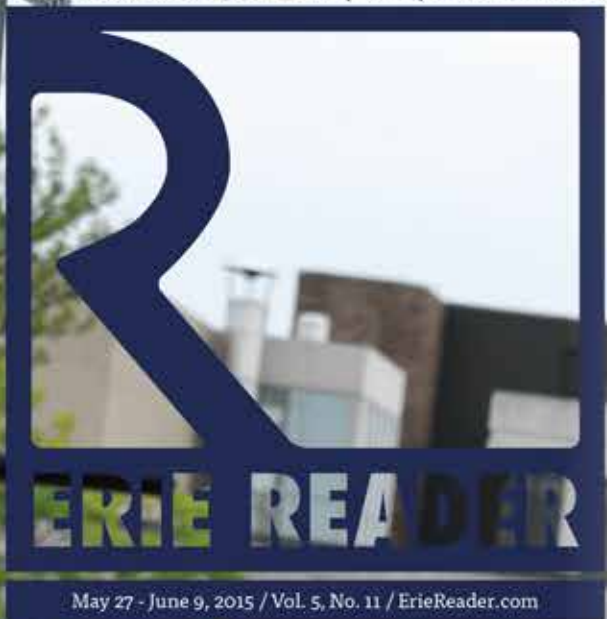


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BIKEABLE ERIE

THE PUSH TO MAKE OUR CITY MORE BICYCLE-FRIENDLY

**IS THE CITY OF ERIE'S POPULATION
DECLINE THE FINAL KNOCKOUT PUNCH?**

BY: RICK FILIPPI

PUTTING EMERGE 2040 IN ITS PLACE

BY: JIM WERTZ

ART IN TANDEM: THE JESSE & RICARDO STORY

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From The Editors

Mention bikes in Erie and most people likely think of motorcycles and the rumbling hums signaling that summer has arrived. And most come to this conclusion with good reason, as the stalwart summer festival, Roar On The Shore — the multi-day gathering of bikes, bikers, and the culture that comes with the quasi-Sturgis that's heralded as sound economic development for the City of Erie — is becoming a rival in size and scope to Celebrate Erie. Some even consider it the opening act to the August festival.

Beyond ROTS — and its effect on the City — there are bike nights, too, that reinforce the notion that when we think of bikes in Erie, we think motorcycles first and bicycles, well, hardly at all.

One of the things that motorcycles and bicycles have in common are the perceived risks inherent in opting for two wheels instead of four. As dangerous as motorcycles may be (think: no helmet law in Pa.), bicycles aren't without controversy, too (think: mass hysteria over bike lanes in New York City and the introduction of a bike-share program).

Bike lanes, some argued, would *increase* bicycle-related accidents, because they'd promote more bicycling and more bicycles sharing the road at the same time as cars creates the more bikes plus cars equals more accidents all around equation.

"Evaluating the Safety Effects of Bicycle Lanes in New York City," a study published in the *American Journal for Public Health*, revealed that the "installation of bicycle lanes did not lead to an increase in crashes, despite the probable increase in the number of bicyclists." Rather, the study noted, "the most likely explanations for the lack of increase in crashes are reduced vehicular speeds and fewer conflicts between vehicles and bicyclists after installation of these lanes." That is, creating a lane for cars *and* a lane for bicycles means a clear separation leads to an increase in safety for *all* travelers.

But it doesn't stop there. When Citi Bike, the recently debuted bike-sharing program in NYC, launched last year, critics cried foul, suggesting that cabs would inevitably end up mowing down cyclists, spilling the blood of innocent pedaler making their way through the Big Apple. Fast-forward a year later to the shocking news in NYC: No one found bike lanes on tri-

al, charged with first-degree murder of cyclists and/or drivers.

According to Citi Bike, the 8.75 million trips that resulted in 14.7 million miles logged on its bikes led to just a hundred crashes — and zero deaths. This news isn't uncommon, as bike-share programs throughout the world aren't leading to mass — or nearly *any* — casualties. Rather, drivers are learning, adapting, modifying their driving tendencies as they acclimate to the increased presence of cyclists.

Realizing that bicyclists and increased bike traffic won't correlate to an increase in biker deaths means that biking isn't just for small towns or rural paths. Rather, it means biking *works* in bigger cities and the use of bikes has the potential to build better transit by at the very least creating more alert drivers and at the very most reducing the number of citizens opting for motor-powered transit to take them a mere mile.

After all, that *AJPH* study notes that of the nearly 140 million commuting trips made daily, less than 1 percent are made by bicycle. What's more shocking is that approximately 25 percent of trips made total less than one mile in distance and 75 percent of those trips are made by car.

Aside from the obvious conclusion that if any of these short trips were to be made by bike people would get more exercise, which could lead to a reduction in obesity, bikes can also help to build stronger communities.

Take for instance the work the Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network are doing in Erie. And consider Erie's Eastside Opportunity Corridor being developed by County Councilman Jay Breneman and City Council President Dave Brennan. Katie Christ covers both of these — and more — in a riveting feature on Erie's bike (read: cycling) culture and how these examples demonstrate how people are endeavoring to make Erie a bikeable city, one more bicycle-friendly while making Erie a better city.

Is promoting bikes, bikers, and biker culture revolutionary? No. Is it controversial? Not really.

But it gives us hope that people see that bikeable cities mean improved cities, and they aren't afraid to dare to have such dreams in a smaller (read: shrinking) city — especially because the current population statistics don't have us all that revved up.

Exile on State Street

Is the City of Erie's population decline the final knockout punch?



Erie's population continues to plummet, but no one at City Hall seems to have a plan.

just not competitive.

How do you avoid raising taxes? In one respect we have to run the City more efficiently. In my administration, we implemented the "DROP" plan, a retirement incentive that allowed us to reduce the City's workforce by nearly 200 through retirements. The savings from that program delivered benefits for years.

Other savings ideas, which the current administration has failed to adopt, include the electronic payroll system. The City still employs numerous payroll clerks to calculate wages. Why not do this with 20th century technology? That's right – 20th century. The next mayor needs to push for innovative and creative ways to reduce the City's expenses to avoid raising taxes.

Second, and related to taxes, is to develop new revenue sources. I've beaten this horse numerous times before to deaf ears. We've seen over a hundred million dollars of investment by the Convention Center Authority in the convention center, hotels, and the ice arena and ballpark complex. Does the City get one red cent from any of these facilities to address its budgetary issues? Of course not. Why isn't the mayor at every single Convention Center Authority meeting demanding a piece of the 7 percent room tax? The City hosts these facilities. Much of the revenue generated from them comes from outside the City. Why don't the consumers using these facilities pay their fair share of the expenses to run the City?

In addition, why isn't the mayor going after all of the so-called "nonprofits" to get fair payments in lieu of taxes? These "nonprofits," including the hospitals, the universities, and others, pay their top executives hefty salaries that the private sector can only envy, yet pay only token amounts for the benefits they receive from the City. The next mayor needs to go into the ring with the nonprofits and fight for fair share payment to offset the burden on city residents.

Third, and again related to taxes, as well as expense reduction, the City needs to open serious negotiations

By: Rick Filippi

Sometimes you hate to be right. This time it really hurts.

As you know by now, the U.S. Census Bureau recently released its 2014 census statistics for the City of Erie. And, as I predicted for the last several years, it is now estimated that the City of Erie's population has fallen below 100,000 for the first time in almost a century, standing now at 99,452 as of July 2014.

We have to go back to 1920 to see a similar figure! Folks, this is nearly a knockout punch for the City and the Erie Region. It wasn't enough that we lost the designation as the third largest city in the Commonwealth. Or, that we no longer have a representative in Congress. Or, that the state legislature has sliced and diced Erie County so that we no longer have unified representation in Harrisburg, because ladies and gentlemen, the City's loss of population and the corresponding political clout that comes with it has dire consequences for our entire region.

Did this have to happen? I don't believe so.

As reported in the *Erie Times-News*, when asked how the City could reverse this decades long population slide, the only thing Erie Mayor Joe Sinnott could say was that "it's a complicated question." Not surprising from an administration that for 10 years now has offered not a single idea to address the City's fundamental problem, which is the fact that the City is not an environment that people want to invest in, be it to live or to do business. In fact, the administration of the current mayor has contributed significantly to the City's slide by doing virtually nothing to address the root problem.

The answer to Erie's population decline is not complex at all. Is it hard? Yes. Does it take some vision? Of course. And will it require hard work and leadership? Absolutely.

With the recent municipal elections behind us, and as we look forward to a new mayor in a couple of years, I am going to offer some suggestions that

hopefully a few of the candidates who will vie for the City's top job might consider. Because folks, the City of Erie is on its last legs. It's in cardiac arrest, and the people running it – be it the administration or city council – don't even seem to realize it. If the population statistics don't wake them up, then nothing will. But I have to have hope. I live here. My businesses are here. My kids go to school here.

Here are a few suggestions that we all could start working on now to address this "complicated question" and reverse this trend – or, at least demand that the next mayor support them. This is by no means a complete list as there are so many things a leader of Erie could be doing. I tried some of these things myself when I was mayor, and I have suggested them in this column before.

First, stop raising taxes. In the last three years, the City has raised taxes approximately 24 percent. That is not a novel or creative way to deal with the City's problems. Coupled with the school district's high tax bill, the City is

with the County about transferring the City's well-trained and qualified fire department to the County. This makes sense on so many fronts its ridiculous that this discussion has not happened.

The fire department represents about a \$17 million expense to the City. The impoverished and overtaxed city residents can't afford it. At the same time, the volunteer fire departments throughout much of the County, and in particular the metropolitan area, are experiencing great difficulty staffing themselves. By transferring the fire department to the County and re-deploying its force in a strategic geographic fashion, not only would the City realize a significant cost reduction by spreading this important regional public safety necessity among all of Erie County, but the County as a whole would benefit from increased public safety. After all, Millcreek Township has already started going to part-time paid fire personnel to address its needs. The next mayor needs to begin discussions with the county executive to make this happen.

Fourth – and this one really hits home – after experiencing another shooting and wounding in my neighborhood, there is no doubt that the gun violence that has plagued the City now for almost two years has contributed significantly to the flight of people from the City. I know the police have been doing their best. But where the hell has the current mayor been? At my count, he has had one press conference last year to address this situation.

The next mayor needs to show the people of Erie that he or she is out in front of this problem. The mayor should have weekly press conferences telling the citizens of Erie how we are dealing with the problem. The mayor should be conducting neighborhood sweeps, as I did, going through the violence prone areas, which are now practically the whole city, with police, public works, and code officials, cleaning up junk and debris, closing down crack houses, going to neighborhood watch meetings and fundamentally letting the people of Erie know that he or she gives a damn about their plight.

Finally, we need to rebuild the fundamental blocks upon which all cities are built – and that is the neighborhood. Let's be frank, folks. The City's

housing stock is old. If there is a decent neighborhood without blight, your house is overtaxed. When I was mayor, through the backing of city council, we adopted the City-wide, 100 percent LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance) program, a tax incentive to get people to reinvest in the City. And you know what? It worked.

In the early- to mid-2000s, the City experienced a mini building boom.

The answer to Erie's population decline is not complex at all. Is it hard? Yes. Does it take some vision? Of course. And will it require hard work and leadership? Absolutely.

We actually were able to challenge census figures at the time and proved that the City had gained back some ground, largely due to this program.

What did the current administration and council do? Cut back on the program. What happened? We lost any ground we had gained. The next mayor needs to utilize existing resources, such as LERTA, to attract residential and commercial investment in the City.

Is the City finished? Of course not. But the latest population data confirms a decline that has far reaching implications for the City and the entire Erie Region.

These ideas are just the surface of what the next mayor needs to address. Folks, the City is in a fight for its life, and we, the citizens of Erie, need a champion who can fight back. We need a man or woman as the next mayor with a spine of steel and an acute vision that can go into the arena and throw some counter punches. Without a leader of that sort, the City really will be down and out for the count.

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

Erie At Large:

Let's put Emerge 2040 in its proper place.

By: **Jim Wertz**

The untimely release of Erie County Director of Planning Jake Welsh at the hands of County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper is raising many questions about what goes on behind closed doors in the less than transparent office of the Erie County Executive. Dahlkemper called the firing a "personnel issue" in local media, but information about Welsh's departure has been so tightly held that Dahlkemper refused to discuss the matter at a public Erie County Council meeting, asking instead to meet with Council in an executive session, away from the public and the media.

Only County Councilman Kyle Foust objected to the executive session and refused to take part in the private meeting because he claimed it ran contrary to "open government." This is an ironic position considering that Foust was the sole no-vote to County Councilman Jay Breneman's sunshine resolution to record and post County Council's public meetings online. Nevertheless, Foust's exercise in bureaucratic contradiction will have to wait while we parse out the saga of the County Executive, and what appears to be, her ongoing attempts to remove the vestiges of previous administrations.

