and Grill, 32 E. Main St., Corry 663.7173.

Valentine's Day Couples Dinner

Feb. 14 – 6 p.m.

Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main St., Northeast piwine.com.

Bertrand's Bistro Mardi Gras

Feb. 17 – 5 to 10 p.m.

Bertrand's Bistro, 18 N. Park Row, 871.6477.

FILM

Rocky Mountain Express

Ongoing, Wednesday through

Sunday – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trepci.org.

Mysteries of the Unseen World

Ongoing, Wednesday through Sunday – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trepci.org.

Wonders of the Arctic

Ongoing, Wednesday through Sunday – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m..

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trepci.org.

Dear White People

Feb. 5 – 8:30 p.m.

Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Road, Edinboro. aux.edinboro.edu/filmseries/.

Ed Wood Double Feature

Feb. 6 – 7 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Felix the Cat and Betty Boop Cartoons

Feb. 7 – 2 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

The Theory of Everything

Feb. 8 – 2 p.m.

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu/events.

The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Him and Her



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bastard Bearded Irishmen

Friday the 13th isn't normally associated with good fortune, but local rock fans will be treated to the luck of the Irish thanks to Sherlock's. The kind folks at the State Street venue won't be hosting black cats, smashing mirrors, or forcing patrons to walk beneath ladders on the accursed date, but it will welcome in a few axe men (and other musicians) in from Pittsburgh. Celtic-punk troupe Bastard Bearded Irishmen will return to Sherlock's Friday, Feb. 13, the first time the Pittsburgh-based band will be back in The Gem City since fall of 2014. The talented sextet of hirsute hooligans may not hail straight from the Emerald Isle, but you couldn't tell from the group's high-energy Irish jams, a blend of traditional sounds and roaring punk rock that create an appropriate backdrop for songs of booze, pretty ladies, and more booze (these are bastard bearded Irishmen, after all).

Not convinced yet? Bastard Bearded Irishmen have some strong support from the Steel City, having been voted the Best Rock Band in Pittsburgh by the readers of Pittsburgh City Paper in 2012, 2013, and 2014, an impressive three-peat. – Alex Bieler

10 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13 // 508 State St. // facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace

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feat. John Welton
of Waterband
and Cliff Starbuck
of ekoostik hookah
SAT 2/14
BRYAN ANDREW
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Fringe Fest 2015

Gannon University's Annual Theater Festival is Back and Bigger Than Ever

By: Alex Bieler



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fourteen productions. Thirty-six performances. One Fringe Fest. That's what Gannon University is offering the community during the Fifth Annual Fringe Fest, a series of shows courtesy of the downtown university's theater program, as well as off-campus associated productions. Fringe Fest Producer Jax Kubiak gave the Reader a quick rundown of this year's events.

On-campus Shows (All \$5 for entry)

Actors // 8 p.m. Feb. 4 // Zurn Science Center, 143 W. Seventh St., Room 104

The first show of the Fringe Fest is an appropriate way to kick off a month of theater. "It's a three-person show about two actors playing chess and getting to know each other and learn more about life," Jax says of the Audrey Stadler-directed play.

A Little Nonsense // 8 p.m. Feb. 5 // Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St., Green Room

Coulrophobics should probably stay away from this Lauren Loop- and Paula Barrett-helmed production. "It's about a man and a clown," Jax says. "It's a dark comedy that makes you question your outlook on life and reality."

GU Talent Show // 8 p.m. Feb. 6 and 7 // Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St., Main Theater

"[The Talent Show] is made up of faculty, staff, alumni, and students showing off their best and some surprising talents," according to Jax. As someone who saw last year's version, expect everything from musical performances to physical comedy.

Like Father, Like Son // 8 p.m. Feb. 9 and 11 // A.J. Palumbo Academic Center, 824 Peach St., Room 3205

Like Father, Like Son is a completely original show, written by Gannon student Roman Denisyuk. "It came out of [The Rev.] Shawn Clerkin's playwriting class and it questions what you would do when you're put in certain situations and is based on a true situation," Jax says.

Mainstream // 8 p.m. Feb. 10 and 12 // Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St., Main Theater

"It's an original work by one of our alumni [Conor Grey] and it's all about hipsters, the culture, and what it means to be a hipster," Jax explains. Fedoras and a general dislike of the status quo are not necessary for entry.

Laugh/Riot presents Bedtime Stories // 8 p.m. Feb. 16 and 18 // Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St., Main Theater

This production is actually presented by Laugh/Riot, but will be performed on Gannon's campus, unlike the rest of the affiliated performances. "Bedtime Stories investigates relationships and nighttime situations. There should be a disclaimer about adult situations on this one," Jax adds. Duly noted.

The Sketch Comedy Show // 8 p.m. Feb. 17 and 19 // A.J. Palumbo Academic Center, 824 Peach St., Room 2005

Just like the title suggests, this production is "an original sketch comedy written by our students for our students in the style of Saturday Night Live," according to Jax. Former

SNL actor Fred Armisen will likely not be part of the cast, although he certainly seems to pop up everywhere these days.

Oedipus Tex // 8 p.m. Feb. 20 and 2 p.m. Feb. 21 // Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St., Main Theater

"If you know the story of Oedipus Rex, this takes out the Greek, adds music, and sets it in Texas. It's very complex, fun music," Jax says of this Tom Barton-directed show. Off-campus Productions (Prices vary)

Dramashop presents God Help Us // 8 p.m. Feb. 4, 10, and 11 // Renaissance Center, 1001 State St., Second Floor // Free admission

Dramashop offers up an original production for this year's Fringe Fest, with Jeremy Kehoe's God Help Us presenting the story of how God was tied up in a 2,000-year-long meeting and needs to work his way out of middle management.

PACA presents All in the Timing // 8 p.m. Feb. 12-14 // 1505 State St. // \$5

One of two PACA productions in the Fringe, All in the Timing is a three-night run of a series of one-act plays by playwright David Ives.

All an Act presents Witness for the Prosecution // 7:30 p.m. Feb. 13, 14, 20, and 21, 3 p.m. Feb. 15 and 22 // 652 W. 17th St. // \$12

An Agatha Christie classic will be on display for a six-night run thanks to All an Act, giving you six chances to see why this tale originally written in 1925 has stood the test of time.

PACA presents An Evening of Christopher Durang // 8 p.m. Feb. 19-21 // 1505 State St. // \$5

Christopher Durang will be highlighted in the second PACA production in the Fringe as the venue hosts a pair of the playwrights Tennessee Williams parodies in For Whom the Southern Bell Tolls and Desire, Desire, Desire.

Laugh/Riot presents Third Annual New Works Festival // 7:30 Feb. 19-21 and 26-28, 2:30 p.m. Feb. 25 and March 1 // 219 Meadville St., Edinboro Performing Arts Center // \$10 GA, \$5 for faculty, staff, seniors, and non-Edinboro University students, and \$3 for Edinboro students

A trio of never-been-seen-before shows will hit Edinboro University with How Now, Brown Couch, When Violet Met Watson, and The Would-be Playwright.

Erie Playhouse presents Songs for a New World // 7 p.m. Feb. 23 and 24 // 13 W. 10th St. // \$15 GA, \$5 for Gannon University students for Feb. 23, \$20 for Feb. 24

The Playhouse will produce Jason Robert Brown's abstract musical Songs for a New World, including a Feb. 24 date that will feature a reception and a show which will benefit the Alex Clemente Fund for Performing and Related Arts.

