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R ERIE READER

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The Erie Reader is the local voice for news, arts, and culture, and is Erie's only independent, alternative newspaper. Founded in 2010, the Reader has quickly become the region's award-winning source for arts coverage, a strong cultural compass, and a dynamic resource for news and opinion. With a dedication to long-form journalism and a commitment to provoking thoughtful discussion, the Reader tells the stories of the people and places making and shaping Erie, while highlighting the events and issues influencing life in northwestern Pennsylvania. The Erie Reader is published every other week and distributed at over 250 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 901, Erie, Pa, 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct inquiries to 814.314.9364 or contact@ErieReader.com.

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From the Editors

Ever wonder where the whole "Keep ___ Weird" phenomenon began? Many attribute its genesis to Austin. But back in 1982, writer Richard Boler published a satirical piece in *Showcase* that encouraged readers to get up-in-arms about the city's greatest crisis: its rising draft beer prices. He called on his fellow citizens to join CHUG: the Committee to Harangue Unscrupulous Greed-mongers, and promised those who wrote to the paper a "Let's Keep Erie Weird" button to wear as a symbol of their solidarity.

To Boler's (and *Showcase's*) surprise, a handful of readers sent in their \$1.25, and the buttons then had to be printed. "Let's" didn't quite fit, so "Keep Erie Weird" was born.

Several years later, "Keep Austin Weird" took off, as Scott McGrath elucidates in this issue. And in the early 2000s, the *Erie Times-News* printed new "Keep Erie Weird" buttons, spreading the word out about rockerie.com.

Regardless of whether Erie or Austin can claim the original campaign for weirdness, the common theme echoes one we explore repeatedly in the *Reader*: Who are we? What is Erie's distinguishing character? And how can we best celebrate and promote it to help our city thrive?

"Keep Austin Weird" began in an effort to promote small businesses and avoid the generic-ification inevitable when big box stores move in.

Small businesses, it was understood, are at the heart of a city's identity.

One perfect example of this is AcousticSheep, the Erie-based company that produces SleepPhones and RunPhones. Their mission, to "use local resources, leverage technology, and be socially and environmentally responsible," has extensive potential to boost Erie's creativity – and confidence – in the realm of practical, ingenious innovation.

AcousticSheep, meanwhile, is no stranger to recognition. But this has been one banner month. On Saturday, Nov. 7, they were featured on CBS' *The Henry Ford's Innovation Nation*, hosted by Mo Rocca. And Nov. 10 brought the announcement that AcousticSheep has won Consumer Electronics Association's Innovation Entrepreneur Award, 2015 Small Business of the Year.

What a wonderful counter to the recent devastating news that GE will lay off 1,500 Erie workers. AcousticSheep's "flock" is nowhere near GE's size. But they're a refreshingly encouraging example of the way innovative businesses can thrive in Erie.

This issue also features Scoville Food Institute and Beelzebub's Salsa: two local businesses perfecting the pepper; and Fairview's YoYoSam: the largest yo-yo store in the world.

It's certainly no easier to start a small business here. But that hasn't stopped numerous Erieites from finding a need, creating the means to fill it, and keeping this community's wellbeing in their sights.

In an interview last February in the *Reader*, AcousticSheep CEO Dr. Wei-Shin Lai told Jim Wertz, "unethical businesses can't survive. It's only the ones that give something of value to the world that are going to make it."

What a wonderfully weird, entirely Erie idea.

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COUNTRY FAIR

Just a Thought

By: Katie Chriest

Lt. Cmdr. Edward James Broms Jr. was a pilot in the U.S. Navy. He went MIA on Aug. 1, 1968, and in Aug., 1997, I put a stainless steel cuff bearing his name on my left wrist. I've worn it ever since.

I bought the bracelet from veterans running the POW/MIA booth at the Crawford County Fair that year. One had known Broms, he said.

The cuff glides over the tattoo inside my left wrist: a musical staff with the notes of the word "wanderlust" from Joni Mitchell's "Amelia." I've had fifteen more years of life than Broms to indulge my wanderlust. For all I know, the same impulse helped draw him to Vietnam.

On my wrist, Broms has hiked in the Pyrenees, the Andes, and through the volcanic terrain of the Azores. He's walked endless desert trails and driven countless blue highways. Among grizzly men who may have witnessed the same war he didn't survive, he's seen Emmylou Harris play a little fair-ground in Ninilchik, Alaska.

Except that he hasn't. And no number of reflective moments on my part can change the fact that I've never had to see what he saw, and I've gotten to live past my twenties while he did not.

Turns out Broms' name adorned a lot of wrists over the years. And in 2011 - 36 years after his plane went down in North Vietnam - his remains were positively identified. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery a year later.

I'm completely anti-war. Some will say that's naive, but I say it's naive to think that war is the path to peace; or that it isn't more accurately a leveraging tool employed by the elite to maintain their power and profits.

Nevertheless, I'm completely pro-veteran, though it feels hypocritical to also pay taxes to a military industrial congressional complex that fails to properly support its veterans upon their return home: an undoubtedly confounding place where things largely operate as though nothing bad is happening half a world away.

Now that Broms is home, I've kept wearing his name as a reminder not to squander this precious life. And to try to find the courage to be, as Thoreau would have it, a "counter-friction to stop the machine" that implies it's more patriotic to fight people than to feed them.

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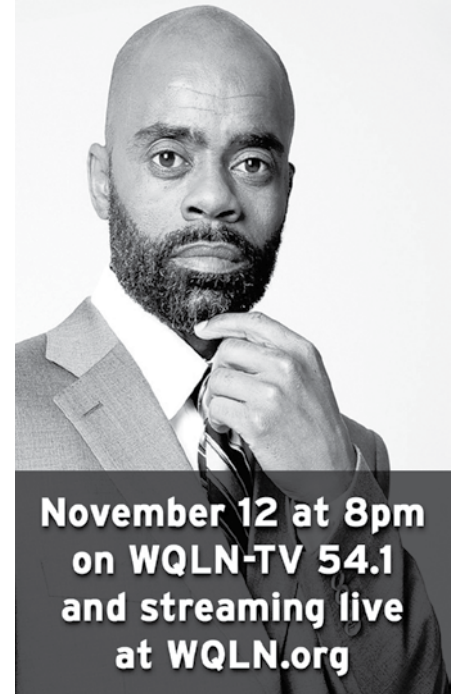
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Erie at Large

An Island Unto Itself



Left: A view of Erie in 1920, during the era when Erie was embedded in the nation's most prolific supply chains.