Dahlkemper says that she's looking for new leadership in the planning office. In concert with Welsh's departure, she asked County Council – before the executive session – to reduce the salary for the director of planning position to \$65,000. Welsh made \$70,980 in his former post, according to county records, but he was also a county employee since 1988. Welsh supervised the county planning office since 2006.

Dahlkemper also says that she wants the vision of the director of planning to reflect the Emerge 2040 regional plan. She's correct, but she's not gone far enough. Dahlkemper should be fighting for the County's director of planning and the project manager of Emerge 2040 to be one and the same. The projects and programs undertaken by county government should not just be in the spirit of the Emerge

2040 plan; they *should be* the projects and programs of the Emerge 2040 plan.

Emerge 2040 currently operates from within the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership. That move was made to insulate the project manager's position from the ever-changing political tides of regional government. But those were the days when Emerge 2040 was branded Destination Erie, a controversial study rather than an executable plan. Now that such a plan is in place, the community should be holding its elected officials accountable based on the objectives and timeline of Emerge 2040, mitigating the need for meddling middlemen with their own agenda.

Just as Destination Erie planners were concerned about the political will of incoming and outgoing elected officials, so too should Emerge 2040 planners be concerned about the undue influence of the ERCGP, which has its own history of poorly managed plans to recruit and maintain regional assets.

County leaders should codify pro-

Dahlkemper should be fighting for the County's director of planning and the project manager of Emerge 2040 to be one and the same.

tections for the Emerge 2040 project manager, holding that person – be it the current project manager, Anna Frantz, or her successors – accountable on a level beyond the reach of the County Executive. The evaluation rubric is built into Emerge 2040. If the objectives of the plan are being met and its projects remain on schedule, the project manager should be unimpeachable.

If the community and its leadership can't agree on that simple premise, the Director of Planning shouldn't be the only vacancy at the Erie County Courthouse.

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

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To Uber or Not To Uber

Reader riders take on the question.



BRAD TRIANA

By: Jim Wertz

Ever since Uber arrived in Erie April 10, there's been an array of questions related to the ridesharing service that is disrupting traditional taxi service around the country. The generally skeptical public questions the safety of getting into a stranger's car, the cost of something that amounts to low-rent limo service, and the quality of the ride related to both the drivers and their cars.

The taxi mafia PR mill has filled the airwaves and newspapers in cities and towns across the coun-

try with stories of bad Ubers and, for that matter, bad Uber riders. But if you've spent enough hours and lost nights trying to cab your way around Erie, you know that Erie Yellow Cab is not necessarily the reliable choice. Stories abound of dispatch hanging up on needy riders at the midnight hour because they have a cross street, but no street address. It's one thing when you're standing on State Street waiting with friends outside a bar. It's another when you're a female college student on the tail end of bad date in a questionable neighborhood.

To face these truths and challenge some stereotypes, the *Erie Reader* assembled a team of riders to put the ridesharing service in direct competition with the city's stalwart Yellow Cab. There were four riders in teams of two: one "Team Yellow Cab," and one "Team Uber." The *Reader's* fearsome foursome hit the town with the same agenda, a couple of smart phones, and enough cash to eat, drink, and – for the cab set – take care of your driver.

The Agenda

The *Reader* riders selected locations that provided enough distance from one another to compare the cost of the rides and geographic variance that would test Uber and Yellow Cab's abilities to reach riders in a timely manner. The night began at Lavery Brewing Company on West 12th Street in downtown Erie at happy hour, followed by a cross-town jaunt to The Public House at West Ridge and Asbury Road in Millcreek for dinner, and a return trip to Union Station for art

From Downtown Erie to West Millcreek and back again, the Reader riders put Uber to the test.



BRAD TRIANA

at Urraro Gallery and a nightcap in The Brewerrie.

The Rides

Erie Yellow Cab is, well, a cab. It's essentially a fleet of what appear to be recycled police cruisers of various age with variable quality of interior – including everything from seats to smells. Some drivers own their cabs, while others rent, but all of the drivers are required to have clean driving records, according to the cab company's website.

The upshot with Yellow Cab is that if you've had a dispatch horror story, some drivers may give you a direct line to their cell phones, allowing you to circumvent what can be a very frustrating exchange. If you've never lived in or spent extended periods of time in bigger cities, *Reader* readers, getting the driver's number is a move that can make the difference between expensive, frustrating nights and a personal chauffeur for a fraction of the cost. Tip well and behave and you may have something akin to a private car service for the foreseeable future.

Uber drivers, on the other hand, all use their personal vehicles, which must be 2007 or newer, sport four-doors, and cannot be salvaged or reconstructed vehicles. The drivers undergo, what one driver described as, "a serious background check" and must have driven in the U.S. for at least one year. There aren't many Erie Ubers in service, but we met drivers who've been working Erie streets since its inception about a month ago as well as those who were two days on the job. Both said they've seen new Ubers on the map each day.

Because Uber eliminates the middleman of the dispatcher, Uber drivers choose which fares they take when an Uber ping comes across the driver's smartphone. Likewise, riders can spin the wheel to get another driver if they don't like what they see on their handheld device. Drivers and riders rate each other post-

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BUSINESS



BRAD TRIANA

Uber vs. Erie Yellow Cab: A split decision.

years, noted that he typically posts up around the Erie International Airport, took the same route back downtown – 26th St. to I-79 to 12th St. – arriving at Union Station in just over 20 minutes for the same cost as the outbound trip, \$21 fare and a \$4 tip. The same concern about dispatch and wait times was made, but no personal contact information was offered by the driver.

By the time Team Yellow Cab had another beer in hand, Team Uber was just slipping into a Kia Soul. He followed the same route as the Yellow Cab and arrived at Union Station 32 minutes after the ride was requested. Because Uber charges by distance and the route was shorter, the total fare cost \$17.30.

The Verdict

It was a split decision. Uber's cheaper, but not always faster. However, the quality of an Uber is, well, uber. As Uber continues to scale into the Erie market, the variety and number rides will increase. The disruption that ridesharing causes to Erie Yellow Cab remains to be seen, but neither of the cab drivers said they were concerned, both citing the fact that they served regulars who didn't seem interested in making the Uber switch. The potential for disruption, though, is strong. Nevertheless, as the love for Uber continues to grow, so too must the number of Ubers in town. Uber knows this.

In major markets like New York and San Francisco (the city where the whole rideshare concept started in 2009 and is still headquartered), increased availability led to increased expectations from riders. Between 2013 and 2014, Uber riders' willingness to wait for Uber rides dropped from eight minutes to just four minutes because their experience in the previous year of service had been prompt and cost effective.

Uber mines this type of data in every city in which it operates – which as of March was more than 200 – so by this time next year we should have new transportation data on Uber Erie and the travel habits of the people of the Gem City. Such information could be transformative for city planning as well as our transportation sectors. We might even learn something about what we want and, dare I say, what we need to make Erie just a bit more uber.

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ride. So if you want to treat your Uber like Taxicab Confessions, that's fine, but there may be fewer Ubers in your future. And by the way, if you puke or leave bodily fluid in an Uber, you're on the hook for the cleanup and your credit card will be charged between \$100-\$200 dollars or more depending on the extent of the damage, according to the Uber Cleaning Fee Policy.

The Challenge

Team Yellow Cab put in the call to dispatch and Team Uber tapped the app shortly before 6:30 on a Thursday night at Lavery Brewing Company. Team Yellow Cab – after enjoying the on-hold playback stylings of the Goo Goo Doll's "Slide" – was told by dispatch that it would be "40 minutes or less" before their chariot would arrive, so they went back in for another round.

Team Uber was in a sporty red Hyundai Elantra in two minutes – before the cabbies even ended the call. The Uber route followed 12th Street to Asbury Road, arriving at the Public House 22 minutes after the app tap for \$18.90, tip included. Ubers charge only by distance and don't accept tips. The driver said Uber fares don't include idle time like metered cabs, so traffic – whatever that means in NWPA – is not a factor. But according to the Uber rate card, it does charge 25 cent per minute. If there were time-related charges on our trip,

it didn't show on the final bill. No cash is exchanged with Uber. You pay with a credit card pre-registered on the Uber app, with which multiple payment methods can be stored.

Team Uber expected to wait for their counterparts for the better part of an hour. But much to their surprise, the Yellow Cab crew walked through the door just seven minutes later, for a total time of 29 minutes from call to drop off. The cab had arrived in less than 20 minutes and the driver took 12th Street to I-79 to 26th Street. It was a \$21 fare with a \$4 tip. The riders in the car expressed their concerns about dispatch and the potential 40 minute wait time, to which the driver, who had been cabbings for three years, responded with a business card, cell phone number included.

Both teams expected the ride back from Public House to pose a greater challenge. Looking at the Uber app map, the closest cars were in Fairview and east of I-79.

At 8:30 p.m. the app was tapped and a call to dispatch – for an authentic experience – made. Both teams ended up with different cars, different drivers, and different experiences. Team Uber tracked their driver from West County on the Uber app and watched begrudgingly as Team Yellow Cab drove out of Millcreek. A different driver in a different cab, who's been driving for nine

Harrisburg Happenings

State Senate draws clear party lines on one bill while unifying in bipartisan celebration over the other.

By: Senator Sean Wiley

As the General Assembly enters into the month of June, the Commonwealth budget process begins to ramp up. Thirty days has September, April, June, and November. Thirty days to land upon a responsible budget worth more than 29 billion in tax dollars.

The Governor's bold plan is being reviewed with the proverbial fine-toothed comb, and hand-in-hand with that process, the General Assembly is tackling additional major challenges. Earlier this May, the Senate passed, along party lines, a pension reform bill, Senate Bill 1, as introduced by Majority Leader Jake Corman (R-Centre). Corman cited the need to address the public pension system in the Commonwealth as priority number one. I agree with Corman, but where my agreement ends is *how* to tackle a reorganization of that system. SB 1 is not the right answer as indicated by my negative vote on May 13.

My biggest criticism of SB 1 is that it does nothing to address the unfunded liability the Commonwealth is currently facing, further pushing down the road the responsibility of shouldering those costs. How much longer is the General Assembly going to delay, and at what point will we finally say enough's enough? We have criticized previous administrations for neglecting their duty to address this liability for the last 17 or so years, and yet SB 1, as written, subscribes to the very same philosophies. Unacceptable.

SB 1 targets employee benefits instead of addressing the unfunded liability. The new benefit offered to employees is substandard at best by providing a 20 percent replacement of salary for workers who have been employed for 25 years, far short of the national standard of between 60-70 percent. Additionally, pension benefits have been



MICHAEL PLASMEIER

defined by the courts as "deferred compensation for services rendered," therefore making pension benefits part of the contract between an employer (in this case, the Commonwealth) and an employee, thus protected by the state constitution. The fact that SB 1 changes the terms of that existing contract puts it in direct opposition to constitutional protections. Therefore, if SB 1 does pass the House and is signed by the Governor, those potential future savings generated by the change in formulas, etc., may never materialize because of the pending constitutional challenges.

SB 1 is more than 400-pages long, a

SB 1 took more than five months to craft, but garnered only 72 hours worth of review and consideration by the Senate. How does that speak to openness and transparency? How does that speak to good government?

document that my colleagues and I saw for the very first time late on Friday afternoon May 8 when it was first made public. By that next Monday morning, the Republican-controlled Senate Finance Committee voted the bill out of committee along party lines. Tuesday morning saw a quick review by the Pennsylvania Employee Retirement Commission (as required by statute) that spit out a hasty actuarial note – the same note that was then provided to my colleagues and me on the Appropriations Committee that same morning.

We asked to table the bill, to delay the vote, but were denied. The very next

day, the floor of the Senate saw more than four hours of heated banter, with accusations and indictments hurled across the aisle, and a final vote to pass SB 1.

SB 1 took more than five months to craft, but garnered only 72 hours worth of review and consideration by the Senate. How does that speak to openness and transparency? How does that speak to good government? How does that speak to dispelling the color of cynicism and of skepticism of government in general?

It doesn't.

I contrast the aforementioned situation with an example of bipartisanship at its finest. Only one day prior on May 12, the Senate came together united in an effort to move forward legislation to allow the medicinal use of cannabis in the Commonwealth. Senate Bill 3, as offered by Senators Mike Folmer (R-Lebanon) and Daylin Leach (D-Montgomery), outlines a solid plan for access to treatment and a critical step forward in improving the lives of thousands of Pennsylvanians who endure serious medical conditions. By voting 40-7 in favor of SB 3, the Senate moved the bill to the House for further consideration, where the House has until the end of the 2015-2016 regular session to take it up.

The week of May 11 ran the gamut of emotion, from flying high in bipartisan celebration to drawing a firm line in the sand affixed with a keep-out sign. I am hopeful that sign will not hang there for the rest of our deliberations in the 30 coming days.

Senator Sean D. Wiley can be contacted at SenatorWiley@PaSenate.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @ [SenatorWiley](https://twitter.com/SenatorWiley).