Head to facebook.com/schusterttheatre for more information.



Feb. 11 - 6 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Cannibal! The Musical
Feb. 13 - 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Rebels with a Cause
Feb. 13 - 7:30 p.m.
Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu/events.

Rotten Relationships: The Naked Kiss & Of Human Bondage
Feb. 14 - 2 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Hilarious House of Frightenstein Tribute Night
Feb. 15 - 5 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Erie Maritime Lecture and Movie Series
Feb. 17 - 6:30 p.m.
H. O. Hirt Auditorium, 150 E. Front St. 452.2744 ext. 225.

VISUAL ARTS

Duane Cregger, Among Shared Archetypes
Ongoing to Feb. 10 - All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5 St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

William E. Workman, Ronald E. Holstein Gallery
Ongoing to Feb. 7 - All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Higherglyphics: Annex Stairwell Project, Annex Stairwell
Ongoing - All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Ian Brill: Storm, McCain Family Gallery

Ongoing - All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Into the Common Ground by G.C. Meyers
Ongoing - All Day
The Kada Gallery, The Shops at the Colony, 2632 W. 8 St. kadagallery.com.

Kids as Curators 2015, Hagen Family Gallery
Ongoing - All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Mary J. and Fran Rosiak: APPLIED IMAGES
Ongoing - All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Performing Blackness, Performing Whiteness
Ongoing - All Day
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St., Meadville, allegheny.edu.



JOHN PHILLIPS

Soak in the Sounds of Summer in Winter at the Dockside with Preach Freedom and Connect featuring Mosaic Foundation

Check out some of the stuff popping up on Preach Freedom and Connect's social media platforms in recent days, and you'll get the feeling this is one band that's waaay ready for the warm rays of the summer festival season to start coming on so they can get out to play – and bask – in the sunshine.

That's still a way off yet (hell, right now, it feels like a loong way off) but that's not stopped PFC from summertime dreamin' – and it's not keeping them from playing on, either.

Good thing, too, 'cause sometimes, a healthy dose of the kinda stuff PFC's got – a funky, deep-groovin' sound, soaked in sun, drenched in good vibes, and straight beaming with socially-conscious positivity – is just what we need to get us through a couple more months of these long, cold, dreary winter nights.

The sun will shine warm (or, at least, feel like it is) here in Erie again when PFC hits the stage at the Dockside on Saturday, Feb. 14 along with the not-to-be-missed New York roots-reggae collective Mosaic Foundation.

Yep, that's Valentine's Day, too, so the evening show can serve as a nice, funky party present for you and yours, whomever they may be. – Ryan Smith

7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 14 // 1015 State St. // facebook.com/DocksideErie

Styled by Adams: Streamlining America, Main Gallery

Ongoing – All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Uniting Art Forms

Ongoing to February 7 – All Day
The Heesch Gallery, 910 Market St., Meadville artsmeadville.org.

Patti Larson: A Wide Range Photography

Ongoing beginning Feb. 12 – All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Heesch's Creatures, Robert E. Holstein Gallery

Ongoing beginning Feb. 13 – All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Printmaking Class w/ Matt Luebbert

Feb. 7, 14 – 1 to 3 p.m.
North East Arts Council, 25 Vine St., North East northeastarts.org

Zentangle Class w/ Christine French

Feb. 7 – 10 a.m. to noon
North East Arts Council, 25 Vine St., North East northeastarts.org

Second Sundays

Feb. 8 – 2 to 4 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Confronting Injustice: A Woman's Voice, Cummings Art Gallery

Feb. 8 – 5 p.m.
Mercyhurst University, 501 E.

38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Annual Member's Exhibit

Feb. 13 – 7 p.m.
The Heesch Gallery, 910 Market St., Meadville artsmeadville.org.

Mixed Media Exhibition, Bates Gallery

Feb. 14 to Feb. 21 – 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Edinboro University, 219 Meadville St., Edinboro edinboro.edu.

THEATER

Dramashop Presents God Help Us

Feb. 4, 10, & 11 – 8 p.m.
Renaissance Center, Second Floor, 1001 State St. dramashop.org.

Gannon Fringe Presents Actors

Feb. 4 – 8 p.m.
Zurn 104, 143 W. Seventh St. gannon.edu.

Laugh/Riot Presents Edward Albee's Seascapes

Feb. 4 to 7 – 7:30 p.m.
Diebold Center for Performing Arts, 219 Meadville St. Edinboro. laughrioterie.com.

The Intergalactic Nemesis

Feb. 4 – 7:30 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu/events.

Gannon Fringe Presents A Little Nonsense

Feb. 5 – 8 p.m.
Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

GU Talent Show

Feb. 6, 7 – 8 p.m.

Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

Gannon Fringe Presents Like Father, Like Son

Feb. 9, 11 – 8 p.m.
Palumbo 3205, 824 Peach St., Erie. gannon.edu.

Gannon Fringe Presents Mainstream

Feb. 10, 12 – 8 p.m.
Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

Gannon Fringe Presents The All In The Timing

Feb. 12 to 14 – 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.ning.com.

The Addams Family

Feb. 13, 14, 19-21, and 25-28 – 7:30 p.m. & Feb. 22 and March 1 – 2 p.m.

The Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Witness for the Prosecution

Feb. 13, 14 – 7:30 p.m. & Feb. 15 – 2:00 p.m.
All An Act Theater, 652 W. 17 St. allanact.net.

Laugh/Riot Presents Bedtime Stories

Feb. 16, 18 – 8 p.m.
Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

Erie Broadway Series Presents 'Flashdance'

Feb. 17 – 8 p.m.
Warner Theater, 811 State St. 452.4857.

Gannon Fringe Presents The Sketch Comedy Show

Feb. 17, 19 – 8 p.m.



INDIEWIRE

Richie Cole Brings His Playful and Energetic Jazz to Anchor In

From the time jazz alto saxophonist Richie Cole gets maybe a third of the way through the first tune, it's already evident that he is going to have some fun and so are we.

His stage attitude is casual, playful, and energetic, and says swing, swing, swing.

That's so, whether he's doing a ballad or love song or an up-tempo be-bop classic or a Cole Porter or George Gershwin standard or a simple, even corny (by jazz standards) pop song, past or present.

Cole, who'll turn 67 in late February (so you can wish him an early Happy Birthday if he makes one of his usual trips through the audience when he comes to Anchor In Feb. 6) plays just about everything with zest and spirit. He comes right at his audience, wailing as if there's no tomorrow.

That's the way it's always been for the man who calls what he does "Alto Madness."

Cole, who started on the sax at 10 and later won a *DownBeat* magazine scholarship to the prestigious Berklee School of Music in Boston, became – and remains – a hard-swinging quintessential be-bopper.

The New Jersey-native – who will share the stage with both Erie's own Frank Singer on guitar and Joe Dorris on harmonica and vocals – hit the big time jazz scene in 1969 as one of the hot young players on the exciting new big band formed by drumming great Buddy Rich.

Rich featured Richie a lot and the youngster's career took off, with gigs with two more big bands led by vibraphonist Lionel Hampton and trumpeter Doc Severinson, the famed *Tonight Show* band leader.