By: **Jim Wertz**

When the Puritans arrived at the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, their future governor, John Winthrop, declared the fledgling port “a city on a hill.” Winthrop believed that the eyes of the world would be upon the colonists, who gained strength and confidence for their work from an other-worldly belief in predestination ordained by an omnipotent God. That Puritan spirit became the founding ethos of most cities that followed.

Erie's establishment on the shores of Lake Erie was likely no different. What would come of this great ship-building port, set upon a pedestal, if not atop a hill? Would it become the great turnstile to the Midwest: a position of prosperity made possible by virtue of its compact land mass connecting the industrial behemoths, New York and Ohio? Or was it destined to bask in the isolation that attracted the French to our peninsula in the first place?

When Gov. Wolf visited Erie for the Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit VII on Nov. 1, it was evident that Erie had become the latter, by the Governor's own admission. To be clear, he didn't intend his comments to be derogatory in any way. Indeed, he came to Erie to offer hope for the budget and its impact on education, and a glimpse of his vision for the political near future. But the major takeaway from his talk and subsequent Q&A with C-SPAN's Steve Scully was that *Erie is an island unto itself*, disconnected from the machinations of state government in Harrisburg, our sister cities within the Commonwealth,

and our big brothers to the south and southeast. It's at the heart of our revitalization struggles as well as the battle for educational funding in which we are now embroiled.

“You're disconnected,” Wolf told the audience at Collegiate Academy. It was the first time in a long time that a politician spoke honestly about our region, as it sits beyond the Pennsylvania Wilds and above the great valleys that hover between I-80 and the Great Lake.

Asked if high-speed rail was the answer to what ails us, Wolf deemed the evidence inconclusive. “But something must be done to connect Erie to the rest of the state,” he said.

It's not that our local representatives have done a terrible job of culling whatever resources they can. Even during the Corbett administration, Erie received millions of dollars for Bayfront development, and rumor has it there may be a CRIZ (City Revitalization and Improvement Zone) around the corner. But if the budget impasse has taught us anything, it's that the legislature doesn't necessarily make decisions based on the waxing and waning of societal best interests.

As VP of the Brookings Institution Bruce Katz said of the federal government, “no one is coming to save you.” So it's time we make some decisions for ourselves with particular interest toward our connectivity to the rest of Pennsylvania. By air, land, or Port of Erie, the region must connect to the outside world. It's the capital investment that yields the greatest return. Ask any local company trading in a global market.

But then again, maybe we've been jinxed.

No one talks much about the Erie Railroad War that put Erie back on the national map after the War of 1812. It was the early 1850s and Erie was abuzz with forced traffic from rail passengers who had to switch trains here because the nation, and particularly the City of Erie, had no standardized width between the rails. New York had one standard; Ohio another. The two lines met in Erie, and the conflict created opportunity for people here who tended to the needs of offloading passengers. When the rail lines were standardized, Erie City Council passed ordinances to block development, and the police were instructed to pull up railroad ties that were placed along city streets. Riots erupted as locals dismantled the rails and disrupted train traffic across the county. Outsiders soon resented Erie for how its people behaved in the face of such change. Famed newspaper editor Horace Greeley wrote in his *New York Tribune*, “Let Erie be avoided by all travelers until grass shall grow in her streets, and till her pie-men in despair shall move away to some other city.”

The city, once abuzz with activity and viewed upon the hill, was relegated to recognition only for its Presque Isle. Nevertheless, it persisted. Its industrial future was on the horizon.

By the early 20th century, Erie was embedded in the nation's most prolific supply chains and about to become the center of manufacturing for, ironically, America's locomotive exchange.

The pie-men have long since departed, and the Governor has come. He recognizes the plight and, we hope, the promise of the region. Our future may not be predestined by the grace of God, but it's in our humble, human hands. Perhaps it's time we lay new track.

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

Treating Penn's Woods Like it was Disposable

The Clean Power Plan promises that fossil fuel-fired power plants will operate more cleanly and efficiently, but that's not nearly enough.

By: **John Vanco, Erie Art Museum Director**

Last August, President Obama announced the Clean Power Plan (CPP), establishing “the first carbon pollution standards on existing power plants,” according to Pa. Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) fact sheet. States have until Sept. 6, 2016 to submit a strategic plan to lower their own emissions in compliance with these new standards.

Soliciting public input, the Pa. DEP held 14 “listening sessions” statewide, including one at Erie's Blasco Library on Oct. 29. Among those testifying were County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, Benedictine Sister Pat Lupu, and Solar Revolution President John Purvis, who may have had the best one-liner of the night: “My parents didn't teach me to comply. They taught me to excel.”

Erie Art Museum Director John Vanco, who also testified, has generously agreed to share his remarks with us, below. In our next issue, we'll feature the testimony of Sister Pat Lupu, just before the UN Climate Change Conference begins in Paris.

As we face this global crisis locally, may the words of these inspiring and visionary Erie leaders help us all to see Penn's forest for the trees.

Have you ever flown over Pennsylvania in a small plane? There used to be direct flights from Erie to Harrisburg, and, although it's been at least 45 years, I still remember the first time I took one of those flights. Our beautiful state, which looks like just acres and acres of trees when you're driving through it in an automobile, takes on a distinctly different aspect when viewed from above.

The hand of man is heavy on our landscape. Thruways, highways, county roads, township roads, farm lanes, subdivisions, of course. Stone walls and abandoned foundations.

But an aerial view of the landscape looks like a flock of incompetent graffiti artists have attacked it. Logging roads, oil and gas wells, waste ponds, strip mines, power lines, pipelines, mine tailings. We have treated

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Left: "Like a flock of incompetent graffiti artists have attacked it." Our beautiful state, which looks like just acres and acres of trees when you're driving through it in an automobile, takes on a distinctly different aspect from above, as exemplified by this view of Bellefonte, Pa.

Penn's Woods like it was disposable. And in fact, we have disposed of a lot of its natural resources, not to mention its natural beauty.

So we live with the results. We have some of the most amazing pollution in the world. There's the Hughes Bore Hole in Cambria County, an artesian well that has been flushing out toxic metals from more than five square miles of mines since the 1970s. It discharges between 800 and 1,200 gallons into the Little Conemaugh River every minute of every day. That's something like 1.5 million gallons of heavily contaminated water *every day*.

Pennsylvania is home to Little Blue Run Lake, the largest coal ash pond in the U.S. It's an artificial lake with a bizarre blue color (now faded to gray) about 30 miles northwest of Pittsburgh, right beside the Ohio River. It's filled with 20 billion gallons of coal ash and scrubber slurry, leaking arsenic, selenium, mercury, and other metals into the watershed.