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Jeb Bush was an early supporter of the invasion of Iraq.

DOD/MEDIA

Street Corner Soapbox

Hindsight's 20/20, but Jeb Bush's vision of the invasion of Iraq may be blurred by bad intelligence seen through rose-tinted glasses.

By: Jay Stevens

“Nostalgia,” according to my handy Miriam-Webster dictionary, is a “wistful or sentimental yearning for a return to or of some past period of irrecoverable condition.”

How sweet the honeyed taste of nostalgia. How alluring it is to sip from its nectar.

Take the interview that Fox News' Megyn Kelly conducted with Republican presidential hopeful Jeb Bush, in which he was asked if he would have authorized the invasion of Iraq if he were president instead of his brother, George W. Bush, in 2003.

“I would have,” said Bush. “And so would've Hilary Clinton, just to remind everybody. And so would've almost anybody that was confronted with the intelligence they got.”

Jeb Bush, of course, was referring to evidence linking Iraq to weapons of mass destruction – the infamous “WMDs” – his brother's administration used as justification for invading Iraq.

The current presidential candidate Bush scurried for a different answer after getting walloped in the press for his answer. (The Iraq War, after all, was seen by most to be a disaster.) “You know, given the power of looking back,” he said in a later interview, “of course, anybody would've made different decisions. There's no denying that.”

Ah, those days of yore! When men were men, and when bold, visionary presidents acted from the gut on the faulty intelligence they had! Sure, in *hindsight*, the invasion might have been a bad idea. But *with the information we had at the time, it was the right call to make.*

Nothing like the passage of time to add a rosy tint to your glasses!

Jeb Bush is not alone in his, ahem, nostalgia. David Brooks, also an avid Iraq War booster, recently wrote that “the decision to go to war was a clear misjudgment.” The lesson? “[W]e should look at intelligence products with a more skeptical eye.”

Alas, reality has a harder shine.

The decision to invade Iraq was not based on faulty intelligence. Faulty intelligence was used to justify an invasion that had already been decided on.

It's this reality, by the way, that David Brooks calls, “a fable going around.” Which is the *real* fable.

There's so much evidence that we were lied to, manipulated, that Iraq was planned months, even *years* before, that intelligence was cooked, or skewed, or not parsed properly. That the Bush administration pressured intelligence agencies and military bodies to come up with the information they needed to go to war.

Where do we start?

Perhaps with the neoconservative think tank, the Project for the New

American Century, and a 1998 memo to then President Bill Clinton advocating for the overthrow of Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein. Which is a very big deal, when you realize that among the memo's signees were Paul Wolfowitz (later to serve as Bush's Deputy Secretary of Defense), Eliot Abrams (Bush's special assistant on the National Security Council),

John Bolton (Bush's Undersecretary of State and Ambassador to the UN), and Donald Rumsfeld (Bush's Secretary of Defense). And that among the group's signatories to the PNAC's statements of principles includes Dick Cheney (Bush's Vice President), Scooter Libby (Cheney's assistant for national security affairs), and... *drum roll* ...Jeb Bush!

Or maybe we start with recently declassified documents that show, only hours after the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001, Donald Rumsfeld met with top military aides and asked them how to turn the U.S. response against Saddam Hussein.

Which, you know, should remind everyone that the *original* reason the Bush administration gave for invading Iraq had nothing to do with the dreaded WMDs – but instead due to Hussein's alleged ties to al Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks. It was only after the media had trouble gagging down so obvious a lie that the Bush administration turned to WMDs.

“The fraudulence for the case for war was actually obvious at the time,” wrote Paul Krugman in a recent editorial. “[T]he ever-shifting arguments for an unchanging goal were a dead giveaway. So were the word games – the talk about WMD that conflated chemical weapons... with nukes, the constant insinuations that Iraq was somehow behind 9/11.”

As for the intelligence?

There's plenty of documentation that shows the Bush administration pressured the CIA into coming up with “actionable” intelligence on Iraq. That caused the agency to pass on unreliable or obviously false reports to the Bush administration that confirmed their allegations. Likewise, Donald Rumsfeld

created the “Office of Special Plans” in the Department of Defense to provide unvetted intelligence information to the Bush administration. That office was headed by Paul Wolfowitz.

The Bush administration's thirst for an invasion of Iraq was so strong, it kick-started the U.S. “enhanced interrogation” program in order to torture detainees into coughing up “evidence” linking Hussein to al Qaeda, according to former State Department officials.

And let's not forget the press' role in creating bad intelligence. Take *The New York Times'* Judith Miller, who ran a series of stunning reports on evidence of Iraq's nuclear ambitions just before the invasion. Only that “evidence” was fed to her by Amed Chalabi – an Iraqi exile wanted for bank fraud in Jordan, who had close ties to Paul Wolfowitz, and

The decision to invade Iraq was not based on faulty intelligence. Faulty intelligence was used to justify an invasion that had already been decided on.

who promised to supply the U.S. with the intelligence they needed to justify an invasion in exchange for being named head of the new Iraqi state. The *Times* later admitted that coverage of the Iraq invasion “was not as rigorous as it should have been,” and its lead editor, Bill Keller, expressed “regrets” over his “handling” of Miller.

So... why all the nostalgia for a mythic time of good decisions made on faulty intelligence?

“Some of them, I suppose may have been duped...which doesn't say much about their judgment,” wrote Krugman. “More, I suspect, may have been complicit: they realized that the official case for war was a pretext, but had their own reasons for wanting a war... or allowed themselves to be intimidated into going along.”

Saying you made a decision based on faulty intelligence lets you avoid the hard truth: you were a sap, a sucker, or worse, that you were *in on the fix*.

Jay Stevens can be contacted at jstevens@eriereader.com.

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News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

Is This a Great Country or What?

There's hardly a more "generic" song in America than "Happy Birthday to You," but to this day (until a judge renders a decision in a pending case), Warner/Chappel Music is still trying to make big dollars off of the 16-word ditty (15 original words plus a user-supplied 16th). Its original copyright should have expired, at the latest, in 1921, but amendments to the law and technicalities in interpretation (e.g., did the copyright cover all public uses or just piano arrangements?) bring Warner at least \$2 million a year in fees. A federal judge in California is expected to rule soon on whether the song is in fact uncopyrightably "generic" — 125 years after the Hill sisters (Mildred and Patty) composed it. [CBS News, 3-27-2015]

Can't Possibly Be True

In April, WNBC-TV's investigative unit in New York City reported on a series of fetish parties in Manhattan reportedly organized by a licensed M.D., in which the consensual activities consisted of saline scrotal inflation, controlled

near-asphyxiation and controlled arterial blood-letting (in which splatters are captured on a canvas as if made by a painter). An event organizer said the "Cirque de Plaisir" was more of a "performance art" display by a few body-modification aficionados than it was a fetish "party." Local governments were alarmed especially by the blood splatters' endangering onlookers and promised an investigation. [WNBC-TV, 4-29-2015]

Accused amateur serial tooth-puller Philip Hansen, 56, was convicted on two counts in May following a trial in Wellington (New Zealand) District Court. Several women had accused him, during 1988-2011, of holding their mouths open and wriggling teeth out with pliers (and in one case, a screwdriver), motivated by his attraction to "gummy women" as a prelude to sex. He apparently also lauded the "free" service he was providing, since real dentists, he said, would have charged the women. (Hansen allegedly told another woman, with full dentures, how "beautiful" she was — as he was removing the plates, crushing them and flushing

them down a toilet.) [Stuff.co.nz, 4-30-2015; Dominion Post via Stuff.co.nz, 5-6-2015]

Ironies

"The ancient art of yoga is supposed to offer a path to inner peace," wrote the Wall Street Journal in February — before launching into a report on how many yoga classes these days are so crowded that inner peace-seekers are more likely than ever either to seethe throughout their session — or to openly confront floor-hoggers. Explained one coach, "People who are practicing yoga want Zen; they don't already have it." [Wall Street Journal, 2-16-2015]

Timely Information: (1) Joseph Forren, 21, with a .172 blood alcohol level, plowed into a pickup truck in April in Trumbull, Connecticut (though with no serious injuries). Police said Forren's cellphone on the seat still displayed a current text message, "Don't drink and drive ... Dad." (2) According to police records released in April, Mila Dago (now 24 and awaiting trial for DUI manslaughter) was trading sarcastic texts with her ex-boyfriend

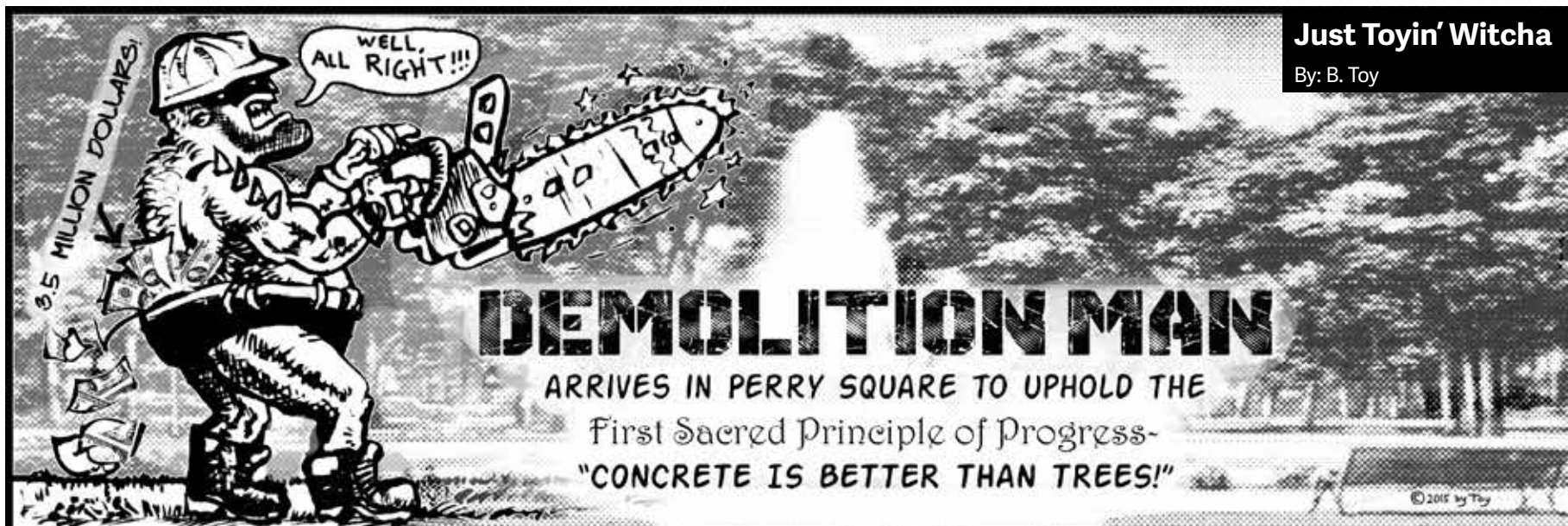
that night in August 2013 while barhopping (later, registering .178 blood alcohol), and as she ran a red light, smashed into a pickup truck, injuring herself badly and her friend in the passenger seat fatally. According to the police report, her last text to the ex-boyfriend (three minutes earlier) was "Driving drunk woo ... I'll be dead thanks to you." [Connecticut Post (Bridgeport), 4-27-2015] [Miami Herald, 4-30-2015]

Readers' Choice: (1) The Indian Journal of Dermatology announced in April that it was withdrawing a recent scientific paper by a dentist in Kerala state, "Development of a Guideline to Approach Plagiarism in Indian Scenarios," because parts of the article had been plagiarized from a student dissertation. (2) Low voter turnout in non-presidential election years is increasingly problematic in easily distracted Los Angeles, but the issue was specifically addressed by campaigners in the March 3 city council elections — which, of course, only about 9 percent of registered voters cast ballots in. [NPR, 4-2-2015] [LA Weekly, 3-4-2015]

Suspicious Confirmed

In New York City, someone can be fired for being "too nice." Doorman Ralph Body, 41, was dismissed from his job at an upscale New York City apartment building because he did too many favors for tenants, according to an April New York Post report. Body said he "gave his life" to the residents at the "27 on 27th" tower in Queens, but "upper management" thought such extra kindnesses violated building policy and ordered his dismissal despite a tenant petition. [New York Post, 4-5-2015]

When the chief auditor for Hartford, Connecticut, finally got around to checking the finances of the police shooting range recently, he found that the range supervisor had bought 485,000 bullets per year, but was using only 180,000 — and had no paperwork on where the other bullets went. (In one instance, the supervisor acknowledged having bought 94,500 rounds of .45-caliber ammo two years after the department had stopped using .45s and switched to .40-caliber weapons — but his story was that he needed .45-caliber bullets so he could trade them for .40s.) [Hartford Courant, 5-2-2015]



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By: B. Toy



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Art in Tandem

An exploration of love, art, and bicycles.