In the '70s and '80s, Cole led a quintet that traveled the world. That's likely when he and the group gave a command performance for the Queen of England, a gig proudly mentioned in Cole's press material.

A guy who loves to play and not sit around the house, Cole's worked with an impressive list of musicians: Freddie Hubbard, Sonny Stitt, Art Pepper, Nancy Wilson, The Manhattan Transfer, and more.

So Cole's Erie stop – his second in recent years – will be a welcomed return. – Bob Protzman

6 to 9 p.m., Friday, Feb. 6 // Anchor In, 3122 West Lake Road // JazzErie.com



COURTESY OF AEPR

Erie Chamber Orchestra Features Actor Harry Lennix and Violin Virtuoso Ade Williams for Stravinsky's Soldier's Tale

Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale* is a notable work by one of the most influential composers of the 20th century. The story follows Joseph, a Russian military member who sells his violin – and, of course, his soul – to the devil, leading to a dramatic battle of wits between the two. The stunning libretto is an impressive work, featuring several time signature changes and jazz influences, and the Erie Chamber Orchestra is up to the task when it hosts Stravinsky's

1918 libretto Sunday, Feb. 15 at the Cathedral of St. Paul.

The ECO won't be alone to take on *Soldier's Tale*, as a few guests will be in Erie for the occasion, including trumpeter James Thompson, bassist James VanDemark, teenage violin sensation Ade Williams, and actor Harry Lennix, a man you may recognize from roles in the NBC drama *The Blacklist* and the *Matrix* films and just so happens to be the godfather of Williams.

"I love music; I'm a former music educator myself from the Chicago school system," says Lennix, who will serve as the narrator in *Soldier's Tale*. "[ECO Executive Director] Steve Weiser asked me if I would come in and do it, so it was by association that they found out about me and I was, of course, willing to go along with it."

The deep-voiced Lennix has worked on several high-profile projects, but the opportunity to work with a talented orchestra to recreate one of Stravinsky's timeless pieces is something that he eagerly accepted based on his connection with Williams and his past experience as a narrator.

"I always enjoy it, to be within that cocoon of sound, that warm embrace of all of these tremendous musicians behind you supporting whatever the narration is," Lennix says.

The ECO is providing some extra star power to its usual sonic excellence, providing a wonderful opportunity to enjoy one of the world's finest composers. – Alex Bieler

4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 15 // 134 W. Seventh St. // facebook.com/eriechamberorchestra

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CALENDAR



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A Comic Book Comes to Life In an Interstellar Sort of Way

To describe *The Intergalactic Nemesis - Target Earth: A Live Action Graphic Novel* is to attempt to describe many things. Here's what it's not: boring.

What it is: a mix of radio plays, comic books, live theater, foley artists, multimedia, pure storytelling, and general hysterics.

The premise is actually simple: three actors, a pianist, and a foley artist take the stage, voicing dozens of characters against a backdrop of comic book panels, campy sound effects, and music fit for a radio melodrama/sci-fi serial. The result is an interstellar adventure, but the real fun isn't in the story; it's in the telling of the story.

Now on a world tour - including a stop at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center - *Intergalactic Nemesis* enjoyed a limited run on Broadway and sold out the Kennedy Center. It's even received rave reviews from that most venerable of institutions, *The Wall Street Journal*. Listen, if *WSJ* (and NPR, NYT and PBS, and all the other sets of initials to laud this production) is down with *The Intergalactic Nemesis*, even your grandfather will like it.

If all of that isn't enough to tickle your geeky, nerdy fancy (and if so, what on Earth is wrong with you?), stop by early to chat with the folks from MoreFrames, a local Erie animation studio, and try your hand at animation.

Whether you're into sci-fi comic books, old-school radio, or the simple magic of live theater, *Intergalactic Nemesis* will not let you down. - Sara Toth

7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4 // 501 E. 38th St. // \$15 // 824.3000

The Watson's *EmergencyCare* membership came in handy after their *Romantic Valentine's Day* date went awry!

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For more Watson Family mishaps, check out [Facebook.com/EmergencyCare](https://www.facebook.com/EmergencyCare)



Palumbo 2005, 824 Peach St. gannon.edu.

COMMUNITY

Erie BayHawks vs Delaware

Feb. 5 – 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. nba.com/dleague/erie/schedule.

Jon Reep at Jrs Last Laugh

Feb. 5 & 6 – 6:30 p.m.
Jrs Last Laugh, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Keystone Hoops Future All Stars Classic

Feb. 5 to 17 – 5 to 9 p.m.
Family First Sports Park, 8155 Oliver Road. 866.5425.

Erie Otters vs Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds

Feb. 6 – 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. ottershockey.com.

GU Talent Show

Feb 6, 7 – 8 p.m.
Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

8th Annual Multicultural Asia Day

Feb. 7 – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
exPERIENCE Children's Museum, 420 Drench St. eriechildrensmuseum.org.

Erie Otters vs London Knights

Feb. 7 – 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. ottershockey.com.

St. Peter Cathedral Parish Casino Royale

Feb. 7 – 7 to 11 p.m.
Ambassador Convention Center, 7794 Peach St. 868.3525.

Winterfest 2015

Feb. 7 – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Mead Park, Corry winterfest@velocity.net

Even Craftier Handmade Fair

Feb. 8 – noon to 4 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.ning.com.

Erie Otters vs Guelph Storm

Feb. 11 – 7 p.m.

Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. ottershockey.com.

Boots On Ground St. Valentines Day Ball

Feb. 13 – 6 to 10 p.m.
Bel-Aire Clarion, 2100 W. 8 St. 873.9568.

Erie Otters vs Owen Sound Attack

Feb. 13 – 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. ottershockey.com.

Emma's Footprints Valentines Day Masquerade

Feb. 14 – 6 to 11 p.m.
Ambassador Center, 7794 Peach St. 440.1634.

Erie Maritime Lecture and Movie Series

Feb. 17 – 6:30 p.m.
H.O. Hirt Auditorium, 150 E. Front St. 452.2744.

Wine and Watercolors

Feb. 17 – 6 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY



Explore the biases of the break-up with *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Him and Her*

Relationships – especially romantic ones – can turn us into unreliable narrators. Intimacy often comes at the expense of objectivity, and an accurate assessment of a rough break-up is typically tough to muster.

If you've ever wasted months obsessing over the details of a doomed love affair, director Ned Benson feels your pain. To offer a more complex glance at the contours of a relationship, he split his recent film, *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby*, into two feature-length interpretations of the same narrative.

As you might guess from the masculine pronoun in the title, *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Him* approaches the story of a young couple reckoning with the loss of a child from the perspective of the father. *Her* repeats the same narrative from the woman's point of view, making it clear that the highly personal nature of the grieving process can undermine the bonds that healthy relationships are based on. On Feb. 11, the Erie Art Museum will invite you to draw your own conclusions as both films are screened together.

For cinephiles, this obsession with contradictory narratives is known as "the *Rashomon effect*" – named after Akira Kurosawa's multi-perspectival 1950 murder mystery. Last summer, director David Fincher used the technique to tear away at the artifice of another doomed romance in *Gone Girl*.

Rigby tells a less cynical story. The focus here is on the inability to maintain emotional bonds in the wake of a tragedy. Expect something similar to Michel Gondry's 2004 cult classic, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, where warmth and playfulness are prioritized.