Little Blue was actually created in

the 1970s by First Energy Corporation, the same power company that services Erie. First Energy told the people who live in the nearby communities that this would be a beautiful lake, a recreational destination for swimming, boating, and fishing; but it's more like a chemical cesspool. First Energy has signed a consent decree to close the 1,700 acre site. Although no ultimate plan has been announced, it will almost certainly amount to sacrificing several square miles of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania produces 15 million tons of coal ash every year. It is stuffed into 77 ponds and 28 landfills. At least 21 of the ponds and 13 of the landfills aren't even lined — heavy metals are leaching out of them into the surrounding water tables as we speak.

Remember the coal ash disaster in North Carolina last year? The big one, right? Unfortunately it wasn't the big one — it was just the third largest coal ash spill in the U.S. There were two that were even larger! And they will continue to happen, including in Penn-

sylvania.

I probably don't even have to mention Centralia, the Columbia County town that sits on a coal mine fire that has been burning since at least 1962. It has brought everlasting fame to Pennsylvania, inspiring books, films, songs, and even a video game, not to mention all the jokes.

So, we can't continue to tear up the earth to pull out the coal, burn it to the detriment of the air, and dump the poisonous ash into our water. *But*, gas and oil are much cleaner, right? Well, no, they're not.

Even if we ignore the looming catastrophe — the largest ever faced by the human race — which is the overheating of our planet caused by the release of greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels. Even without considering global warming, oil and gas drilling has left us a toxic legacy unmatched by any other American state.

Abandoned, uncapped, and leaking wells are everywhere. Although the DEP list of orphaned and abandoned

wells totals just over 12,000, the best estimate of the number of gas and oil wells that have been drilled in Pennsylvania is 970,000. Methane, petroleum, and brine are leaking from tens of thousands of wells across the Commonwealth. Just dealing with the existing mess is going to occupy Pennsylvanians for generations.

Perhaps I should have talked about the benefits of alternative energy, especially energy efficiency, photovoltaics, and wind power. Despite a lack of public investment, despite disincentives and erratic tax policies, alternatives have already proven their absolute worth.

We have treated Penn's Woods like it was disposable. And in fact, we have disposed of a lot of its natural resources, not to mention its natural beauty.

We don't have to dig up the earth to fuel them. They don't pump carbon dioxide, particulates, and heavy metals into the air as they are used. They don't leave tons of ash to be dealt with by future generations.

The Clean Power Plan promises that fossil fuel-fired power plants will operate more cleanly and efficiently, but that's not nearly enough. We have to stop.

We have options. But if we want to survive as a species, burning fossil fuels is not one of them.

Online extra: local Climate Reality Leader Janine Fennell's piece "Politics and the Environment: Sixty years of climate action ... and counting" provides historical context of climate legislation in the U.S. Learn more at eriereader.com.

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20th Century Pains of Erie Parking Need 21st Century Treatment

Parkers pay the price of outdated technology one quarter at a time.

By: Ben Speggen

Erie has a lot of parking problems.

But let's be clear: The inability to find a parking space differs heavily from the unwillingness to park a few blocks away and walk to our point of destination. And in Erie, we're flush with parking options.

Although Erie citizens may be quick to demand more parking – or even tolerate proposals of additions atop of what we already have – we really don't need it.

A recent study – as reported on by *CityLab's* Eric Jaffe – found that on average “parking was universally oversupplied, in many cases quite significantly.” That average, according to Rachel Weinberger and Joshua Karlin-Resnick of Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates, amounts to 65 percent. That is, typically more than a parking spot and a half exists in most metros for most Americans.

This reveals the parking-obsessed nation we've become. Rather than opt for public transportation, walk, bike, or carpool, we still prefer to drive, often alone and often in search of a parking spot situated within one block of our endpoint.

It seems our perception is *lots and spots everywhere, and nary a place to park*. Or as Jaffe puts it, “we're all home run hitters who've forgotten what it's like to knock a single – or, as a closer metaphor, to draw a walk.”

Take, for instance, a trip from The Brewerrie at Union Station to Lavery Brewing Company. Ample parking exists at both locations, and although they're just two blocks from each other, the preferred option seems to be to drive the distance.

Or let's say the next stop is the U Pick 6 Tap House on the corner of Fourth and State streets. Driving from The Brewerrie to Tap House takes all of five minutes (from

parking spot to parking spot, and yes, nearby lots and street parking both abound). Walking, on the other hand, takes seventeen minutes – and the total distance is less than a mile.

Cases for why walking a mile in a city is better than driving aside (that's another column for another day), Erie has other, more pressing parking problems, and those problems are street-level.

If you want to park in one of the 1,400 spaces along Erie streets – and not get a ticket – you must possess a small chunk of metal.

Despite the ocean of parking spots everywhere, there really isn't one in which to park – unless you have a quarter. Or a token.

Which poses a larger problem than you may think for younger generations who often opt to carry plastic over a copper-nickel alloy – or anyone who's been to other cities and noticed you can pay at a kiosk. Or better yet, anyone who's recently been to a city like Pittsburgh that now allows parkers to pay by using an app.

On Thursday, Oct. 29, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and the Pittsburgh Parking Authority unveiled “Go Mobile PGH” – a mobile application facilitated by Parkmobile, LLC. In its agreement to operate the platform, Parkmobile nets 8 cents per initial parking instance without charging additionally when a meter is re-upped through the app.

Yes: Re-upped *from* the phone.

Those in Erie who've run the quarter quarter-mile dash to refill

a meter only to find their windshield adorned in yellow and orange tickets know the pain of defeat, as one minute means the difference between 25 cents and \$10. Much more conveniently, “Go Mobile PGH” alerts users when their time is expiring and offers the opportunity to buy more time – without having to scramble to however far away their meter may be.

Forget for a moment the kiosk debit or credit card option, and say you fear not enough people would use – or have the technology to use – a mobile app. The Pew Research Center recently reported that the pockets of 68 percent of Americans contain a smart phone. And that number is rising.

Meanwhile, Erie isn't app-averse. More than a twinge of irony pings in this conversation, as Visit Erie recently plastered stickers on the 1950s-style parking meters encouraging parkers to download the “Hello, Erie” app, which provides info on restaurants and entertainment, more or less.

To his credit, City Councilman Bob Merski has been vocal on the street parking payment issue, working with Erie Parking Authority. But as it stands, we remain just hopeful that we *may* get a test case in the *near* future.

So despite the ocean of parking spots everywhere, there really isn't one in which to park – unless you have a quarter. Or a token.

Erie Parking Authority's only alternative to quarters for paid street parking is tokens, which do come at a dollar discount when you get \$10-worth for \$9. But those can only be obtained at the Authority's main office, located at 25 E. 10th Street, housed in a concrete fortress surrounded by parking meters only taking quarters and tokens.