BRAD TRIANA

By: Hannah Choi Paul

You may have spotted them on occasion — two men riding on a tandem bike and searching for treasure in the ordinary. They are Jesse and Ricardo, Erie artists collectively known as Art in Tandem.

On West Front Street, I stand in the upper floor of a building that smells like honeyed soap and newspapers. A black mannequin clothed in a tribal dress has a black baby doll strapped to the waist. The doll sings, “Joy, joy, joy,” which sounds like sorrowful nuclear fission. The spray of static evokes a devolved society. The mannequin and baby doll make up an

art piece titled “Chattel Number 5” and have traveled the country with the exhibition *Hateful Things*. They’re back in Erie, along with their creators, who stand on either side of me, dressed identically in orange and green. The building is their shared home, their shared art, and their shared life, naturally titled the “Poetics of Space.”

Adventurous travelers, artists, and scholars in several fields, Jesse and Ricardo do everything and go everywhere together — literally. Jesse is from Erie, and Ricardo is originally from New York City. His father, who may or may not have been related to Mussolini, moved the family to a hog farm in Ohio when Ricardo was a boy. For several years, Jesse and

Ricardo have been able to support themselves as artists.

A dual self-portrait hangs from the ceiling of “Poetics of Space,” each side representing one. The self-portraits have recognizable differences. On Ricardo’s canvas, a disembodied female spectral hovers over a chair. A red heart is in stitches on the chair, either coming apart or being sewn back together. Jesse’s canvas is divided: two chairs and two masks (the muses of tragedy and comedy). Remarkably, both portraits swim in bright primary reds and yellows, which reveals something important about Jesse and Ricardo’s relationship. Although they come from different backgrounds and have different stories to tell,

they essentially share a greater universe through their imagination, a vibrant sea evoking happiness because they have found each other. And evident in their home and gallery space, there are no boundaries between them.

“We’re like the house,” Jesse says. “It’s visible for the world to see. We try to be very open. We can see the bay from every window. Even when sitting on the throne.”

Locals may see Art in Tandem as a novelty, dressing alike because they are gay. But there are about four million adults in the United States who identify as being gay or lesbian, according to the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy.

Ricardo (left) and Jesse (right), otherwise known as Art in Tandem.

Out of that four million, I will bet that only two people dress like Jesse and Ricardo — and that’s Jesse and Ricardo. Lace fringe over green suede boots, khaki skirts layering khaki pants, knitted hats topped with spiraling towers — these are a few of the things I’ve seen them wear.

“It’s been a bumpy road to try to educate people when the opportunity arises,” Ricardo says. “We’re doing an art piece with our wearing apparel, and it has nothing to do with being gay.”

If the premise holds true that art is life then I see no better example than Art in Tandem. Their relationship is art, and



BRAD TRIANA



BRAD TRIANA

their art is their relationship.

The elision was both gradual and instantaneous. Jesse, a sweet, shy 19-year-old met the older, assertive Ricardo, who took it upon himself to ensure that Jesse reached his greatest potential. He went with Jesse to every one of his undergraduate and then graduate classes at Gannon and Mercyhurst. Ricardo didn't want Jesse to be stereotyped and underestimated.

"He's like me except he's got more chutzpah," Jesse says with a smile. "In class, I would have no identity among all the students. Ricardo was there to support me. As he was sitting there, I was thinking about why I was there and what I was doing. And I concentrated and graduated with all 'As,' summa cum laude."

Ricardo was 16 when he started college. He didn't talk to anyone in his classes, and his friends were still in high school. Perhaps, attending Jesse's classes many years later was a way to relive a formative experience that he hadn't been present for, spiritually and emotionally. It was a way of doing something over and doing it right with purpose and meaning.

"I have learned more consideration and kindness from being around Jesse," Ricardo says. "And hopefully he's become more assertive being around me. We have grown

together and adopted some of the styles that are innate within each of us. And I think that should be a good thing if you see something in the person you are with, that you are attracted to, something that maybe you wished was part of your personality. So in that way, I think we have flowed together."

One of the very interesting things I learn about Ricardo is that he came out in the black community, specifically in Cleveland during the '80s. "They were completely warm and loving," he says. "Everything I hadn't found in the white community."

Ricardo officially met Jesse at Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival at Frontier Park. Ricardo saw him standing and, characteristically, made the approach. They made a date to play tennis, and Jesse, characteristically, failed to keep the appointment. It wasn't the first time Ricardo had noticed Jesse.

"I had seen him from across the street one time or two before. I had seen him walking," he says. "He looked like he was in his own world... like he was lost or looking for something. And he was smiling."

At the time, Ricardo lived on Chestnut Street in the house that eventually became Art in Tandem's first space, "Crumbling to Perfection," which was featured on the show *American Pickers*. Jesse

Above: The decor of "Poetics of Space" is a team effort. Right: Jesse (left) and Ricardo (right) take delight in collaboration.

showed up at Ricardo's front door to apologize for the tennis no-show. He also happened to need a ride to work at a plastics factory, and Ricardo pulled out his spare bicycle.

After that first bike ride, they were together. Several days later, while Jesse and Ricardo were walking through the neighborhood, they saw an old red Western Flyer tandem bicycle. Art in Tandem was born.

It makes sense. Love, like a bicycle, can save you from loneliness. It can get you out of the house and make you see your city in a new way. It can lead you to discover the beauty of pavement and grass and the vivid colors of a building with more intimacy than if you were driving.

"You have to make your own way," Jesse says. "It's like there were no bicycle paths before we came along."

Of course, a bicycle can also lead to danger. You can get run over or stranded by a flat tire. Your bicycle can be stolen, which is what happened to Ricardo before he was with Jesse.

"One time I was about to go bike riding with a guy, and he was all for going for a bike ride, and I was getting the spare one out, and he just rolled off with my bike," Ricardo says. It was



BRAD TRIANA

more than 20 years ago, but he still sounds a bit flabbergasted by the blatant theft. I would be, too.

"I looked for him because I knew where he hung out... and I approached him and

asked for my bicycle, and he said he didn't have it anymore. He couldn't give it back... He said someone stole it from him. Well, if he left it outside or something like that, then someone would naturally steal

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it from him," Ricardo says.

He's talking about a long-lost bicycle, but his anecdote offers some choice lessons in modern love. Don't leave your bicycle outside, and don't leave it unlocked. Don't go riding with shady strangers who say one thing and do another. Don't give your bicycle to just anyone. And if you've found a fellow rider, a rare kindred spirit, who's going exactly where you're going at all times, best not to fight it and just ride tandem.

A snowy afternoon, I follow as they carry a long tapestry down a slippery hill. Twin orange patches in a white, icy world. They unfurl the tapestry to explain how it worked in their art piece, "River of de Nile."

"It's like Magritte's 'Cela n'est pas une Pipe.'"

They're birds building a nest. One lays down a twig and his mate a leaf. On and on, one seeing this, the other seeing

Above: Ricardo says he "feels a lot of love from Erie." Below: The primary mode of transportation for Art in Tandem.

that, until the work is complete. There is always some give and take as arguments slip into negotiations.

Jesse gets a thrill from children's toys. Ricardo delights in anything off-the-wall.

Ricardo basks in primary colors. Jesse reconstructs lost and broken things.

They indulge in laughter as children no longer in need of parents.

Clothing is play with layers of gender. They're part of their mothers. They're part of their fathers. They're part of everyone.

They show me how I can grow here.

Hannah Choi Paul can be contacted at Hannah@ErieReader.com.



Port of Erie Summer 2015



Waterfront Fun For Everyone!



July

- 7 **THE CLARKS** (American Rock)
- 14 **CHRIS HIGBEE** (Contemporary Country)
- 21 **JAKES BLUES** (Blues Rock)
- 28 **DWAYNE DOPSIE AND THE ZYDECO HELLRAISERS** (Zydeco/Blues)

August

- 4 **LOS STRAITJACKETS** (Surf Rock)
- 11 **THE CLASSIC ROCK EXPERIENCE** (70's Arena Rock)
- 18 **DONNA THE BUFFALO** (Folk Rock)
- 25 **I-90s & MONEYSHOT 2.0** (80's Pop/Rock)



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1 HOLLAND STREET

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WATER TAXI

Dobbins Landing and Liberty Park to Waterworks at Presque Isle State Park, May 23 - Mid October. Call 814-881-2502 for schedule. Adults: \$10 roundtrip, \$7 one way. Children under 12: \$7

June

1, 8, 15, 22, 29 **CRUISE THE BAY**
 6pm, Bayfront Park & Ride Lot
 Produced by Lake Erie Car Classics Club 814-474-5183

6 **ERIE POKER RUN**
 Wolverine Park Marina
 Produced by Elite Poker Runs 716-510-9669

July

6, 13, 20, 27 **CRUISE THE BAY**
 6pm, Bayfront Park & Ride Lot
 Produced by Lake Erie Car Classics Club 814-474-5183

7, 14, 21, 28 **8 GREAT TUESDAYS**
 6:30pm, Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by Erie Port Authority 814-455-7557

10, 11 **MUSIC FEST 15**
 Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by G.Pro Foundation 908-406-1053

25 **BEER ON THE BAY**
 12-3pm/4-7pm, Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership 814-454-7191

18, 19 **LAND LIGHTHOUSE TOURS**
 Erie Land Lighthouse
 Produced by Erie Playhouse Youththeater 814-454-2852

FREE Shuttles on all 8 Great Tuesdays and select events from the Intermodal Transportation Center and the Thomas C. Hoffman Transportation Hub.

For your safety, no pets, bikes, rollerblades, skateboards, weapons or alcohol may be brought into Liberty Park. Calendar subject to change.

Follow the Erie Port Authority and 8 Great Tuesdays for the latest updates

August

3, 10, 17, 24, 31 **CRUISE THE BAY**
 6pm, Bayfront Park & Ride Lot
 Produced by Lake Erie Car Classics Club 814-474-5183

4, 11, 18, 25 **8 GREAT TUESDAYS**
 6:30pm, Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by Erie Port Authority 814-455-7557

8 **LAKE ERIE FREEDOM CHAPTER CHARITY POKER RUN AFTER PARTY**
 3-8pm, Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Contact 814-397-6719

14, 15 **PRESQUE ISLE BAY MESSABOUT**
 Bayfront Maritime Center 814-456-4077

15 **CARDBOARD BOAT REGATTA**
 Bayfront Maritime Center 814-456-4077

15, 16 **LAND LIGHTHOUSE TOURS**
 Erie Land Lighthouse
 Produced by Erie Playhouse Youththeater 814-454-2852

23 **GOSPELFEST**
 Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by New Jerusalem Luthern Church 814-455-1972

September
 8, 15, 22, 29 **CRUISE THE BAY**
 6pm, Bayfront Park & Ride Lot
 Produced by Lake Erie Car Classics Club 814-474-5183

12 **HEART WALK**
 Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by American Heart Association 814-836-0013

13 **WALK FOR SMALL ANIMALS**
 Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by Because You Care, Inc. 814-866-5039

19 **WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S**
 Burger King Amphitheater/Liberty Park
 Produced by Alzheimer's Association 814-456-9200



Budweiser **BUD & BURGERS** Championship



THE FLUFFER NUTTER

1/2 lb. BURGER WITH AMERICAN CHEESE, FRIED JALAPENOS TOPPED WITH A SWEET & SALTY BLEND OF YOUR FAVORITES; FLUFF & PEANUT BUTTER

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$10 FOR BUCKET OF 5 BOTTLES



THE DOUBLE BOGEY

1/2 lb. BURGER WITH PERFECTLY SEARED PHILLY STEAK STRIPS, YOUR CHOICE OF CHEESE, FRESH LETTUCE, TOMATO, PICKLE, AND ONION.

TUESDAYS 7-9PM
\$2.00 BUD BOTTLES



BUFFALO RANCHERO BISON BURGER

FRESH BISON BURGER WITH AVOCADO, RANCH PROVOLONE, LETTUCE & TOMATO

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$12 FOR BUCKET OF 5 BOTTLES



POLISH BURGER

1/2 lb. BURGER; 1/4 lb. KEILBASA, CHEESE/POTATO FILLED PIEROGIES, CARAMELIZED ONIONS, & CHEDDAR CHEESE

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.75 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS



BUILD A BURGER

1/2 lb. BURGER WITH YOUR CHOICE OF TOPPINGS & CHEESE

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.50 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS



THE ITALIAN

1/2 lb. ANGUS BEEF WITH PEPPERONI, MARINARA, CHEESE STICKS TOPPED WITH PROVOLONE CHEESE

SUNDAY SPECIAL
\$2.50 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS





DIABLO BURGER

FRESH GROUND STEAK BURGER, LETTUCE, TOMATO, ONION, GHOST PEPPER CHEESE, BACON, JALAPENOS, SRIRACHA MAYO

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.00 BUD 12oz. BOTTLES



SWEET V BURGER

1/2 LB FRESH BURGER TOPPED WITH PROVOLONE CHEESE, LETTUCE, TOMATO, ONION TOPPED WITH SWEET VIDALIA ONION DRESSING.