If spending over three hours analyzing a doomed romance sounds exasperating, the strong cast might convince you it's worthwhile. The always-reliable Jessica Chastain plays the title character, whose father is a Fab Four super-fan (hence the movie's name). Chastain brought steely swagger to *Zero Dark Thirty* as she hunted Bin Laden, but films like *Take Shelter* show that she's also capable of great kindness.

You'll recognize her male counterpart, James McAvoy, as the younger, groovier Professor X from the *X-Men* franchise, but he's also terrific in less escapist settings (like the BBC series *State of Play*, for example). The supporting cast is equally strong, featuring ex-SNL chameleon Bill Hader as McAvoy's buddy and art-house icon Isabelle Huppert as Chastain's mother.

Rigby kicks off the Spring Series for FILM at the Erie Art Museum, so drop by early (around 6 p.m.) to see what's in store for the coming weeks. – Dan Schank

Doors at 6 p.m., Film at 7 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. // erieartmuseum.org/events/film.html

They Changed the Rules: *Rebels with a Cause*

In the '50s and '60s, a group of Davids pulled their slingshots taut and took down the Goliath of big business, special interests, and government. The result was the creation of the conjoined Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, arguably the largest and best urban park in the country. The long-term legacy of their shot is the setting of new precedents for preserving wild landscapes and the shape of today's environmental movement.

The two-decade-long story of these super-heroes is told in the documentary *Rebels with a Cause* by filmmaker Nancy Kelly. These ordinary citizens – an unlikely group of allies including garden clubs, ranchers, farmers, conservationists, and politicians – fought to preserve the 151,000-acres of breathtaking landscape against the greatest odds with little more than their time and enthusiasm. Thinking they would quickly fade away, their foes did not take them seriously. They emerged victorious after numerous setbacks, disappointments, and the near-collapse of their partnership.

Narrated by Oscar-winning actor Frances McDormand, *Rebels* is a beautiful film to watch according to nearly every review, but more importantly, it reveals how, at one time in this country, compromise and negotiation across party lines actually worked.

Kelly, who will be at the screening at the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture for a question-and-answer segment after the film, said she hopes everyone comes to see the 2012 Mill Valley Film Festival Audience Favorite Award winner for Best Documentary. "It's humorous, inspiring, and beautiful," Kelly states. "It is a celebration of these people's victory over all kinds of special interests and it usually sparks the audience to compare it with its own battles and victories."

Besides the spectacular scenery, my guess is the audience was voting for the depiction of a successful collaboration among disparate groups and the average citizens who stuck to their guns. They remind us that things do not have to be business as usual; we can change the rules by which we live. – Mary Birdsong



ALAN MAJCHROWICZ

7:30 p.m., Friday, Feb. 13 // Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. // 824.3000

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The Totally Out-there Fusion of Progressive Rock, Jazz, and Funkability Featured on One Damn Fine Fiddle

To me, titles are always kind of dubious things. So when I hear anybody calling somebody 'The Jimi Hendrix Of,' well, anything, I get to feeling a touch skeptical.

But, in the case of eclectic electric-string maestro Joe Deninzon, "The Jimi Hendrix of Violin" sounds about damn right. And with his band, Stratospherius, the music (they call it "a frenzied mélange of progressive rock, jazz fusion, and funkabilly") starts to get weird – in a really good way.

Cleveland rock critic David Budin put it like this about the NYC-based quartet: "If Bela Fleck and Frank Zappa had a love child in outer space, they might grow up to sound like these guys do."

That's something worth checking out, alright. And you can, and soon, when Stratospherius kicks it at the King's Rook Club on Saturday, Feb. 7.

They're being joined by some of Erie's own favorite musical hyperspace-cases, Eric Brewer & Friends, so the show – which is no-cover – is shaping up to be a totally out-there (in a really good way). – Ryan Smith

7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7 // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub

Women Artists Confront Injustice

Confronting Injustice: A Woman's Voice Challenges Viewers to Consider Wrongs of Society and What We Might Do to Affect Change

By: Pen Ealain

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jan. 15 was Dr. King's birthday. It is fitting then that the opening reception of an art show dedicated to laying bare the injustices of this world and manifesting solutions would have its opening reception that day. Mercyhurst University's noteworthy show, *Confronting Injustice: A Woman's Voice* challenges all who lay eyes on it to consider what is wrong in our society and what we might do to right those wrongs.

Gallery Director Heather Dana gathered together 25 illustrious regional female artists to undertake the challenge of depicting Mercyhurst University's academic theme for 2014-15: *Confronting Injustice*. One might presume that an all-women's show would lean the show's thematic motif heavily towards interpretation of women's issues, but instead, the topics chosen for each individual artwork are as varied as the distinct personalities of the artists themselves.

There are, of course, many pieces in the show that pertain to abuse and inequality of women. Of those, the ones that use the traditional women's media of fiber in a new way make a powerful symbolic statement. Since quilting and weaving are so steeped in tradition, the use of those materials and techniques links us to the past of our culture and to cultures all over the world.

Sandy Shelenberger is a textile artist from the Cleveland area whose quilted wall-hanging "Bullet Point Your Thoughts" uses holes burned through the fabric to represent the violence perpetrated against the hearts of women. Womankind is represented by a body print of the artist in a bright pink. Both the feminine softness of the color and the cotton contrasts a brick texture sewn into the fabric and the barely legible words "your thoughts" stenciled throughout the image. Decorating fabric is a traditional home industry currently used by women in many Third World Countries to tap into the international market



Confronting Injustices remains on display at the Cummings Art Gallery, located at Mercyhurst University, through Feb. 8.

Dana has the show hung thematically, with materials and sizes harmoniously grouped. On the same wall as "Supplication" is Stephanie Wood's similar re-purposed metal assemblage, "Shattered." Wood is best known for lovely watercolors, so it is somewhat disconcerting to see here her presentation of razor blades and safety pins enclosed in a box meant to symbolize the violence and pain of domestic abuse.

On the other side of Cisek's piece is another framed sculptural surprise: Christine P. Bowler's "Wrong Body... but Sound in Mind and Pure in Spirit" in which a priest throws bowling balls down a flight of stairs knocking nuns over like so many pins as they attempt to climb upwards. What is surprising is that such a blatant questioning of the Catholic Church's policy of denying qualified women the privilege of serving as clergy would appear in the gallery of a Catholic college. Or maybe it is not so surprising: this is Erie, where our nuns have been vocally questioning their glass ceiling for years.

But the majority of the work here is not about women's issues per se. You will find Erie Reader contributor Mary Birdsong's backlit photograph, "Holding Ground" is quite obviously about justice for a metaphorical woman - Mother Earth. In it an uprooted seedling struggles to gain purchase and find sustenance in a stark, plastic, manufactured, and oily world. I find myself rooting for this poor helpless organism as it battles to overcome the odds that mankind has stacked against it. The photo makes me long for spring, so I can again plant a garden and make the world a greener place. An artwork that makes the viewer want to take action is a powerful thing.

Art can have other powerful effects as well. The best art makes us feel deeply. A show dedicated to pointing out injustice in the world can't all be about hope: Sometimes we are going to feel anger,

grief, and frustration. Solutions to some of the issues presented here seem out of our reach.

In her quilt "Spoonful of Sugar," Deborah Sementelli points out the result to our health of the ever-increasing amount of sugar present in our diets and how little it seems we can do about it in a world run by mega-corporations bent on selling us as much high-profit, over-processed, genetically-modified "food" as they can. Unhealthy diet is, after all, the world's leading cause of death.