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

Enlisting our Veterans as Active Duty Citizens

When it comes to veteran integration, society sees with blurred vision.

By: Jay Breneman, County Councilman, District 4

Warriors. Damaged. Heroes. Wounded. Courageous. Volatile.

There are two simultaneous narratives regarding our former military men and women to which we Americans subscribe:

Firstly, we raise our veterans upon a pedestal, elevating them to living-martyr status. They sacrificed, and embody a set of values that are essential to our national and cultural identity. We figuratively salute our veterans, and readily thank them for their service.

Secondly, we treat our veterans as patients.

Our veterans are among the single-digit percentage of the American population who signed up to serve our country, yet they are disproportionately represented in certain areas of significant social concern.

As soon as they take off their uniforms, we send them to a clinic. As soon as we strike up a conversation with a veteran, or about veterans, the first subject is usually related to their physical or mental well-being. We honor them, we memorialize them, and we seek to help them.

But neither narrative successfully captures the true nature or value of our veterans – and, if anything – only serves to further deny them true appreciation, and functional post-military integration.

Furthermore, by focusing solely on our veterans' past traits or accomplishments, we miss out on recognizing the exceptional contributions they make to our community long after they take off the uniform. We develop



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NEWS & OPINION

and adhere to an incomplete picture, one that ends the biography of our veterans well before the full breadth of their life, service, and abilities is actualized.

In essence, we unknowingly limit our veterans to an unfinished story that negates their full potential, constraining them to the extremes of sainthood or brokenness.

The greater reality is somewhere in between: our veterans are among the single-digit percentage of the American population who signed up to serve our country, yet they are disproportionately represented in certain areas of significant social concern.

But there is so much more to the richness, skill sets, and sizable contributions made to our communities throughout the veteran-citizen lifespan.

Veteran Impact

In 2015, a sociological examination of civic health by the National Conference on Citizens revealed that our nation's veterans are remarkably engaged citizens: Veterans are three times more likely to participate in a civic or service group and nearly twice as likely to reach out to their elected officials. They're sizably more likely to attend public meetings, vote, discuss politics with family and friends, fix problems and provide favors in their neighborhoods, donate more money to charity, and volunteer many more hours than their nonveteran peers.

Interestingly, veterans without a college degree are equally engaged civically as nonveteran college graduates. When veterans earn college degrees, their civic engagement increases further.

This demonstrates that the nature of service that drew these men and women to join the military, and their training, education, and experience earned while in the military, are major assets with a considerable impact on society.

While this creates stronger neighborhoods where our veterans reside, their economic impact is even greater. According to 2014 estimates by the U.S. Small Business Administration, veterans are 45 percent more likely to be self-employed than nonveterans, representing about \$1 trillion in annual sales nationally.

Their community and economic impact is not going wholly unnoticed: the U.S. Department of Agriculture, for in-

stance, is providing grants and training to veterans who want to be first-time farmers to help meet critical food system needs.

With just under half of all veterans coming from rural communities, they are returning home and proving to be engines of change and growth in areas dominated by corporate agriculture and hampered by low employment.

Correcting Society's Blurred Vision

Imagine for a moment that you volunteered to serve your country. At minimum, you undergo a transformation that forever changes your social and personal identity, endure intensive training and labor in a culturally-diverse, team-focused, and goal-oriented environment, and take on critical management responsibilities before you are old enough to drink.

Following this, you return home, or relocate to a new community to buy a home, go to school, start a career or your own business, and start or raise a family.

Yet despite all of your experience, drive, motivation, and personal accomplishments, you're met by family, friends, educators, employers, policymakers, and a general public who treat you as a hero incapable of normal functioning.

How can one thrive under these circumstances? Unwittingly having to fight stereotypes or unrealistic expectations, all the while trying to establish one's future self, seeking success in the nonmilitary environment.

Our response and treatment towards veterans — no matter how well-intended — is just as detrimental to them as it is to us. We stymie their potential, and miss out on a chance for meaningful engagement.

We have so much to gain from a different interaction — one that could strengthen our families, our communities, and our economy — should we focus on the amazing post-military potential of these men and women.

Our attempts at engaging veterans should not begin with a "thank you" or a gift of some sort. They should start with a declaration and a call to serve:

"We have an important mission for you here at home and we need you on our team. What can we do to get started?"

Contact Jay Breneman at

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News of the Weird

This issue's focus may be making Erie weird, but let's stop short of human parrots, shall we?

By: **Chuck Shepherd**

Annals of Justice

A 2015 decision of the Georgia Supreme Court has created a puzzle for drunk driver enforcement. In Georgia (and other states), blood alcohol tests are "voluntary" (to bypass the issue of whether drivers can be forced, or even pressured, to endure a test that ultimately helps to convict them), but the Georgia court has ruled, against custom, that a "consenting" driver might be "too" drunk to appreciate the consent -- in which case, the test results would be inadmissible in court. Equally awkwardly, prosecutors would be forced to argue that the drunk driver -- too drunk to handle a motor vehicle -- was still sober enough to give knowledgeable consent. Atlanta's WSB-TV reported in October that judges statewide are grappling with the issue. [WSB-TV, 10-29-2015]

Recurring Themes

Funerals and burials, in the United States and elsewhere, are no longer always so staid. Most famously, one man was, per his instructions, lowered to the ground inside his beloved Cadillac; dressing corpses in fanciful outfits (such as the Green Lantern) is not unheard of.

In October, after Mr. Jomar Aguayo Collazo, 23, was killed in a shootout in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the family outfitted his body in his favorite blue tracksuit and propped him up at a table in his mother's tavern ("playing" dominoes and holding a drink and a condom) -- as friends and relatives passed by to pay their respects. [Fox News Latino, 10-21-2015]

The list of all-time extreme body modifiers would start with the late Dennis "Stalking Cat" Avner (who incrementally cut, chipped, tattooed, pierced and implanted his body to make himself a human feline) and the similarly obsessive Erik "Lizardman" Sprague, who at one time toured with the Jim Rose Circus. Newer to the scene is Britain's Ted Richards, 57, working to become a human parrot. With 110 colorful tattoos, 50 piercings and a split tongue, he currently seeks a surgeon to turn his nose into a beak. Even without the beak, though, Richard says becoming parrotlike "is the best thing that has happened to me." (London's Daily Telegraph, publishing astonishing photos of Richards, asked, rhetorically, whether we've reached "peak plastic surgery.") [Daily Telegraph, 10-16-2015]