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$3.00 BUD 16oz. ALUMINUM BOTTLES



KEG MONSTER

1/2 lb. BURGER WITH PEPPER JACK CHEESE, GRILLED ONIONS, BANANA PEPPERS WITH JALAPENOS, AND A SIDE OF BUFFALO SAUCE

SUNDAY SPECIAL
\$2.00 BUD 12oz. BOTTLES

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE BEST BURGER IN ERIE!

TEXT BUDNBURGERS to 66555

1. Follow the picture below

2. You type in the words in white bubble boxes

3. Vote for the PLACE at 5pm when prompted!

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TAVERN
IRISH COUSINS

THE BIG UGLY COUSIN

2 BURGERS, EGG, 2 KINDS OF CHEESE, BACON, CHEESE STICKS, LETTUCE, TOMATOES, ONIONS, AND A SECRET SAUCE

THURSDAYS
\$1.50 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS



5 ALARM FIREHOUSE BURGER

BLACKENED 1/2 lb. BURGER TOPPED WITH PEPPER JACK CHEESE, PICKLED HOT PEPPER RELISH & GHOST PEPPER AIOLI

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$3.00 12oz. BOTTLES



HEATER

1/2 lb. PORK BELLY BURGER WITH CHIPOTLE CREAM CHEESE GARLIC SPREAD, PEPPER JACK CHEESE, SAUTEED ONIONS, BACON, FRIED BANANA PEPPERS, LETTUCE, AND TOMATOES

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.75 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS



BLACK & BLUE

1/2 lb. BURGER WITH CAJUN SPICES FOR A LITTLE HEAT TOPPED WITH BACON, LETTUCE, TOMATO, AND BLUE CHEESE

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.75 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS



THE KING FOX BURGER

2 - 1/3 lb. BURGER PATTIES WITH AMERICAN CHEESE, & PROVOLONE, BACON, ONION RINGS, BANANA PEPPERS, & MUSHROOMS TOPPED WITH SRIRACHA RANCH

FRIDAYS
\$2.50 BUD 12oz. BOTTLES



DOUBLE DECKER CLUB

1/2 lb. BURGER BETWEEN 2 GRILLED CHEESE, TURKEY, BACON, LETTUCE, TOMATO, ONION

ALL DAY SPECIAL
\$2.00 BUD 12oz. DRAFTS



EARN BONUS POINTS - TAKE A PICTURE POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND TAG US: #budandburger #eriebeer



SANDBLASTER

1/4 lb. PATTY 3 CHEESES APPLEWOOD BACON, LETTUCE, TOMATO, TOPPED WITH OUR SECRET SIGNATURE SAUCE

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$3.00 BUD 22oz. DRAFTS



SHERLOCK'S BURGER

1/4 lb. BURGER TOPPED WITH BACON, MUSHROOMS, CHEESE, & DILL DIP

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.25 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS



ROYALE CHEESE

8oz. BURGER TOPPED WITH SMOKED PULLED PORK, APPLEWOOD SMOKED BACON, 4 YEAR AGED SHARP CHEDDAR, AND HOMEMADE ONION RINGS, SERVED ON A TOASTED BRIOCHE BUN WITH A SIDE OF HORSE RADISH MUSTARD

BEER OF THE MONTH
\$2.50 BUD 16oz. DRAFTS

BUD & BURGERS

Championship





CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Asian Festival Showcases Culture from Eight Different Countries

The Rib Fest, The Greek Fest, The Cherry Fest—sure, these are all staples of a summer spent in the Erie area. But what about the Asian Festival? At Rainbow Gardens – located at 3100 West Lake Road – the festival takes place on Saturday, May 30 from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The Fifth Biennial Asian Festival will feature countries Bangladesh, Burma, China, India, Japan, Mongolia, Pakistan, and the Philippines, and offer a

taste from each. With food available for purchase, arts and crafts, a traditional costume fashion show, and live performances, this free event is sure to have something that everyone in the family has never seen—or tasted—before. Henna and calligraphy drawings will also be available. The performances take place at 1 p.m. and at 4 p.m., both perfect for grabbing a plate of ethnic food and sitting down to watch as dancers twirl, spin, jump, and shake on stage in traditional dress.

This one-day event is put on by the Erie Asian Pacific American Association. Erie APAA showcases the diverse cultures in the region through events like these. The nonprofit organization also serves as a place for individuals to network and share experiences from these Asian/Pacific cultures. – *Lauren Griffith*

11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. // Rainbow Gardens at Waldameer Park // ErieAPAA.org

MUSIC

Beyond Silence

May 28 — 9 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

OTIS!

May 28 — 9 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Rankin and Schell

May 28 — 6 p.m.
Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US-6, Venango sleepingchainsaw.com.

After Funk

May 29 — 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

BT's Acoustic Showcase

May 29 — 5:30 p.m.

Basement Transmission, 145 W. 11 St. facebook.com/beardedbabyproductions.

The Cottonwood Band

May 29 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US-6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

The Groove

May 30 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Matt Gavula

May 29 — 5-7 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

MF Jones

May 29 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

The Romantic Era

May 29 — 6 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Eric Brewer & Friends

May 30 — 6 to 9 p.m.
8440 Singer Road, North East, lakeviewwinecellars.com.

GNOSiS + Wanyama

May 30 — 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Old School

May 30 — 9 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Badfish

May 31 — 3 p.m.
Schickalay's on the Bay, 2860 W 6th St., facebook.com/schickalaysonthebay.

zBlue w/ Dave

VanAmburg

June 3 — 6 to 6:30 p.m.
Victor's Restaurant, Bel Aire Clarion, 2800 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.

Lady Day

June 4 — 7:30 p.m.
The Brewerrie, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

Season Finale for Erie Chamber Orchestra

June 5 — 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Cathedral Prep Auditorium, 225 W 9th St. facebook.com/eriechamberorchestra.

The Two Bridges + Seann Clark

June 5 — 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Unplugged 2.0

June 5 — 6:30-10 p.m.
Erie Philharmonic, 609 Walnut Street, Erie, PA 16502. eriephil.org.

Gang of Thieves

June 6 — 9 p.m.

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

Ron Yarosz & The Vehicle

June 6 — 6 to 9 p.m.
8440 Singer Road, North East, lakeviewwinecellars.com.

The Ark Band

June 7 — 3 p.m.
Schickalay's on the Bay, 2860 W 6th St., facebook.com/schickalaysonthebay.

Latin Jazz and Salsa

June 7—4 to 6 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Church, 7180 Perry Hwy. jazzerie.com

FILM

Rocky Mountain Express

Ongoing — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Living in the Age of Airplanes

Ongoing — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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

Wonders of the Arctic

Ongoing — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Pygmalion

May 28 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Pure Doctor

May 31 — 2 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Great Expectations

June 4 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Ghosts, Spirits, and Hauntings

June 6 — 7 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Romantic Era Brings the Pop to Happy Hour at Sherlock's

By the time 6 p.m. hits on a Friday, it's time to have some fun. The 9-to-5 gig can be put on hold for a few more days, and if you don't necessarily have a 9-to-5 gig, well, it's still the start of the weekend and you can relax with a draft or two during a wonderful period called happy hour.

On Friday May 29, The Romantic Era will provide some pop to go with your beer during a special happy hour show

at Sherlock's. The band will start pumping out dance-inducing numbers starting at 6 p.m., letting you celebrate the weekend as soon as possible.

The locally-founded pop rockers have earned themselves quite a few fans with tracks like "Forever" and "Alone" and an electric live presence that can turn any night into a party. Head to Sherlock's May 29 to join in on the happy hour fun whether you just got out of the office and feel the need for a relaxing drink, or want to start the weekend off on the right note, courtesy of The Romantic Era. – *Alex Bieler*

There's still time to register



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Summer Block Party Season Kicks-off in Downtown Erie with Geek Army

The first of Erie's Summer Block Parties takes place next Thursday, June 4, at the U Pick Six Tap House and benefits the American Red Cross. The Tap House has 22 beers on tap that change daily, and will suit any taste—whether you're in the mood for a lager or an ale. The event lasts from 6 to 10:30 p.m., and is sure to be one hell of a show. Geek Army is always a hit in Erie, playing energetic tracks from the '80s, 90's, and the 2000s. With this being the first one of the season, it should draw a big crowd.

The Block Party Series holds nine events over the course of the summer months, with each weekly party showcasing a different charity. Last year's series saw \$44,000 go towards various charities including the YMCA and the Autism Society. With the Block Party Series currently in its 10th year, this should be one for the books. The free shows are a great way to get out and celebrate the summer sun, and to support the community while doing so.

The Block Parties are hosted at a different location each week, and feature different performances from local acts. Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle, Abbey Road, and The Romantic Era are other bands that will be hitting the Erie region for the parties at Calamari's, Jerry Uht Park, and The Plymouth Tavern, among other restaurants and bars in the area.

The Block Party Series is put on by the Erie Downtown Partnership. It was created in order to promote businesses in the area and to bring more people downtown, and has proved to be successful. The crowds continue to grow each year, and this one looks to be no different.

w— Lauren Griffith

6 to 10:30 p.m. // U Pick 6 Tap House// eriedowntown.com

Erie Homes for Children and Adults  www.ehca.org

EHCA 5K RED CARPET RUN

Saturday, June 27
formal wear without all the formalities!
"fun run" on the campus of Penn State Behrend.



Register online: ehca.org/upcoming-events

Over the EDGE for RECOVERY

June 10, 2015

Rappel 14 stories down the side of the Renaissance Center to raise money to combat the increase of heroin deaths in our community. Funds raised at this event will help individuals who can't afford treatment.



Sign up Today!

Go to: https://gdznhb.ejoinme.org/gaudenzia_erie_overtheedge or call: Sarah Burrows at 814-459-4775



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Schickalay's on the Bay Kicks off Summer Music Series with Badfish and Ark Band

Sublime tribute band Badfish (top) and reggae rockers Ark Band (below) kick off Schickalay's Summer Music Series.

“Better than Sublime with Rome,” one fan posted about Badfish – Rhode Island’s (in)famous, (un)official Sublime tribute band – after a Keystone State show in late April. “Definitely better than Sublime with Rome,” another fan replied. If you’ve seen what they got, chances are you may concur. That’s because Badfish (A Tribute to Sublime) always deftly, and always lovingly, carries the torch, and the soul – the best of the best – of the legendary Long Beach act, long after that band’s bright-burning, cut-short heyday a couple of decades back.

On Sunday, May 31 – just after their highly-anticipated annual summer show at Nelson’s Ledges Quarry Park in Garrettsville, Ohio – Badfish are bringing it back to Erie for a return appearance at Schickalay’s on the Bay, once again kicking off the gyro joint/awesome live music venue’s outdoor Summer Music Series.

They’ll be joined there by local pop troupe The Romantic Era, making it a good day (yep, the shows start at 3 p.m.) to get down to – and down at – Schickalay’s.

From there, the sound-and-sun-kissed fun keeps happening – and the spirits of tributes to music legends linger – with the series featuring Ark Band’s “Tribute to Bob Marley,” with special guests Chaka, as its next installment on Sunday, June 7.

I’ll repeat what I said about this place recently: Of all the cool Erie gyro joints to go catch live summer-day shows, Schickalay’s is the one ... well, it’s the one.

And this summer’s lineup, right from the get-go, is looking tasty. – Ryan Smith

3 p.m. May 31 and June 7 // 2860 West 6th St. // facebook.com/SchickalaysontheBay

What feels illegal but isn't?

Lavery's Cards Against Humanity



Lavery Brewing Co. & The Erie Reader present

Cards Against Humanity

the worst round yet.

JUNE 9th | 6-9PM @ Lavery Brewing co.

doors at 6, the game begins at 7
\$20 a team, limited to the first ten teams
cash due at registration
register at the pub

beer, food & prizes
registration begins immediately
celebrity judges from Erie Reader
& Lavery's Brewing Company

A PARTY GAME FOR HORRIBLE PEOPLE.

Kings Rook Club

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+THE LEC

DOORS 8PM | MUSIC 9PM

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+SEANN CLARK
FRI 6/12
IMPERIAL BROWN
SAT 6/13
SKYPILOT
FRI 6/19
FLETCHERS GROVE
SAT 6/20
BLUE SOUL
+ LAMORE VL
+RON YARMAN
FRI 6/26
SMACKDAB
+ADAM GOULD
SAT 6/27
MOCHESTER
SAT 7/11
LIONIZE
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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Erie Chamber Orchestra Season Finale Features Renowned Flautist

Summer is upon us, with the promise of warmer, longer, greener days. As one season begins, however, another ends — whether it's spring, or the 37th season of the Erie Chamber Orchestra.

The ECO will deliver its last performance of its 2014-15 season next weekend, and it will go out with a bang, with a lively, exciting evening featuring an eclectic range of pieces, spanning the classics to the contemporary.