Issues like these beg for solutions, but what are we to do about it in a world where so many others seem bent on heading in the wrong direction?

Mary Elizabeth Meier gives us the solution by questioning the most common response of people to all of these injustices - the fact that we don't respond. Her starkly

Issues like these beg for solutions, but what are we to do about it in a world where so many others seem bent on heading in the wrong direction?

elegant embossing, "Silence" calls us to examine what we do when we witness injustice. The single white-on-white word is itself a silent rebuke of those who sit by as the world continues to break and decay around them. The powerful message of this show is that none of us should wait for the world to get better.

These women artists have made a difference here in fighting injustice. We can too.

"Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

The show is free and open to the public and runs from Jan. 12 to Feb. 8, weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and weekends from 2 to 5 p.m.

and lift themselves out of poverty. Shelenberger's piece not only calls attention to an injustice, it seems to offer a solution to one.

As antithetical as it may seem, Marsha Cisek's metal sculpture, "Supplication" is also steeped in the tradition of women's crafts

since it is a weaving, although a lattice made of metal is not technically a fabric. The steel wire armature in this small-framed relief is reminiscent of a cage, while pointed red-tipped screws seem to reach out to us, pleading for release from some inescapable prison.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The Punch Brothers
The Phosphorescent Blues
 Nonesuch

★★★★★

The Punch Brothers is a band that is great at introductions. Take "Movement and Location," the opening track off of *Who's Feeling Young Now?*, for example. It's an absolute whirlwind of a song about Hall of Fame pitcher Greg Maddux's pitching style (yeah, you read that right) that demonstrates that Punch Brothers isn't your typical bluegrass band. Well, the massively-talented quintet one-up their last introduction with the spacious, shifting "Familiarity," an excellent 10-minute starter on latest album *The Phosphorescent Blues*. The track really sets the tone for the release's 11 songs, with the band deftly crafting an album that's both immensely detailed and delicate. *The Phosphorescent Blues* is an intimate 46 minutes of music, as each sonic whisper and stirring arpeggio draws you closer with every passing track, and The Punch Brothers reward with a beautifully-crafted album that runs the gamut from pop-driven bluegrass to Debussy covers. — Alex Bieler



The Decemberists
What a Terrible World, What a Beautiful World
 Capitol

★★★

The Decemberists are a band that usually ties overarching themes to its albums, but latest album *What a Terrible World, What a Beautiful World* doesn't dwell on any subject for too long. Coming from a group that has dabbled in verbose musings into anything from Japanese folk tales to sea shanties, a simple, more relaxed release almost seems odd, but the results generally work. Lead single "Make You Better" is a wonderful trip into a '70s-lounge style, spiked with an enjoyable rousing chorus. If there is a slight theme through the new album, it's a focus on the band itself, whether Colin Meloy is jokingly singing of how music impacts fans on "The Singer Addresses His Audience" or a remark back on past tracks on "Anti-Summersong" ("I'm not going on just to sing another sing-a-long suicide song"). The former song ends well, but the latter sounds cloyingly sweet, a sense that pervades a handful of songs and puts a damper on an otherwise enjoyable album. — Alex Bieler



Jason Marsalis Vibes Quartet
The 21st Century Trad Band
 Basin Street Records

★★★★

In separate interviews with this writer, Winton and Branford Marsalis each made a point of saying "wait 'til you hear Jason," their younger brother. Well, with *The 21st Century Trad Band*, Jason's second well-received CD (the first hit No. 1, the new one is at No. 7 on the jazzweek.com radio-play chart) the younger sibling seems to be living up to his brothers' bragging. Jason began his career on drums before switching to vibraphone, on which he has become a skilled player, composer (all 12 songs here), and leader. On vibes, he has a sharp, high-energy sound that is exciting but sometimes jarring. A full-fledged mallet man, here he also plays a little marimba, xylophone, glockenspiel, and tubular bells. Jason leads an excellent band, ensemble and solo-wise, and with few exceptions, they shine on a creatively varied repertoire, ranging from interludes to extensive workouts, modern to old-timey, intense to downright cheerful, and hard-swinging to gentle (even pretty). — Bob Protzman



Fall Out Boy
American Beauty/American Psycho
 Island Records

★★

If Fall Out Boy wants to save rock 'n' roll, this is not the way to do it. This latest variant of the pop-punk mega-band seems to have embraced the pop and jet-tisoned the punk. Bands evolve over time, but there are so few real rockers with true star power influencing today's Top 40-listening teeny boppers, that it is tragic when one of them sells out and becomes just another commercial dance band. This album is radio-friendly: The anthem "Centuries" has inundated the airwaves. No one will argue that singer Patrick Stump can't belt out a tune with the best of them. And good Lord, does this collection have catchy hooks. The infectious "Uma Thurman" turns the theme song of TV's *The Munsters* into a groovy, must-dance earworm. Gone, though, are the crunchy, driving guitars and capricious drum-kit work. And I miss them. Upon hearing this denouncement of her favorite band, the biggest FOB fan in my house berated me mockingly: "This isn't your music. You don't understand. They aren't your generation." Perhaps she's right. Maybe I'm just too old to appreciate Fall Out Boy's new, updated sound. — Bryan Toy



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greater value of output because of the method of production.”

This is perhaps the most important note with regard to Erie’s industrial future. If you’re looking at the industrial landscape from a return on investment perspective, manufacturing holds the greatest promise in terms of wages and the multiplier effect of those wages throughout the community. Health care and local government represent the second and third largest generators of income in Erie.

Given evidence that manufacturing jobs produce higher wages that ultimately lead to a higher quality of life and greater community vitality, the creation and sustaining of manufacturing jobs is critical to the future of Erie.

But manufacturing may not look as it always did, dotting the Erie horizon with smokestacks that sit upon massive indus-

trial footprints. Instead, it may mean that Erie manufactures new technology for the health care industry; it may mean that Erie adopts what the Brookings Institute calls an “advanced industrial” profile rooted in STEM knowledge occupations as well as technological research and development; or, it may mean that startups, like AcousticSheep, LLC, expand into creating products in concert with other sectors of the Erie economy, creating jobs and raising the region’s technology profile.

AcousticSheep, LLC manufactures and distributes headphones that are built into patented headbands for high-impact activities like running and low-impact activities like sleeping, under its RunPhones and SleepPhones brands, respectively. *Wired* magazine named its headphones one of the top products at this year’s Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Wei-Shin Lai, M.D. is the CEO of AcousticSheep, LLC. She recently blogged about why the company she runs with her husband, video game developer Jason Wolfe, is a better fit for Erie than it is for Silicon Valley.

Lai celebrated the benefit of “easy-going employees who not only understand teamwork, but truly pull together in such a way that we have a multiplicative effect (the synergy that you hear about but rarely experience).” She also credited the local business support community, including the Erie Technology Incubator at Gannon University and eMarketing Learning Center at Penn State Behrend, among many others, as keys reasons for her company’s success.

It’s this kind of collaboration, says Katz, that will allow manufacturing to flourish in the 21st century.

Today, health care and social assistance agencies comprise more than 16 percent of employment in Erie, making it the largest sector in the region.