Raised Right -- or Snitch-in-Training? In September, Audrey McColm, 25, traffic-stopped in Randolph County, Indiana, for driving "erratic(ally)," became the latest parent ratted out by her child. When Mom denied having been drinking, her daughter, 7, blurted out, "Yes, you have, Mom." McColm registered 0.237, had nearly hit another officer's car head-on, and was so hammered that she "urged" a different officer to "shoot her in the head." [Indianapolis Star, 9-18-2015]

A chapter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals undertook one of its favorite consciousness-raising tactics in August, demanding that Pennsylvania officials erect a roadside grave marker near Lancaster at the spot where a tractor-trailer hauling 80 pigs overturned, killing several of them. The "terrified animals" that suffered traumatic deaths should be memorialized by the community, PETA said. The pigs, of course, would have eventually found their way to a slaughterhouse, and it is possible that the ones euthanized as a result of the accident passed more peacefully than the "survivors." [Lancaster Online, 8-24-2015]

In October, The Washington Post and the New York Post separately reported re-

cent episodes of government agencies keeping high-earning employees on the payroll for more than a year, with no job assignment, because the agencies were unable to adjudicate their misconduct cases. Almost 100 shelved Homeland Security employees turned up in a Washington Post Freedom of Information Act request, and one information technology analyst warehoused by the New York City employee pension fund said she had earned \$1.3 million over 10 years doing absolutely no work for the city. "I watched movies," said Niki Murphy. "I crocheted -- right in front of (supervisors)." [Washington Post, 10-22-2015] [New York Post, 10-25-2015]

Drivers who blindly follow their vehicle's satellite navigation with disastrous results are almost No Longer Weird, but a truck driver's mishap in Ashton, England, in October still seemed worthy of reporting -- in that he was working for a company called Dachser Intelligent Logistics when his tractor-trailer got stuck in a narrow alley (directed there by the sat-nav, in violation of all common sense). (Bonus: It was not the first time sat-nav had misdirected a vehicle into the same alley; the town had even placed a formal traffic sign at the approach to the alley: "Do Not Follow Sat Nav Next Left.") [Manchester Evening News, 10-19-2015]

Updates

In October, the federal government finally unloaded the two New Hampshire prop-

erties it seized in 2007 from dentist Elaine Brown and her husband (after a nine-month standoff following their vow to die rather than pay their back taxes to the IRS). Their 100-acre "compound" became a magnet at the time for an array of "sovereigns" and tax-resisters, who were rumored to have booby-trapped the property to ward off law enforcement -- and the 2015 auction only partially guaranteed that the property was free of hidden explosives. (News of the Weird's 2007 story included Dr. Brown as one of three U.S. dentists who, independent of each other, had become obsessed about federal taxes. The Browns are serving 30-year prison terms.) [WCVB-TV (Boston), 10-22-2015]

High school principal George Kenney believes he has a gift to aid students' concentration abilities -- hypnosis -- and practiced it extensively at North Port High in Sarasota, Florida, until 2011, when three of his students died in separate incidents (two by suicide). While Kenney enjoys retirement in North Carolina, the Sarasota school board did not close the chapter until October 2015 when it granted \$200,000 settlements to the families of the three students. The lawsuits complained of Kenney's unlicensed "medical procedure," which altered the "underdeveloped" teenage brain -- but Kenney had also pointed to improvements in studying by other students. [Herald-Tribune, 10-6-2015]



Just Toyin' Witcha — By Bryan Toy

The Agora Unveiled

A tribute to the free exchange of ideas at the Jefferson Educational Society



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

with JES when he painted the Perry 200 shipyard mural. You've likely admired it as you've traveled down State Street. Hinman has a special affinity for paintings that depict classical culture, as he studied the Renaissance masters during his days at Temple University's Tyler School of Art. One of his favorite paintings has always been Raphael's *The School of Athens*, which happens to be the very subject which he and the JES were proposing for the painting.

Quite overwhelming to consider

reimagining one of the great monumental paintings of all time, done by the great master himself, Raphael. But Hinman was undaunted. He states, "I'm not as good a painter as Raphael, but I have better information than he did. Better resources and research." He could also use the expertise of the Renaissance masters to help him with the composition and technique. His materials would be of far superior quality as well.

So he began ... by stretching a 290 square foot piece of canvas over a custom stretcher, designed with one-of-a-kind braces so it

Above: Painter Michael Hinman channeling the expertise of Renaissance masters as he works on *The Agora*, Right: Artist and woodworker Brad Triana assembles the frame he conceived of and crafted to display the piece, as JES Executive Director Ferki Ferati looks on.

would not warp. (To give you an idea of the scope of this project, just moving the painting from one room to another takes eight people.) Then came three coats of gesso, a rough acrylic underpainting, each needing to be sanded to a fine finish before the next coat. Of course, to be historically accurate, he

The painting was to be of the Agora: the center of cultural, political, and intellectual activity in many Greek cities, most notably Athens; and an apt representation of what the JES hopes to be for Erie.

needed to do exhaustive research. His preliminary sketches for the figures are currently on display at the JES. Before he was done painting, he had put

in more than 2,000 hours and travelled to Athens itself.

Once it came time to frame and hang this massive painting, the JES turned to another expert, artist and woodworker Brad Triana. The frame would have to be engineered to hang separately from the painting, be lightweight, never twist or crack, and do justice to the space in which it was to be hung as well as the painting. After calling every framer, moulding company, and woodworker he could think of, as far away as Texas, Triana decided that the job of designing and constructing an appropriate display could only be done here, on site, by himself. And before he was done, he and a throng of helpers had applied three coats of a special gold gilding and six coats of primer, built a special pneumatic arm, bounced ideas off of artists and makers he has worked with nearly every day, and spent two weeks hanging everything. The achievement of these adroit craftsmen is impressive to say the least. The final mural does justice to all that Jefferson and his ideals of classical democracy stand for.

Bryan Toy can be contacted at bToy@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @ToyinWitcha.

By: Bryan Toy

Though they limited human equality to a privileged few, Thomas Jefferson and his contemporaries idealized principles such as the right of property, religious tolerance, and freedom of thought that they felt were embodied in the great republics of the past: Greece and Rome. You can see evidence of our young country's obsession with all things classical in the architecture of our public spaces.

So the Jefferson Educational Society (JES) decided to follow this grand American tradition of paying homage to ancient Greece by commissioning a grand painting. This painting would cover the entire east wall of their lecture hall and dominate the space with its massive size: 30 feet long by seven feet high. The painting was to be of the Agora: the center of cultural, political, and intellectual activity in many Greek cities, most notably Athens; and an apt representation of what the JES hopes to be for Erie.