The evening begins with Beethoven's "Egmont: Overture" before going into Melinda Wagner's "Concerto for flute, strings

and percussion." This is the third time this season the ECO has performed a concerto from a living, American composer — and Wagner will be in attendance for it.

The ECO's performance of the Wagner concerto also features one of the most respected flautists in the world, Bonita Boyd, a professor at the Eastman School of Music and the musician who actually gave the premiere of Wagner's work, according to a preview video posted online by ECO's music director Matthew Kraemer (who will also be conducting the season finale).

Up next is Kodaly's "Dances of Marosszek (Marosszeki tancok)," with the evening rounded out by Antonín Dvořák's "Czech Suite, op. 398, D major (Ceska suite)." The Dvořák piece, Kraemer said, is "a brilliant way to close our season." (This writer stands in agreement, as nothing screams "Summer is here!" more than the Czech composer. But that may be because she is a nerd and Dvořák's "New World Symphony" has soundtracked many late summer nights in her newspaper office.)

If an evening of classical music sounds like the perfect, relaxing way to send spring packing, get to the Erie Chamber Orchestra's last performance of the season. Can't make it? It's okay — as Kraemer adds at the end of his video preview, "our new season is only three months away."

— Sara Toth

7:30 p.m. June 5 // Cathedral Prep Auditorium 250 W. 10th St. // Free admission // http://www.gannon.edu/2014-2015_Season

Tom Weber Films: Retrospective

June 10 — 7 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

FILM at the Erie Art Museum

June 10 — 6 p.m.

Erie Art Museum, 411 State Street, erieartmuseum.org.

VISUAL ARTS

92nd Annual Spring Show

Ongoing — All Day
Erie Art Museum, 411 State Street., erieartmuseum.org.

Geoff Dunn "Echo of the 7"

Ongoing beginning May 22 — All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5 St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Higherglyphics: Annex Stairwell Project, Annex Stairwell

Ongoing — All Day
Erie Art Museum, 411 State Street, erieartmuseum.org.

Ian Brill: Storm, McCain Family Gallery

Ongoing — All Day
Erie Art Museum, 411 State

Street, 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.

Kristen Cliffel, Ronald E. Holstein Gallery

Ongoing beginning May 22 — All Day
Erie Art Museum, 411 State Street, erieartmuseum.org.

Mark Hulings: Original Paintings

Ongoing to May 30 — All Day
Meadville Fine Arts, 242 Chestnut St., Meadville meadvilleart.com.

The Stories We Don't Tell

Ongoing — All Day
Kada Gallery, 2632 W. 8 St. kadagallery.com.

Echo of the 7

Ongoing from May 22 to June 30 — All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 East 5th St., grassglowersgallery.com.

Heeschen's Creatures at Meadville Council on the Arts

Ongoing from May 29-June 6 — All Day

Heeschen Gallery 910 Market St. (Second Floor) Meadville, artsmeadville.org.

Regional Juried Photo Exhibit

Ongoing from June 12-July 15 — All Day
Heeschen Gallery 910 Market St. (Second Floor) Meadville, artsmeadville.org.

FOOD AND DRINK

French Picnic at Iris Garden -

May 30, 31 — 11:30 to 3p.m.
Johnson Estate Winery, 8419 West Main Road, Westfield, lakeeriewinecountry.org.

THEATER

The Erie Station Dinner Theater Presents

Snake Eye Sam's Saloon Showdown
May 30 — 5:30 p.m., May 31 — 2:30 p.m., May 27 — noon

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

PACA Presents: "Calling the Moon" by Margo Wolfe

May 21-30 — 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. paca.ning.com.
State St. RSVP to Adam Kenney at AKenney@Bridgewaycapital.org



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bona Fide Blues-Rockers Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle Head to Oasis

"My first time seeing you ... definitely won't be my last!"

"Smashing! Now I know what all the fuss is about."

That's the kind of stuff you'll come across if you take a quick look at Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle's social media feeds. And the things people are saying really say something about the band, which has a well-earned place as the Erie region's quintessential blues-rock act, garnering numerous local and regional music awards and other accolades, along with an ever-growing, avid fan base.

If you've seen them, you, too,

probably know what all the fuss is about — they're bona fide blues: rare to find, easy to get down with, and, once you have, hard to shake.

Good thing for us — and for anyone who's not yet taken a ride — Yarosz and the Vehicle keep their schedule good and full, making one of their next stops at Oasis Pub on Friday, May 29.

Yarosz and the three other well-known local musicians who make up the Vehicle (Eric Brewer, Jassen Wilber, and Norbbie Gavin) know what they're driving at — real, good blues — and can always be trusted to take an audience on one helluva ride.

— Ryan Smith

9:30 p.m. Friday, May 29 // 3122 West Lake Road



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Erie gets Wild with Rib Cook Off & Music Festival

It's that time of the year when barbecue lovers throughout Erie head to Perry Square to feast on some delicious meat. That's right: Erie's Wild Rib Cook Off & Music Festival is back for a four-day run starting May 27.

The Rib Fest has been a favorite event of local carnivores and for good reason. Every year, several travelling cooking teams, like Mojo's Rib Shack and Carolina Rib King, provide tasty servings of meat that come with their own handles. That's convenient – and delicious – eating right there.

It's been so good that the 2015 Rib Fest marks the 25th year of the event. Like past iterations of the occasion, the Rib Fest promises more than just meat – although many people wouldn't complain if that were the only offering at Perry Square. As you might have guessed by the second half of the Rib Fest's official

name, the four-day event also offers plenty of live music that you can chew (and dance) to, including performances from Sean Patrick and the Newgrass Revolution and Jackson Station.

If you need more reason to head downtown for the Rib Fest, there's going to be three main event matches from Pro Wrestling Rampage May 30, as well as the usual lengthy list of local vendors and children's events. You can even get a chainsaw-carved ice mug to help you wash your tasty ribs down with a cold drink. I repeat, chainsaw-carved mugs. That's just cool.

For the past 25 years, the Rib Fest has provided Erie with some mighty fine tastes, sights, and smells, so head down to Perry Square and enjoy the tradition for yourself. — Alex Bieler

11 a.m. to 10 p.m. May 27 and 28, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. May 29 and 30 // Perry Square Park // erieribfest.com

COUNTRY FAIR
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Erie community and nonprofit events, brought to you by Country Fair.

Urban Entrepreneur Forum

May 27 — 5 to 7 p.m.
 Erie City Hall, 626 State St. RSVP to Adam Kenney at AKenney@Bridgewaycapital.org.

Kate Buczek Memorial Concert

June 7 — 4 p.m.
 Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, 7180 Perry Hwy, uuerie.org.

Presque Isle Saxophone Quartet

June 3 — 12 p.m.-1 p.m.
 Erie Art Museum, 10 E. 5th St., erieartmuseum.org.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation's Annual Yard Sale is

June 12-13 — 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 Unitarian Universalist Congregation Church, 7180 Perry Highway, call (814) 864-9300 with questions.

Lagoon by Pontoon

Ongoing from May 22-September 7 — 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m.
 Pontoon station, 301 Peninsula Dr., trempi.org.

Evening Lagoon by Pontoon

Wednesdays and Fridays from May 27 - September 4 — 7, and 8:30 p.m.
 Pontoon station, 301 Peninsula Dr., trempi.org.

Sunset Stroll

June 5 — 8 to 9:30 p.m.
 Between beaches 9 and 10, 301 Peninsula Dr., trempi.org.

Presque Isle Bay Fishing

June 6 — 9a.m. to 12 p.m.
 Pontoon station, 301 Peninsula Dr., trempi.org.

Discovering Bluebirds

June 6 — 10a.m. to 12p.m.

TREC, Room 112, 301 Peninsula Dr #1, trempi.org.

Hiking at the Erie Bluffs

June 7 — 9-10:30a.m.
 Erie Bluffs State Park, W. Lake Rd, trempi.org.

Bike Night

June 5 — 6 to 10p.m.
 State Street from 4th to 12th, eriedowntown.com.

Painting Party with Angela

June 12, June 26, July 24, Aug 7 — 6 to 8p.m.
 YMCA Camp Sherwin, 8600 West Lake Rd., www.ymcaerie.org/camp/events.

Beach Glass Jewelry Making Party

June 5, 19; July 3, 17, 31; Aug 14, 28; Sept 11, 25 — 6 to 8 p.m.
 YMCA Camp Sherwin, 8600 West Lake Rd., www.ymcaerie.org/camp/events.



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CALENDAR



Gang of Thieves w/ The L.E.C.

Vermont-based Gang of Thieves bring their funky rock 'n' roll grooves to the King's Rook Club Sat. June 6.

the night, as local hippie-hoppers The L.E.C. will add its own blend of funky tunes to the evening. The night will even feature some additional entertainment to complement the main show, as Oakkao and Liquid Nixon will provide even more music during the pre- and post-concert parties.

While the show is for members of the Kings Rook only, all it takes is a small fee to sign up and join the club. With Gang of Thieves and The L.E.C. playing together, it would be a crime to miss this show. - Alex Bieler

9 p.m. Saturday, June 6 // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub

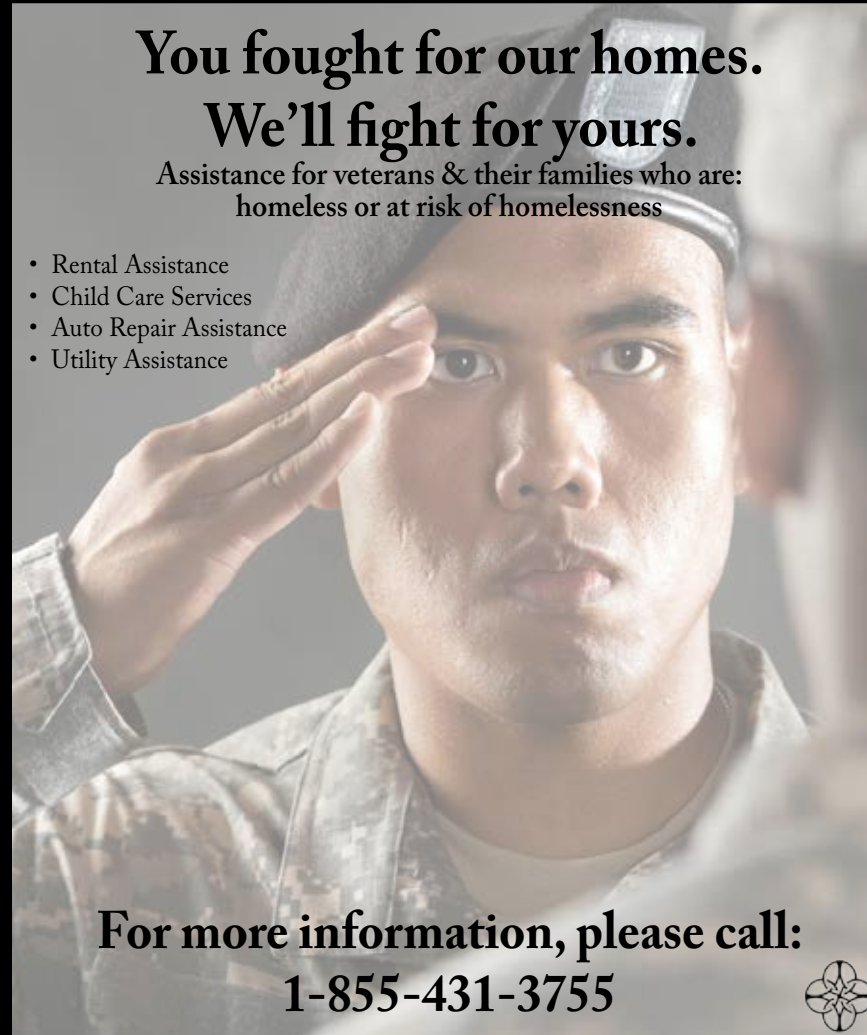

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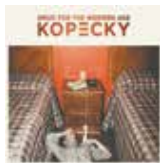
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Kopecky
Drug for the Modern Age
ATO

★★★★★

Drug for the Modern Age marks the first album released by Kopecky since the band shortened its name from Kopecky Family Band, and marks the crew's second full-length album on ATO Records. Like the group's change in title, the Nashville sextet retains a large part of their fanbase on earlier work while continuing to evolve. The engaging harmonies and energy are still a major factor, but Kopecky draws more inspiration from the '80s on *Drug for the Modern Age* than in prior efforts, resulting in a number of catchy dance-pop tracks like "My Love" and "Talk to Me." The new shift makes for a fun album, although there are still some string-laden treats for fans of releases like the excellent *Disaster*, as album bookends "Die Young" and the title track show off the band's ability to create lush sonic landscapes. The band name may be a little different, but Kopecky still packs all of the usual heart. — Alex Bieler