“I think that all places that have had a manufacturing past, particularly those that had an ecosystem of not just companies – but companies, universities, training facilities, private sector leadership – that ecosystem can be revived,” he added. “The U.S. seems poised for a manufacturing renaissance and places like Erie can participate in that, and already are, because of your location and legacy assets.”

Jim Wertz can be contacted at jWertz@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Jim_Wertz.

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ECGRA's Ignite Erie

Creating the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Erie

By: Ben Speggen

Money, Roger Waters wrote, it's a gas. Skeptical or not on the topic of finance, Waters is right: Money is a fuel, an accelerator to propel otherwise static objects into motion.

So money, it's not hard to draw the connection, then – or more money – is what would thrust objects – say, elements in Erie's entrepreneurial ecosystem – onward, driving them with force and increased momentum.

"The role of economic development in a community is to unlock investment, to create progress moving forward," says Perry Wood, executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. "We need to empower the people in the trenches with more resources to accomplish their missions."

In short, 'resources' is that energy, and Wood is no stranger to words like it – as well as ones like 'empower' and 'entrepreneurial'-anything. The seed-level investment that ECGRA is now making through Ignite Erie is what he hopes to flick the spark of ignition to Erie's entrepreneurial motor.

That is, he's putting ECGRA's money where its mission and mouth is.

In December 2014, ECGRA announced the launch of the second phase of its small-business-centric initiative, which came with a commitment of up to \$3.9 million of investments through 2017 with the goal of spurring inner-city small-business development, creating a culture of collaboration between industry and local universities, and presenting a "broad spectrum of financing products for starting, growing, and reinventing small business."

But this story didn't start there. Rather, it began back in November 2013 with Phase I of Ignite Erie, when ECGRA hosted "A Day of Innovation for Entrepreneurs," which was, as Wood puts it: "designed to be a day to talk about innovation-based economic development."

Wood brought in Pittsburgh-native Richard Bendis, CEO and founder of Innovation America, "a national public-private partnership focused on accelerating the growth of innovation economy in America," and one of the top-five speakers on innovation economy in the world.

In case wrapping your head around just what exactly "innovation" (a pretty word used indefinitely and deafeningly to create a culture of buzz) means or does for communities, Bendis' helpful perspective goes something like this: "Innovation really looks at different ways that we communicate, a way in which people govern, a way that people develop partnerships and collaborate with one another. But, it also is "looking at new ideas and the opportunity in new markets."

In other words, innovation – although it



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

can be – isn't limited to things like the development of the next iPad or even the next Twitter, that while innovation can be found on an assembly line or in the app store, it doesn't have to be.

Wood gleaned three key things from the Ignite Erie Summit: Erie's entrepreneurial culture isn't getting the support (read: financing) it deserves; unlike most communities with robust climates to help support industries to innovate, Erie doesn't have intermediaries (read: Philanthropic Institutions in Northeast Ohio is a good, close example of this); and that while financing structures need to be led by the private sector (read: government bailouts aren't necessarily coming to a town near you), they need to be jump-started with capital from groups like ECGRA.

Which is to say: If there's an influx of money, entities, like Community Development Financing Institutions, can serve as the arbiters of the keys to unlocking capital to trigger growth. Or if this were to be a chemical equation, ECGRA, with its Ignite Erie initiative (read: capital), would be the catalyst creating a novel reaction between two existing elements to produce something new.

Because of its mission to be an impact investor by galvanizing nonprofits toward economic and community development, ECGRA is no stranger to infusing the region with capital to spur opportunity. Through the Enterprise Development Fund, ECGRA's investing in retail, healthcare, and manufacturing, while with the Erie Innovation Fund with Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pa., it's endowing in the tech-based sector.

"Locally-deployed dollars give business owners more leverage," says Stephen Brawley, president and CEO of Ben Franklin Technology Partners. That enables businesses, he adds, to "grow to a larger extent faster."

But the second phase of Ignite Erie isn't offering just one spark. To encourage and

Ray Leach, CEO of Jumpstart, Inc.; Richard Bendis, founder and president of Innovation America; William Generett, president and CEO of Urban Innovation 21; Dr. Balaji Rajagopalan, director of Sam and Irene Black School of Business at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College gathered at the Ignite Erie Summit in 2013 at the Booker T Washington Center in Erie.

usher entrepreneurs from stage to stage, ECGRA's also incentivizing collaboration between local universities to provide a support system for entrepreneurs. For proof of collaboration between those institutions, one needn't look further than "The Path Forward," a whitepaper by the Council of University Presidents acknowledging the critical role they play in developing the region's economy. Which is a major step forward considering Erie's Second-Tier identity.

To understand Second-Tier Regions (read: Not synonymous with second-rate) and their attributes, turning to urban affairs and economic geography scholar Heike Mayer, who literally wrote the book on it: *Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Second Tier Regions*, is a good place to start.

While it's a must-read for anyone who's anyone in the world of economic development with an eye on Erie's future, the CliffsNotes version would emphasize how the path to development for Second-Tier Regions doesn't follow the trajectory of larger regions, like Silicon Valley or Boston's Route 128. Instead, these regions use already available resources through partnerships.

Prior to the book, Mayer authored a study for the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institute, "Bootstrapping High-Tech: Evidence from Three Emerging High Technology Metropolitan Areas," that fo-

cused on Portland, Kansas City, and Boise, arguing that they emerged as high-tech centers despite lacking a major research university in the region, thus proving that although it's "often thought necessary," boasting a renowned research-based university really isn't. Rather, these regions capitalized on policies "[linking] universities with industry, [facilitating] entrepreneurship, and [supporting] the development and commercialization of innovation."

So when Wood posits that Erie's existing strength in applied sciences and manufacturing bridges a gap created by the lack of federal labs and key research institutions, it carries weight. And when Mayer's study notes that both Portland and Boise "started as low-cost manufacturing sites for firms whose headquarters and R&D activities were located elsewhere," it affirms Erie's potential for growth in light of its current assets without the need to rebuild the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem from the ground up. But, as Mayer suggests – and Wood echoes – collaboration is key.

Thus, Ignite Erie's second phase put out the call for applications for those endeavoring to support small-business development and those willing to undertake the facilitation of an industry-plus-university collaborative effort. ECGRA is currently in the process of reviewing those applications, and those grantees will be named soon.

While we await, we can do some self-reflecting. In being honest with ourselves about what we lack, as well as what we have, we can more appropriately fine-tune our equation, or as Wood puts it, understand the parts of "the magic formula for regions of our size."

Being realistic about innovation – that it, as Wood stresses, "starts with creative and educated people" – is both simple and profound. Because the Ignite Erie Summit revealed that Erie's ripe with people with business plans sitting on shelves, ideas being hatched in garages, and entrepreneurs struggling to make it the last mile to the marketplace, half of the formula has been identified. And because institutions here are willing to collaborate to champion development, there's the other half. Aligning the two in economic development marriage has become the work of Ignite Erie.

"Our entrepreneurship ecosystem is comprised of applied sciences at the universities, financing entities, the entrepreneur themselves, local government – all factors that have to come together to create this system," Wood says. Which all already exist in Erie, waiting for the spark to set things into motion toward unity.

So yes, money – it's a gas. And with Ignite Erie, ECGRA's filling the tank, ensuring Erie isn't sitting idly by while other cities pass us on the road to economic growth and prosperity.