Who better to undertake this monumental enterprise than Michael Hinman, who had worked in conjunction



Make Erie Weird

Where we came from, and where are we going?



A closer look at the one of Erie's most iconic facades, the Warner Theatre.

By: Scott McGrath

meliorism - [n.] The belief that the world can be made better by human effort

Recently, consultant Charles Buki was hired to report to the city his findings regarding Erie's development plan to address, according to the *Erie Times-News*, issues of "housing, transportation, land use, and economic development." While his words have been reported and re-reported several times, including in the *Reader*, Buki's conclusions bear repeating for those who may not yet be aware of them; but also for the import they carry. And leaving aside the money spent on a consultant whose report could have been delivered to any City Father who took five minutes to ask any State Street passerby the same questions Buki was asked, the consultant has some forthright and true things to say, most notably that "this community hasn't had an adult conversation about the condition of the city of Erie

in about 40 years."

In this, he is quite correct, especially where the aforementioned development plan's concerns lie. Largely, it seems as if Erie has been more or less coasting on the momentum of false hope and old stories for some small time, to the detriment of the city and the lives of its citizens. And these concerns of development — perhaps *re-development* or *un-development* would be more apt terms — are not faced by Erie alone, and they are not new. "Smart Decline: The Road to Right-Size Cities," an excerpt from *The Post-Carbon Reader* published on *Yes! Magazine's* website, spoke at length in 2010 about the very issues brought up in Erie's own development plan, which have been handled by other cities in various ways: "reorganiz[ing] space; remov[ing] unneeded infrastructure; rethink[ing] transportation, energy, and food options; encourag[ing] industrial and other heritage tourism; and, above all, rightsiz[ing]...in authentic, resilient ways."

As Buki pointed out, most in the Erie community only get as far as discuss-

ing problems without presenting solutions. So where to begin the discussion?

Grow Up or Die, or Why We Can't Have Nice Things

What would be expected of a parent whose child wanted to be someone else? That is, if a child were, say, a good artist with natural talent and her own style of drawing who then decided to abandon her way to emulate the work of another child, would we expect the parent to allow the child to do so? Or would we rather the parent tell the young girl to be no one but herself, to work from what was given to her by kismet and follow it diligently to the exclusion of all else?

What would we expect of a city that did the same thing to itself, then?

So it seems as if letting go of bad patterns will be most useful to the community's progress. Erie suffers interminably from a little-brother complex or, at the very least, the bad habit of endlessly comparing itself to other, larger cities. For example, when a new, hip, and locally-owned coffee shop opened

downtown a few years ago, first-time patrons could be heard saying "Oh, my god. Walking in here, you'd never know you were in Erie!" or "This place could easily be in New York City."

We've all heard similar things many times about anything in this city which has any kind of energy to it. Far from inherently complimentary, comments such as these are unhelpful, dismissive of local effort, and only serve to privilege the speaker, as if to say "I am worldly enough to have been to such-and-such a place and bright enough to have made this comparison." One is also reminded of the *Almost New York Good* art show of several years ago at Papa Joe's restaurant. Seemingly named for a winking nod to one critic's high-minded assessment of the Erie artist's work, the title further indicates dismissiveness. It suggests, "Your work is so good that you don't belong here," which is tantamount to saying "Erie should not have talent in it. *From it, sure. But not in it.*"

The then-resuscitated Keep Erie Weird buttons and t-shirts seen around town several years ago are another example of Erie's poor emulation of other areas. Designed to raise awareness and boost economy, the Keep Austin Weird campaign — the first of its kind to receive national attention — was launched to promote local businesses. It also sought to keep big-box stores out of funky, zealously tribe-like areas such as South Austin, which threatened secession from the greater city should Walmart have been permitted to build there, contrary to locals' outspoken wishes.

Our city and the surrounding areas have already been long beset by Walmart and its ilk, so when a button suggests that Erie be kept weird, what is it saying? In what way is Erie weird, exactly? By and large, the town is conservative, blue collar, and more midwestern than East Coast. What of ourselves do we truly and distinctly own? How do we see ourselves? And upon what interior **[Cont. on page 36]**

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Two Local Businesses are Changing Erie's Reputation from Chilly to Chili



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Getting Warmer With the Scoville Food Institute

By: Matt Swanseger

The world's hottest pepper, the Carolina Reaper, is so potent that one ounce must be diluted in over 11,000 gallons of water to be rendered imperceptible (i.e., enough to fill the average aboveground pool). In a retail economy flooded by a small cadre of conglomerates, startups must be similarly concentrated in terms of their plan, vision, and resolve – or be washed away. Manufacturing costs, distribution costs, and slotting fees (which can be thought of as a property tax paid to retailers for shelf space) can dilute profit margins until they barely register - if they aren't nullified altogether.

"If you're planning on starting a small business, take however much money you think you need and double it," says Jon Whaley, sole proprietor of the Scoville Food Institute, who has faced his fair share of trials and tribulations since establishing the local hot sauce company in 2008.

It takes a special degree of intensity to survive long enough to see things through, and Whaley cer-

tainly does not lack for that. Interviewing Whaley is like watching a laboratory beaker froth and bubble from the interplay of the enclosed reactants – past regrets and present uncertainties compete violently against future hopes and aspirations. He wishes he had started at a younger age and with the backing of more investors. He wonders whether he can keep doing this without sacrificing more time with his wife and three children than he already has. Yet he is excited to test new ideas, debut new products, and eventually achieve national brand status, thus eliminating the need to ever work again.

"I don't know if I've ever been a good employee," Whaley admits.

Whaley was always drawn to the idea of *being* the Man, but he doesn't suffer any delusions of ever *beating* the Man. He just wants to generate enough heat with his hot sauces for the Man to take notice. He is inspired by the stories of Bear Naked Granola (snatched up by Kashi, a subsidiary of Kellogg's) and Honest Tea (subsumed into Coca-Cola): once-obscure brands that gained traction by not beating, but joining the big guys. In the condiment realm, the big guy is Pittsburgh-based H.J. Heinz Company, which merged with the even more gargantuan Kraft Foods earlier

this year. Realistically, Whaley estimates that he needs to get his products into 500-1,000 stores before Heinz even *sniffs* them.

They should, though. Because he's onto something.

Life's Too Short. Stop And Smell (And Taste And Feel) The Chilies

Chili peppers have been a staple of the human diet for millennia, but nature never intended them that way. Their "hotness" actually evolved as a deterrent to mammals, whose molar teeth crush the seeds, whereas birds leave them intact for dispersal. The substance responsible for the burning sensation (that us furry folk feel but our feathered friends don't) is a chemical called capsaicin, named for the genus *Capsicum* (i.e., chilies), from which it was gradually isolated over the course of the 1800s. So next time you're curled in the fetal position, whimpering after eating a basket of ghost chilies in a vain attempt to prove your machismo and/or girl-power ... remember that Toucan Sam wouldn't even break a sweat.