Braids
Deep in the Iris
Arbutus Records

★★★

There is no denying that the members of Montreal trio Braids are talented or that they mesh together like fingers intertwined for prayer. Seeing them perform is fascinating. Vocalist Raphaëlle Standell-Preston melds her lilting voice into a hypnotic electric soundscape of layered vocals, synthesizers, and percussion. If you were to strip away the Celtic mythology and deep magic and showmanship of Kate Bush, you would have what Braids does here. But really, does anyone want to listen to Kate Bush without those things? Braids' music is fun to watch, but not so much fun to listen to. Alternating between sleep-inducing and mildly abrasive, the soundscapes Braids creates are so synthesized that the intricacies of the percussion and the beauty of the voice are completely squelched. When the insipid lyrics of the song "Miniskirt" are added into the mix, you may just say your own prayer asking for the album to end. — Bryan Toy



Mikal Cronin
MCIII
Merge

★★★★★

Back in 2013, Mikal Cronin released one of the *Reader's* top albums of that year. Of course, heavy praise leads to high expectations, but Cronin's latest album *MCIII* mostly lives up to them. The layered, melodic glory that made *MCII* a joy to listen to immediately makes its presence known on opening track "Turn Around," a gem of a song that's just made for summer drives with the windows down. Much of *MCIII* follows the same path, pumping out sonically-pleasing nuggets one after the other, similar to the album's predecessor. Really, the biggest issue with *MCIII* is that it doesn't carry quite the same weight as *MCII*, although that's mainly because the *MCII* was really good and not because *MCIII* is a sonic slouch. Cronin's latest album may not reach the same soaring heights as his 2013 offering, but it still has plenty of sunny, pop-punch to make it a success. — Alex Bieler



Hot Chip
Why Make Sense?
Domino

★★★★★

On their new album *Why Make Sense?*, British electronic band Hot Chip moves away from the days as a "Boy From School" and heads straight into the lusty atmosphere of a nightclub. While fans of the band may not come to think of lead vocalist Alexis Taylor's boyish pipes as "sexy," the vibe translates well on the new release. Lead single "Huarache Nights" makes for a twitchy five-and-a-half minutes of fun, as a bouncy groove gets the album off to a good start. Hot Chip channels lowly-lit dance floors on their new album, coming off like a smoke-filled club that has Daft Punk and Pet Shop Boys in heavy rotation. Not everything on *Why Make Sense?* works, such as the languishing "White Wine and Fried Chicken," but the album bounces back quickly with the lovely string-aided "Dark Night," one of several highs that easily outpace the lows. — Alex Bieler



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ERIEARTMUSEUM.ORG

How Safe is Erie?

The Jefferson Educational Society looks for answers in a new essay.

By: Dan Schank

Last month, a concise, readable essay titled "Is Erie A Safe City? Perception, Reality, Recommendations" was released by the Jefferson Educational Society, a local think tank dedicated to promoting "civic enlightenment and community progress," according to their website. Since the essay's title asks an important question, I'll begin with a summary of their answers.

In short, Erie is probably less dangerous than you suspect. According to the Jefferson's findings, we're living in "one of the safest cities in the tri-state area," with a substantially lower violent crime rate than most similar cities nearby. Better still, national crime rates

have declined substantially over the past two decades and our community appears to be following similar trends, albeit more slowly. Not all of the news is positive, though – since 2006, our violent crime rate has exceeded the national average each year.

Not ready to pop open the champagne and celebrate? A closer look at the evidence might prove more compelling...

Most of the violent crime data in the essay comes from two sources, the Erie Police Department (EPD) and the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). The UCR data is compiled from monthly law enforcement reports and individual incident records, which are carefully examined for errors and deviations. Also, the Jefferson essay was written in response to data from the City of Erie only, not all of Erie County.

Let's start with the good news. Violent crime – a category which includes murder, aggravated assault, robbery, and rape – appears to be decreasing. According to the UCR, the number of violent crimes occurring in our city between 2010 and 2013 was about 459 in-

cidents per year. By contrast, between 2006 and 2008, Erie averaged 550 violent crimes per year. If these numbers don't automatically thrill you, a more long term comparison might be useful. According to EPD statistics, the number of violent crimes in our city between 1991 and 1994 exceeded 800 incidents each year. Obviously our current numbers aren't ideal, but the overall trend appears positive.

To contextualize their findings, the Jefferson contrasted Erie's crime data with numbers from cities in the surrounding region with similar populations. When compared to Allentown, Reading, Albany, and Canton, Erie quickly emerges as the safest of the bunch. In 2011, for example, the UCR reported 431 violent crimes in Erie, whereas the number in Albany was more than twice as high, at 939.

To account for differing populations within each city, the Jefferson compared violent crime rates per 100,000 people. In 2013, when the UCR's findings are viewed through this lens, there were 73 more violent crimes in Allen-

town than in Erie, 354 more in Albany, 390 more in Reading, and 474 more in Canton.

Still feeling unsafe? That might be because homicides are still on the rise in our city. Between 2010 and 2014, the EPD reports an average of 8.3 murders per year. That's up from 3.3 per year between 2005 and 2009. But according to the essay, many of these homicides have been the "result of drug conflict, bar fights, neighborhood or family feuds, and as such do not pose a grave threat to the general public."

Another reason the essay suggests that we might feel unsafe is because positive news is often neglected. For example, according to a January 2015 New York Times article cited in the essay, the national murder rate has declined by a dramatic 56% since its peak in the 1990s. Consider this – in 1980, there were 10.2 homicides per 100,000 people in our country; by 2013, the average was 4.5. When I asked Dr. William Garvey, the Jefferson's president, about the discrepancies between crime data and public perception, [Cont. on 36]

Creativity on Display

Erie Arts & Culture's 2015 Summit highlights our community's artistic potential.

By: Dan Schank

A surprising number of art-related projects are underway in Northwestern PA as I write this.

In our immediate surroundings, the Erie County Historical Society is preparing to re-open the Hagen History Center on West 6th street this August. The Flagship Niagara will soon undergo a 4.8 million dollar re-fit in 2017. The expERIENCE Children's Museum is celebrating its 20th anniversary through a series of workshops, fairs and art shows. And the Lake Erie Ballet recently invested in new studio space.

In Grove City, sculptor and art instructor Glen Sanders is helping young people create public

art projects. In Oil City, vacant Victorian homes are being converted into live/work spaces for artists. In Warren County, people with special needs are learning about print-making, fiber arts, and metal-working techniques. Finally, Sharon, PA is preparing to host *Waterfire*, a "multi-sensory art event" in which the Allegheny river is illuminated by a series of custom built baskets containing powerful flames.

I learned about these positive developments when Amanda Brown Sissem, the Executive Director of Erie Arts and Culture, took the stage for their 2015 summit on a rainy Monday afternoon at the Erie Art Museum. In her words, the Summit's goal was to cultivate "a culture

that supports creativity and collaboration." Accordingly, many of the creative people responsible for these recent developments were in attendance – and eager to share their ideas about the future as well.

The afternoon's special guest was Jenny Hershour, the Managing Director of Citizens for the Arts Pennsylvania, a grassroots advocacy organization that works to increase awareness about the arts in our lives. Hershour had some good news of her own. According to her organization, "the non-profit art industry in this state has an annual impact of over 2.5 billion dollars, and generates more than 360 million in state and local tax revenue. This economic impact supports over 81,000 full-time equivalent jobs that produce 1.8 billion in household income."

Although Hershour was visiting from Harrisburg, she shared an arts-related connection to Erie. In 2007, her daughter attended the Governor's

School for the Arts, a summer program at Mercyhurst University which was defunded in 2009. Citizens for the Arts Pennsylvania is currently working to re-establish the program. They're also advocating to increase funding for several tax credit programs designed to provide arts education to underserved communities and to encourage filmmakers to shoot movies in the state of Pennsylvania.

When Hershour was finished speaking, the attendees worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas for greater artistic development. Each table was assigned a particular topic, including issues like sustainability, tourism, marketing initiatives, accessibility, community, and increased opportunities for artists.

My table – which included representatives from the Lake Erie Ballet, the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, and the Academy Theater in Meadville – was instructed

to consider ways to "increase access" within our community. This framework prompted a productive discussion about the lack of knowledge about cultural programming on our college campuses. One attendee, a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, mentioned a "scavenger hunt" she participated in during her first year of college, which was designed to introduce new students to things to do in the city. We all agreed that this was an excellent model to follow, and suggested implementing something like it in Erie.

After about twenty-five minutes, each group submitted their proposals and the event came to an end. The mood was a bit livelier as we began our exits – good ideas were beginning to take shape and friendly partnerships seemed more likely to put them into action. Hopefully by next year's summit, some of our ideas will join the growing list of regional accomplishments.

Bikeable Erie

The push to make Erie more bicycle-friendly.

By Katie Chriest

The kid's probably ten years old. It's a glorious spring day, after school, and he's tearing off on a slightly too-big bike he'll likely grow into this summer. He glances back at me. Eyes up my bike. His face contorts with all of the fiery pent-up energy of his decade on earth. We're approaching a little climb. He emits some sort of characteristic Tonka-truck-ish speed noise, stands, and pedals his butt off, his bike swinging back and forth as he throws his strength into winning.

But I pass him anyway.

I know. I should let him win. But it's spring. And I was a kid once, too. Remember that feeling? Biking returns it to you, if you're lucky.

The kid and I are lucky. We both own functional bikes and helmets. We're on a side road in Fairview. It's pretty safe to bike here.

For many people in Erie, it's another story. Roads are wrecked. Some drivers speed, text, and otherwise disrespect bikers' rights. Some cyclists ignore basic safety rules and endanger everyone. Bikes and requisite helmets are hard to come by. Maintenance and repairs are out of reach.

But cyclists are a resourceful lot. And there's safety in numbers. So in 2012, with the hopes of solving local pedaling problems, Bike Erie was born.

Justin Smith, a Bike Erie founding member and volunteer, emphasizes that "There have been a lot of important advocates and folks from other organizations who've helped biking in Erie and the region progress for a much longer time than Bike Erie has been around. It's been a grassroots movement that's still evolving."

Bike Erie has grown from cooperative, meaningful action. And as of 2015, they have an op-

erating board, nonprofit status, and a goal of raising enough funds to hire a director.

Their collaborative spirit is evident on Bike Erie's impressive website. Providing countless motivating resources for cyclists, the website's "Get Involved" page is comprehensive enough to overrule anyone skeptical about biking's plausibility as a means of transportation. Ultimately, they'd like to see Erie achieve the goals of Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) assessment through the 135-year-old League of American Bicyclists, which emphasizes five categories: Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Evaluation & Planning, and Enforcement.

According to their website, "Bike Erie supports using the BFC application as part of a framework for tracking the progress of each city, municipality and place throughout Erie County." The League's BFC guidelines provide Bike Erie a framework to adapt to Erie County's unique needs, "to make our communities safer, more accessible and enjoyable to bike and walk."

This year, Bike Erie has partnered with the League to certify League Cycling Instructors (LCIs), who'll teach Smart Cycling classes locally to children and adults. LCIs' goals are "to help people feel more secure about getting on a bike, to create a mindset that bikes are treated as a vehicle, and to ensure that people on bikes know how to ride safely and legally."

The cliché "it's like riding a bike" suggests biking's simplicity, but there's a lot more to safely biking as primary transport. Providing educational outreach to both cyclists and motorists who share the road is a galvanizing focus of Bike Erie. "We're hoping to provide a lot of resources for the community," says Eric Brozell, another founding member. "Some of the

ways I've seen kids and adults ride are just scary. Our schools teach kids how to drive cars. But a bike was the real freedom when I was a kid."

When I reach Brozell, he's just returned from — you guessed it — a bike ride. It's a shining Sunday evening in May, the sort that makes May an obvious choice for National Bike Month. The Saturday before, Environment Erie hosted Bike Around the Bay, an event my bike-obsessed husband returned from with the same relaxed ebullience Brozell exudes on the phone.

Brozell has been a cycling advocate for years, and an Erie bike commuter since 1993. In fact, the opportunity to ride to work was one of Brozell's reasons for returning. "I'd spent

way too many hours in my car," he says. But when he began, "There was little info out there about how to ride" in the city.

Interestingly, according to Debbi Lyons' Old Time Erie blog, the Tribune Bicycle — a single-speed model with a frame resembling today's designs — landed Erie's Black Manufacturing on an 1896 cover of Scientific American. But somehow, cycling hasn't maintained its celebrated status here, a fact Bike Erie hopes to change.

"[Erie is] flat, our roads are relatively wide, and we don't have much of a traffic issue," argues Brozell. "It could be a perfect bike friendly place."

Currently, though, Erie falls short. In a recent survey conducted as part of the Erie County 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, respondents rated bicycle amenities as very high priorities. Unfortunately, they rated the need for major im-

provement to current bicycle amenities even higher. "A lot of people named the ability to bike safely as their highest priority," says Brozell. "But we essentially have almost no bike lanes."