Ben Speggen can be contacted at bSpeggen@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @ERBenSpeggen.

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Geeked Out

The Future of West Erie Plaza Theater and the Role of Film-based Entrepreneurs in Erie

By: John Lindvay

In case you missed it, The West Erie Plaza Theatre has a date with a wrecking ball. As recently reported in the *Erie Times-News*, VCP Properties – the Erie-based company that owns the plaza – has elected to raze the theater that shuttered its doors six years ago, reportedly due to “sluggish tickets sales.”

When I first read John Guerriero’s article, I was saddened by the loss of the landmark sitting off of the corner of Pittsburgh Avenue and Eighth Street. But then that sadness turned into confusion. How could a theater located in a neighborhood ripe with recent development not have a future worth investing in?

I was also troubled by two quotes in the Jan. 24 article.

Chris Conrad, VCG’s co-managing director, said that, “It is with great sadness and profound regret we must accept our inability to save the plaza theater.”

This struck me as strange. Yes, the *ETN* article reported that “no companies came forward to commit to the theater’s revitalization,” but was this enough to make this a conversation stopper and destruction the inevitable answer?

The other quote that had me scratching my head even more came from Chris Greene, the other co-managing partner: “Our concern is

How could a theater located in a neighborhood ripe with recent development not have a future worth investing in?

that investment into first-run or second-run theaters is increasingly seen as an unfavorable investment.”

Two other words lingered on after I finished reading the doom-and-gloom report: Resistance and hesitation. Both were reportedly in regards to the theater industry.

But since the West Erie Plaza closed, Erie’s seen young entrepreneurs prospering in both first- and second-run theaters – FILM at Erie Art Museum and Erie Movie House both come to mind.

So given VCG’s rationale to raze the theater coupled with my observation of recent development, I got on the phone. The first two calls went out to John C. Lyons, the executive director of Film Society of Northwestern Pennsylvania, and Craig Stadler, the owner/operator of Erie Movie House.

While Tinseltown houses more than



enough screens – and a lot of flicks – many of the more critically acclaimed films don’t appear there until Oscar time. FILM at the Erie Art Museum – one of the programs of the Film Society – is approaching its third anniversary and fills this void steadily throughout the year, having also brought in 18 live filmmaker Q&As, hosted eight movie premieres in Pennsylvania, and managed to hit their capacity of 200 seats multiple times – all done as a nonprofit with a handful of dedicated volunteers.

So when VCG turned to Facebook to sound a call to arms for “local heroes big and small” looking to talk film, John was there, ready and willing to make something happen. He posted a comment to start a dialogue, pointing out that the Film Society was designed to address questions and concerns like this one involving a brick-and-mortar location; yet John – and the Film Society – never heard back from VCG.

“I think that to a lot of people, maybe those who aren’t connected at all to the film industry, it may seem daunting,” John explained.

I confess that opening a movie theater *does* sound intimidating, but it is possible. He added that many people would likely simply wait for one of the four major theater chains to show up before anyone would believe it possible to open – or re-open – a theater. John said some hold the opinion that “No one has ever started an independent, boutique, theater on their own... which is garbage.”

But while John got no response, Craig, the owner and operator of the small, independent theater Erie Movie House told me another story.

Craig looked into the West Erie Plaza on two separate occasions over a two-year period. Each time, he and his wife and business partner Nicole were not allowed to see the inside of the building and they weren’t allowed to purchase/salvage seats.

“The offer put to us was a scraping of the insides of the building, leaving us with just a shell. We would have to pay for a full reconstruction project, along with fixing the roof, which caused the damage initially, along with a five-figure-per-month rent,” according to Craig, who admitted that this didn’t match the budget he was working with at the time. So ultimately, he had to go elsewhere and start smaller, ending up at 3424 West Lake Road.

Erie, while a small city, is full of young entrepreneurs looking for reasons to stay. Surely, there are enough innovators and investors to figure out a way to mimic the success of independent theaters found elsewhere in the country.

The Bryn Mawr Film Institute based out of Philadelphia conducted a survey of small theaters (average two screens, 300 to 500 seats), and as it turns out, three-quarters of those theaters are nonprofits. In San Francisco, there are 20 theaters in the city, half of which are not chains and many are moving over to nonprofits which also run benefit events and offers membership programs to help drive growth.

It seems like either being a nonprofit or partnering with a nonprofit opens theaters to many new financially-viable avenues including grants. So I have to ask again, why can’t this happen in Erie? Why is the ulti-

The West Erie Plaza Theater is slated for demolition at the same time Erie’s film scene is growing and thriving.

mate answer destruction and not further conversation to explore re-purposing a theater into a theater-based venue?

We have both FILM at the Erie Art Museum and Erie Movie House, but there’s also Mercyhurst Institute For Arts & Culture, Big Green Screen Theatre, and Edinboro Film Series in the discussion. Each of these endeavors fills a niche and each continues to grow, suggesting that Erie has a penchant for – and can support – multiple movie options.

Many questions still remain as to the intentions of VCG in regard to the West Erie Plaza. From talking to both Craig and John, it seems as if there was never a real intention to save the West Erie Theater. While I reached out to VCG for comment, I didn’t receive a response before deadline, but I am still waiting, hopeful for comment.

As we mourn the loss of yet another potential business opportunity for our young and eager entrepreneurs and community leaders, go to – and continue to support – any of the aforementioned film programs in Erie. This will continue to spread the message that Erie is a city that respects and loves movies – one that developers will see and hear.

John Lindvay can be contacted at jLindvay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @FightStrife.

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ER Sports

Looking Back On One of the "Greatest Games Ever"

By James R. LeCorchick

In the history of local sports, there have probably been thousands of "that was one of the greatest games ever," and I think I have seen many of them, including one special contest that still gives me goose bumps every time I think of it. And that is the legendary – not only in Erie but nationally – basketball game between Youngstown State University and Gannon College.

These two rivals met at a jam-packed Gannon "Audi" for the second time in the 1965-1966 season and the crowd of 2,907 didn't get out of the arena until the 11 o'clock news was just starting. The exact date was Feb. 28, 1966 and it was the second time in seven days the Division II national powers met,

I was a freshman at Gannon and can take you to the exact seat I was sitting in for what seemed like an eternity, as both teams were on the edge several times of claiming the victory.