The Scoville Organoleptic Test arose in 1912 not as measure of our intestinal fortitude, but to gauge efficacy of capsaicin as a topical analgesic. Capsaicin is still utilized in this capacity to this day – it overloads sensory receptors to essentially block pain signals

Scoville Food Institute's Jon Whaley has developed the Periodic Table of Scoville Units, which assigns a number and symbol to each pepper along with its "atomic weight" in Scovilles.

from the application site. However, in higher doses it can do more harm than good. Wilbur Scoville was a pharmacist working for the firm Parke-Davis trying to determine why some peppers stung a little and some stung a lot. His test involved dissolving dried chilies in alcohol to extract the capsaicin, then incrementally diluting it in sugar-water until a panel of taste testers could no longer detect it. Scoville Heat Units (SHU) are based on the degree of dilution, rated in multiples of 100.

Because taste is subjective and therefore inherently imprecise, more exact methods for measuring pungency have since been created, such as high-performance liquid chromatography (not that you're crude or underperforming, but this sophisticated telemetry equipment is a *little* more high-performance than you). If you don't have access to a top-grade research facility, though, don't fret - all you need is an unassuming uncle and a small serving spoon.

The Pennsylvania Sauce Exchange

"I can't even smile," my Uncle

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John remarks after ingesting a spoonful of Scoville Food Institute's Carolina Reaper (1,600,000-2,200,000 SHU) sauce.

But he wanted to. That's because when capsaicin makes contact with the tongue, chemoreceptors distinct from the taste buds tell the brain, "This guy is a dumbass for putting this in his face." The brain concurs and releases endorphins, "feel-good" chemicals, to compensate for your indiscretion. This may explain why spicy foods have such a large and fervent following - an estimated one in five Americans use hot sauce regularly. We all know one of these people, for whom food is not really food, but merely a vehicle for hot sauce delivery (in the pharmacological sense).

If you are such a person, I strongly encourage you to try Scoville sauces. The lineup fluctuates with the availability of each variety's eponymous pepper, but all are versatile, flavor-forward, and 100% all-natural. The Reaper is the Big Bad Wolf of the bunch; as sweet and welcoming as a Southern gentlewoman at first (orange marmalade is the second ingredient by volume) before she turns and bares her fangs. For the somewhat squeamish, there is the more conventional Cayenne and Garlic Cayenne, which are on par with Frank's or Tabasco. If you are unsure of where you stand, Whaley has developed the Periodic Table of Scoville Units, which assigns a number and symbol to each pepper along with its "atomic weight" in Scovilles.

The chemistry motif is elemental to the Scoville brand's potential marketability. The label designs are clean, consistent, and easily identifiable on store shelves. Furthermore, these do not fall prey to the gimmickry of other specialty brands, who appeal to collectors with cutesy puns or sight gags.

Until the day comes when you're buying Scoville products at Wegmans or Giant Eagle, you can purchase them at Whole Foods Markets in the North Atlantic and North East regions, or in many beer stores, and via Whaley's website, www.scufoods.com.

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mswanseger@eriereader.com. You can follow him on Twitter @SwazzySwagga or read his blog at squanderoza.com.

Beelzebub's Salsas are the "Happy Accidents" that get hotter each season.



Left: Beelzebub's Salsas are seasonally-inspired, locally-sourced, and certainly "not just for chips!"

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

By: Matt Swanseger

If there's one thing for certain about demonologists, it is that it's *hell* getting them to agree. There's little debate that fallen angel and demonic prince Beelzebub is kind of a big deal at cosmological juggernaut *Lucifer & Associates*, but no one's exactly clear on what he actually does. Depending on which demonology you follow (and we all have our personal preference), his title ranges anywhere from "Abomination-In-Chief" to "Idolator Outreach Coordinator" to "Vice President, Pride/Envy/Gluttony Division" (choose one). Or maybe, due to constant restructuring and reshuffling of the demonic org chart, he has tried his hand at all of the above. Sigh. Damned bureaucracy is enough to make your head spin in Nine Circles.

I caught up with Bubs on a country road in Cambridge Springs, just off PA Route 99 and well outside of the Inferno on a soggy Friday evening. He is in a much better place since stepping down at *L&A* and has found new purpose ... as a model, surprisingly. His grinning mug graces the entire product line of Beelzebub's Salsas, the brainchild of gardening-enthusiast-turned-entrepreneur Eric Laughery. After sampling Laughery's creations, I am led to believe Bubs was at his best tempting through the 'buds ... because Beelzebub's made a glutton out of me.

Laughery's entire operation was essentially a happy accident. Nearly a decade ago, a love of heirloom peppers and Mexican cuisine led to a particu-

larly overabundant harvest - and the dilemma of what to do with it. The most obvious solution was to make salsa. Laughery developed three varieties - original, medium, and inferno - then shared them at family gatherings and special occasions. Word spread and before he knew it, he was selling salsa out of a cooler in the back of his truck to strangers in parking lots. "It kind of reminded me of a drug deal going down," he quips.

He mixed up batches of his salsa in a Meadville bar kitchen on the week-

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ends to help meet growing demand, while experimenting with new varieties throughout the week. Eventually, pineapple, black bean corn, garlic-lime, and chipotle garlic joined the original three and Laughery saw enough promise with the business to "go legal." The Health Board approved his kitchen trailer in 2011, which has since been joined by a walk-in cooler and storage shed to complete the Beelzebub's compound.

In addition to the seven mainstays of the salsa line, a different seasonal

variety is released every other month, employing whatever produce is in season. Given the timing of our meeting, he regrets that he cannot sample his cranberry salsa (November/December), which is his second most popular seasonal to the Maple Chipotle (March/April), made with Pennsylvania maple syrup and smoky chipotles. I settle for a

taste of the Honeycrisp Apple salsa, which reminds me more of a chunky applesauce or chutney and feels somewhat mismatched with the traditional tortilla chip - but then again, Beelzebub's is "not just for chips!"

Laughery is passionate not only about his products (locally-sourced ingredients whenever possible, no additives or preservatives), but also their versatility. He has aspirations of releasing a cookbook highlighting the ways salsa can elevate ordinary meals. He also envisions a day when customers can experience his recipes firsthand from a Beelzebub's food truck or storefront. Although hesitant to compromise his intimate customer base or his connection with his suppliers (which include Mennonite cucumber farmers across the road!), he would like to quit his day job. The devil's in the details, I suppose.