Brozell points out that even positive pedestrian efforts — such as concrete bump-outs — create "squeeze spots" for cyclists, and that in general, cyclists' needs are not considered nearly enough in planning. "We need to change this," he states. "It's not the way a community should be run."

Increasingly, local leaders agree, including Erie City Council President David Brennan and Erie County Councilman Jay Breneman who, according to the Erie Times-News "are spearheading the Eastside Opportunity Corridor project. This aims to create 2.4 miles of bike trails and walking paths along a former railroad line and East 19th Street, between State



BRAD TRIANA

Street and Schaal Avenue.”

“Years ago, when riding the bus to work downtown, it struck me that such a long, and practically unbroken stretch of land could sit there, cutting through neighborhoods and serving as a dumping ground,” says Breneman.

“As time went on, and I got to know the people, businesses, and organizations in the area, my resolve continued to strengthen that something needs to be done for this community. I felt [this] was an issue that both the County and the City should work together on, because it will benefit the region as a whole by demonstrating that no corner of our County deserves to be forgotten, or dismissed as a lost cause.”

Meanwhile, Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper invited County employees to bike with her to work on May 15: National Bike to Work Day.

So how did Brozell honor Na-

tional Bike to Work Day? “By biking to work!” he laughs. “The more people ride on the streets, the safer it is for all of us.”

“More often than not,” adds Smith, [biking is] a lot more enjoyable than driving. It makes sense as a transportation option more often than most people probably realize, so I think it’s important to have organizations like Bike Erie to help people learn how to incorporate healthy transportation in ways that make sense for them.”

Inspired by successful bike organizations’ efforts in nearby cities, Bike Erie is exploring ideas like bike sharing, where people may rent bikes for point-to-point travel. But Brozell feels that bike sharing is unlikely to work until we have more bikeways, and more understanding among both motorists and cyclists about how to safely share the road.

To that end, Bike Erie has part-



BRAD TRIANA

Above: Bike Around the Bay features three levels of tours — a 10-mile, a 30-mile, and a 50-mile trek — providing routes for everyone, from novices to experienced bikers.

nered with the Sisters of St Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) to facilitate Pedal Mettle, a build-a-bike program for kids, nearing its one-year anniversary. Volunteer Kristine Nelson saw a similar program on TV and thought it would be great for the Erie area.

The five-week course, open to 12- to 17-year-old city residents, teaches basic bike terminology, safety, and maintenance

through the hands-on experience of refurbishing a donated bike. Participants are fitted for a bike and learn how to fix minor problems that might strand them. They even get to decorate the bikes they’ll earn. In an introductory video on the Bike Erie website, Nelson explains, “So we’re covering a boost in their self esteem, a boost in artistic endeavor on their parts, and of course the

health and fitness aspect of getting out on a bike.”

“I’m very touched about the sense of accomplishment that we’re seeing in the kids as they learn the small skills of bike repair,” adds Nelson. “It’s just so

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BY TONY KUSHNER

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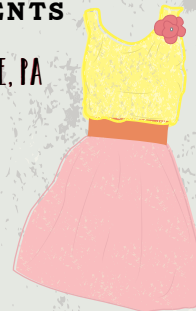
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STEVAN OVICIGOR



BRAD TRIANA

cool to see them kind of maturing before your very eyes.”

“We were encouraged to do this program to help kids in the city,” adds Gloria Shotwell, SSJNN East Program Director. “Instead of kids getting in trouble, we’re giving them something positive. And kids love the program.”

Pedal Mettle, located at St. John the Baptist School, is directly behind the International Institute. They’ve reached out to the local refugee and newcomer community through supporting agencies, with evident results. Brozell says the current kids’ class “looks like the United Nations of bicycle building.”

Pedal Mettle depends upon volunteers and, as such, welcomes anyone interested to contact Shotwell at 870-9021, or gshotwell@ssjnn.org. Volunteers needn’t know much about biking, as experienced Bike Erie folks are always on hand.

Also especially needed are bicycle donations, especially in smaller sizes. “Anything that looks like a bike,” says Brozell, “we’ll take it.” During garage sale season, finding cast-off bikes and parts is a breeze, and those willing to donate are likewise encouraged to contact Shotwell.

Pedal Mettle is also open to adults on Monday evenings, with access to bikes, parts, tools, and safety training. Some city residents who are homeless have benefited greatly from this service, as bike ownership is often the key to gaining employment and escaping poverty.

This year, Bike Erie and SSJNN inaugurate Erie’s first formal bike cooperative, open to everyone in the Erie community. “Our hope,” according to Bike Erie, “is to grow the co-op into a successful city hub for bicycle

education and repair.” Over 100 similar co-ops nationwide have expanded access and interest in cycling for folks from all backgrounds.

“I’ll encourage anybody to ride their bike,” summarizes Brozell. “I don’t care what their income level is!”

And that’s a lot of what it comes down to. Bike commuting isn’t a sacrifice. It’s not something we should only do if we absolutely have to.

At one point I got stuck in the writing of this article. Staring at a computer, as it turns out, doesn’t make words appear. But a bike ride often does.

Out West Lake Road, past acres of emerging crops, I breathed the luxurious aroma of lilacs at peak bloom.

As a kid, I rode my bike down long dirt roads lined by Queen Anne’s Lace, past red-wing-blackbird-crowded thickets and rows of field corn. The older I got, the further I was allowed to ride. The further I rode, the freer I felt. If we’re lucky, we learn the pleasures and freedoms of biking as kids, riding out of our parents’ sight towards early glimpses of who we might become. The bike as an agent of freedom never quite leaves us. Nevertheless, we end up in cars. Isolated, sheltered, inert, and — at least as commuters — anything but free.

In his book *Bicycle Diaries*, Talking Head David Byrne writes, “Cycling can be lonely, but in a good way. It gives you a moment to breathe and think, and get away from what you’re working on.”

Or for some, like Bike Erie’s faithful volunteers, cycling becomes the thing you’re working on. And the rest of us are better for it.

To volunteer with Pedal Mettle or donate bikes or parts, contact Gloria Shotwell at (814) 870-9021 or gshotwell@ssjnn.org. To join or learn more about Bike Erie, or to receive their newsletter, visit www.bikeerie.org

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[Cont. from 31] he responded with a humorous analogy: "It's primordial. It goes back to the fact that a rustle in the bushes might mean death for cave-men... We grow up with a feeling that life is dangerous, so we don't believe the figures."

Obviously there's still important work to be done locally to improve public safety. And it's probably premature to assume that the average reported gunshot is simply a firecracker in disguise. Accordingly, the Jefferson makes a number of suggestions to build on our positive momentum, including adding additional police officers to our ranks (especially through specialized units devoted to juveniles and family crises), working to improve ethnic diversity within the EPD, developing partnerships to eliminate blight in our community, and increasing police funding – either through a public safety tax or social capital funding.

One organization singled out by the study for positive progress "in implementing preventative policing" is UnifiedErie, a collaborative effort between the EPD, the District Attorney, and the Regional U.S. Attorney. UnifiedErie takes a three-pronged approach to crime in our city, by focusing on prevention, enforcement, and re-entry. When I spoke with UnifiedErie's Amy Eisert, who serves as the primary facilitator for the Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families, she noted that there are a "wealth of evidence-based programs in Erie, many of which have low referrals" dedicated to crime prevention and family services. UnifiedErie works to connect these organizations and improve public awareness about them. They have had particular success with family-oriented youth programs designed to encourage parents to find effective ways to demonstrate responsible behavior to children.

I asked Andrea Bierer, UnifiedErie's Community Action Plan Coordinator, how they hope to build on the momentum outlined in the Jefferson's essay, and she cited the importance of their 2015 Neighborhood Concerns Survey. The questionnaire, which will be available online until June 8, asks a series of neighborhood specific questions designed to provide "a more rounded picture of victimization, whether it's been reported or not." If you're skeptical about the official numbers the Jefferson has been using, this survey could

provide a more complete picture by acknowledging what goes un-reported.

The Jefferson essay also praises the work of the Parade Street Blue Coats, a community-oriented mentorship program founded by City Councilman André Horton and community activist Daryl Craig. According to Horton, the Blue Coats are dedicated to "walking the line between the police and the community." They provide counseling to vulnerable youth in low income communities, work to de-escalate neighborhood conflicts, and advocate on behalf of troubled young people who demonstrate a willingness to change. A \$300,000 Erie Community Foundation grant was recently awarded to the Erie School District to expand the Blue Coats' mentorship initiatives, which lead to the creation of a non-profit called Creative Community Connectors to bring their work to more schools in the region.

Since Councilman Horton represents many of Erie's most at-risk neighborhoods, I asked him what he thought of the Jefferson's findings. While he was quick to praise the emphasis on diversifying our police force, he also noted that "Erie is not a safer city for all. It depends on where you live." Horton thinks smarter policing can be as effective as increasing police numbers, and expressed some caution about the essay's emphasis on adding more officers. Horton said that he is "very aware that we need a partnership with law enforcement... but at the same time we need independent, outside oversight." He added that the best way to do that would be to create a Civilian Police Review Board to give people in the community a clearer voice when conflicts arise.

"Is Erie a Safe City?" is the first entry in a new series of essays sponsored by the Jefferson to weigh in "on subjects important to promoting civic growth and improvements." Though it may not provide a complete picture of public safety in our community, let's hope that it engenders greater enthusiasm about positive community development – and encourages us all to be a little less suspicious of our neighbors.

A free PDF of "Is Erie a Safe City?" is available online at www.jeserie.org. To respond to UnifiedErie's 2015 Neighborhood Concerns Survey, visit www.unifiederie.org

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Geeked Out

Edinboro's video game design program takes off.

By: John Lindvay

It is well known that Edinboro University has a robust art program, but did you know that it also has a highly-rated game design program? Recently my alma mater was ranked 15th in a list of the Top 25 Public Game Design Schools and Colleges nationwide, according to Animation Career Review.

The program moved up the rankings this year and, with my own ties to the game development industry, I felt compelled to reach out to Edinboro Assistant Professor Dr. Daniel Bennett and find out what some of you aspiring game developers may be missing.

For my podcast Big Sushi, I interview game developers from indie to AAA (a term used in the industry for games with the biggest development budgets) and we often discuss game design curriculum and academia. Traditionally, game developers come from a background in computer science, as programming is often required to *actually* make games. Edinboro has had computer science (CS) degree programs for a while now, but it wasn't until roughly seven years ago that the school began implemen-



Recently Edinboro was ranked 15th in a list of the Top 25 Public Game Design Schools and Colleges nationwide.

programmer to interact with an animator, and added those classes to the program. Finally we added a physics class." Add in the mixed student projects that allow for students from each program to collaborate and all of a sudden it seems you got the making of a great program. People often underestimate the value a liberal arts education brings to even high technical and specified programs like computer science or game development. First of all "Game Design" is a tricky profession as it includes not only computer science knowledge, but also things like visual design, psychology, philosophy, and communications.

tation of the Game and Virtual World Development track, with the first pair of students graduating this past year. However, Bennett said that the graduating class was much larger this year.

So what makes the Edinboro program special? What is making the school climb the Animation Career Review list? Bennett put it simply, "We decided to build on the strengths of the university." What Edinboro has over other game design or computer science programs is — and this might be surprising to some — its liber-

al arts approach. Edinboro has a strong animation program, and has for years. Cross pollinating between the two programs makes for strong and rigorous curriculum."

"We built the program with classes from our theoretical computer science track, inserted some classes directly aimed at game development, and made elective classes like computer graphics and artificial intelligence a requirement," Bennett explained. "After that we asked a Computer Animation instructor what classes would be required to allow a


[Edinboro's liberal arts] is absolutely essential," Bennett said. "We have students working with Psychology professors interested in the effects of immersion, and student projects have drawn cooperation from the student body across the institution especially actors, musicians, and animators. The liberal education environment exposes students to many other areas and the smaller school personality encourages follow up and interaction based on that exposure." Take that, liberal arts haters!

Building this track and ensur-

ing it meets industry needs is a high priority for Dr. Bennett. "When we started, there were very few programs out there so there was not much to model off of." He said, so they simply build on what they had, a strong arts and science degree with a focus on interdisciplinary communications between programmers and artists and a liberal education. Now with the first graduates hitting the market, the school hopes to get feedback from them to see how to further shape the program. They also had a number of speakers visit the campus and their talks reinforced those goals Bennett and the rest of the faculty established.

If you remember back in April of 2014, I wrote about the Edinboro Game Expo (EGX), which hosts the fine products of the program as well as working with neighboring schools like Penn State Behrend in highlighting the game development possibilities found around Erie. To me, the next big step would be to start hosting a game jam, where programmers, artists, and musicians all come together for a weekend to make a game. Perhaps we could do the Gem City Jam, or the Niagara Jam, with the theme being "Don't Give Up the Ship!" Actually, that's not a bad idea...

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