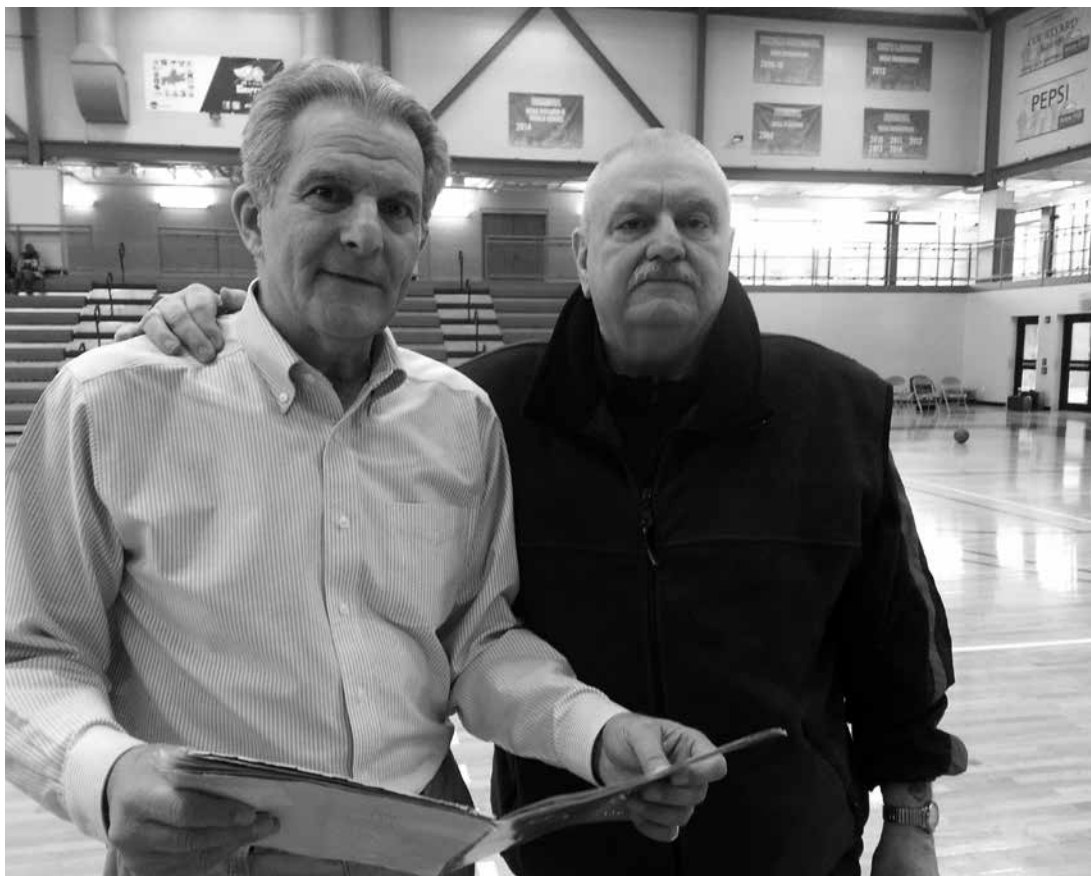
the Golden Knights winning by two points in both clashes.

However, it was the second meeting that had the entire country talking.

I was a freshman at Gannon and can take you to the exact seat I was sitting in for what seemed like an eternity, as both teams were on the edge several times of claiming the victory. As a matter of fact, they announced three times that the freshmen curfew (you remember curfews, don't you?) was being extended before finally letting the frosh know they were allowed to stay until the game concluded.

I vividly remember the start of the game, as YSU legendary coach **Dom Rosselli** had his team slow the tempo down – there was no shot clock or three-point line – against the very athletic and talented Golden Knights. The contest was deadlocked 42-42 after regulation, and then the OT tallies were 44-44, 47-47, 53-53 67-67 and the finale, 71-69.

The most danger the Erie squad was in came during the fifth extra period when the Penguins opened up a five-point lead with less than three minutes to play before unbelievably letting it slip away. A five-point advantage in a contest being played at this slow pace was akin to blowing a 20-point margin in the final 10 minutes.



SETON HILL coach **Tony Morocco**, an alum of the famous six overtime game, looks at a program from that contest with the Erie Reader's **James R. LeCorchick**.

freshman at the time, I was part of the peaceful demonstration, the march failing to make an impact on the powers-to-be at the school.

This is definitely "one of the greatest games ever" in Erie's athletic history.

And if you see me at the Hammermill Center, just ask me where I was sitting that evening and I will be glad to show you.

OVERTIME – This game caught the fancy of all college hoops fans and *Erie Times* Sports Editor **Gene Cuneo** was asked to write a story for the *Sporting News* and it appeared in the March 12, 1966 issue. Cuneo was one of the

Gannon's **Mel Witherspoon**, who is now an Erie City Councilman, had his photo plastered all over the country, as he played every minute (that's 70 minutes, folks) of the thriller. He was shown relaxing in the GC locker room with his feet up, and no one deserved it more as he finished with 17 points and double digits in rebounds. However, this was an easy night for the powerful 6-5, 220-pounder, who survived a lot tougher nights on the Mean Streets of Newark, N.J.

The locals won the game when 6-4 sophomore **Madison "The Fly" Purvey** from New York City took a great pass from **"Bantam" Ben Wiley** to drop in a layup at the buzzer, the home team and their fans celebrating wildly in The Audi. This was Purvey's only field goal of the game, as he finished with three points.

Gannon's roster showed **Cal Graham (11 points)**, **'Spoon (17)**, **Lou Warren (4)**, **Wiley (19)**, **Don Ruminski (5)**, **Larry Peacock (12)**, and **Purvey (3)**. Also on the GC roster were **Tom Balen**, **Jim Chatterton**, **Joe Glassmacher**, **Al Lawson**, **Don Mackey**, and **Tom Quinn**. The talented Penguins countered with the great **Dave Culliver (25 points)**, **Tony Morocco (16)**, **Charley Rowan (12)**, **Joe Nigro (6)**, **John McElroy (0)**, **Jim Leonard (2)**, and **Chuck Swaikowski (2)**.

All five GU starters averaged in double figures for the season.

Morocco, one of the classiest coaches in the PSAC at Seton Hill, and Culliver were teammates at Trafford High School before signing with YSU. Culliver is one of my favorite "visiting" performers to ever play at The Audi.

It was usually a thriller when these two squads met, Gannon posting a 72-70 victory in Ohio the week before, as the Golden Ones had to overcome a 36-point performance that evening by the 6-2 Culliver.

These were two of the premier "small college" teams in the country and it was big news when they met, the Penguins being rated as high as fifth in the country earlier in the season. This Monday night encounter was the final regular season game of the season for both teams, Gannon entering the affair with a 19-3 chart while Youngstown showed 18-5.

However, ironically enough, the exciting game paled in comparison when it was announced following the clash that a GC administrator had turned down an invitation to the small college post-season tournament earlier in the day, The Knights staying home with a final scintillating record of 20-3 while the Penguins accepted the bid and moved on with an 18-6 card.

The controversial move sparked outrage among Gannon students and fans, the students taking to the streets the next afternoon in a protest, marching through downtown Erie. And yes, being a concerned

most respected sports' writers in all of the USA.

The game was offered on tape delay by Channel 12 or Channel 35 and three of the players went to my parents house with me and we viewed all the action until 3 a.m., the contest getting started at midnight on delay. I have tried to find that game on tape, but no one has a copy, including the TV station.

As mentioned, **Tony Morocco** is the Seton Hill coach and there isn't a time he and I don't reminisce when the Griffins and the Golden Knights meet. Morocco loves the game of basketball, and he's always willing to stop and talk to local fans before and after the game.

This was one of the greatest GC teams of all time, and it was a crying (I was crying) shame The Knights didn't get to play in the post-season.

Much of the information was provided by Gannon fan(atic) **Dave Spusta** who let me use the game program and *SI* article by Cuneo. Long-time fan (obviously) Spusta kept score that evening in his program.

The program cost 15 cents and included ads from DiMichael's Pizza, Zink Dry Cleaners, Isaac Baker and Son, P.A. Meyer & Sons, and Lyon Transportation Lines.

The game was broadcast on WWYN 1260 with **Bill Shelley** and **Doug Davis**.

James R. LeCorchick can be contacted at JRLSportsReport@gmail.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @JRLSports.

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