Until then, you can obtain Beelzebub's salsa, pickles, and new Golden Eggs (hard-boiled eggs pickled with jalapenos in mustard brine) at Whole Foods Co-op, farmer's markets, and select music festivals. A pint of salsa or a quart of pickles sell at \$6 each. The golden eggs come in two varieties - Premium and Farm-to-Table, for \$8 or \$9 per quart, respectively.

Check beelzebubsalsa.com for a list of varieties and locations.

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mswanseger@eriereader.com. You can follow him on Twitter @SwazzySwagga or read his blog at squanderoza.com.

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Spotlight on Erie

Nov 11 - 24

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Preston Lacy of JACKASS at Sherlocks



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

As a former regular of Park Place/Sherlock's quarter draft nights, I have both encountered the stray jackass and even played the role myself on occasion, overzealously dancing to Rihanna and Lady Gaga songs that I did not have the wherewithal to resent myself for at the time.

TV celebrity Preston Lacy represents the rare *Jackass* that Sherlock's management has ever not frowned upon, but embraced. The public antics of him and his *Jackass* cast mates over the past 15 years make a college student's Thirsty Thursday hijinks seem tame by comparison. So inadvisable and humiliating are their stunts that they have earned a measure of respect and admiration not usually afforded fools. He — and they — would do almost anything for a laugh.

Lacy's act at Sherlock's is unlikely to get him in trouble with the authorities, but should be good (perhaps less-than-clean) fun. Just make sure you stay within the code of conduct so you can stick around for the meet-and-greet. Admission for both is \$20. — Matt Swanseger

7 p.m. // *Sherlock's*, 508 State St. // sherlockspub.com

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Glimpse 2 and Human Flux Break the Rules at Erie Ale Works

Jazz musicians have long been a rebellious lot. They break rules (of

musical convention). They talk back (improvise). And they're routinely out past curfew (playing smoky jazz clubs and lounges into the wee hours of the morning).

Glimpse 2 and Human Flux won't keep you up too late on a school night when they come to Erie Ale Works, as they open their sets at 7 p.m. But they will sass you. And if you can stand to be challenged, you might find you like it.

Mike Sopko, guitarist of Glimpse 2, will take that tone with you — but he will just as soon play coy ("what tone?"). Glimpse's sound occupies a space somewhere between free jazz atonal-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ity, post-rock majesty, and jazz fusion ferocity. Drummer-accomplice Hamir Atwal can set heads to bobbing with a steady groove, but just as easily dizzy with sudden time-signature shifts and unorthodox meters. Alternately accessible and difficult, Glimpse 2 is a great gateway band to ease yourself into the ongoing Electroflux Experimental Music Series.

The trio of Stephen Trohoske (bass), Adam Holquist (keys/synth), and Ian Maciak (drums) round out the bill as Human Flux, purveyors of "postmodern, post-fusion, post-punk dubscaapes." You can expect to hear a mix of covers and originals through this kaleidoscopic musical lens. — Matt Swanseger

7 p.m. // *Erie Ale Works*, 416 W. 12th St. // eriealeworks.com

Thursday, Nov. 12

Who Doesn't Like Pie? Two One-act Plays by Anne Pie Open at PACA

Pie is delicious. So are these two powerful comedies by Connecticut playwright, Anne Pie. *The Remarkable Thing about Stardust* and *A Quiet Night at the Sanctuary* are both one-act plays exploring human relationships on a small scale. Expect forceful and assertive dialogue that is, according to several reviews, written with a

"I'm a sucker for a story that has a 'twist.' New scripts are always a challenge, but in many ways easier to do than shows done before."

tender and understanding heart.

Stardust, directed by Bobbi Kocher, follows Diana Stern as she is arrested, drunk in a graveyard. The cracks in her marriage emerge, Diana cries uncontrollably, and a mystery is revealed.

Kocher says, "I'm a sucker for a story that has a 'twist.' New scripts are always a challenge, but in many ways easier to do than shows done before. You have no pre-conceived notions."

Sanctuary, directed by Michael Weiss, tells the tale of two women — one a celebrity — trapped in a snow-bound diner. As a 20-year-old bottle of scotch loosens their tongues, stories are told and secrets revealed. No spoilers here, but chili is involved.

About the play, Weiss says, "I have found working on new scripts to be a pleasure, as there is no precedent to live up to, and you and the actors can really make it your own."

He also enjoys working with the playwright. "It is a delight to work with Anne Pie, as she can offer insight and is readily willing to make changes when necessary. This is my seventh association with either producing or directing Anne's work and all have proven quite successful."

Both plays promise to be tasty with satisfying endings. Just like pie. — Mary Birdsong

Doors: 7:30 p.m., curtain: 8 p.m. Nov. 12-14 and 19-21 // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$10 // PACA1505.com/tickets

Friday, Nov. 13

Dramashop Continues its Radius CoWork Studio Production of *Waiting for Godot*



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Written in 1948, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is the tale of two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who await the arrival of someone named Godot. The play's seemingly simple premise has invited infinite interpretive complexity over the years — not to mention audiences with pretty strong opinions.

"If you know *Godot*, you probably know that it has confounded and frustrated audiences for more than half a century," wrote Artistic Director Zach Flock on Dramashop's Facebook page. "If you don't know *Godot*, I may have just turned you off of this play by describing it as confounding and frustrating."

He also makes the point that Beckett changed the landscape of theatre with *Godot*. And *Godot*'s influences reach far beyond the curtain. In his song "Road Ode," Loudon Wainwright III sings, "Out on the road, out on the road / You're Willy Lowman, and you're Tom Jode / Vladimir and Estragon / Kerouac, Ghengis Khan."

The Soft Machine's 1969 song "As Long As He Lies Perfectly Still" likewise references *Godot*'s two characters: "Estragon and Vladimir / Waiting for something that's already there / Heaven on Earth or is it the moon?"

And then of course is my personal favorite: Christopher Guest's mockumentary *Waiting for Guffman*, in which the cast of a small town Missouri production waits hopefully for a Broadway producer to finally recognize their gift-

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CALENDAR

edness.

Whether or not you understand *Godot* — or love it or loathe it — it's worth seeing (especially at \$5) for all of the cultural references you'll finally understand. — Katie Christ

8 p.m. // Nov. 13, 14, 20, 21 // Dramashop // Renaissance Centre, 2nd Floor, 1001 State St. // \$5

Saturday, Nov. 14

The Mallett Brothers Band Set New Standards at the Kings Rook Club



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

One critic from their neck of the woods — rough, rugged, beautiful Maine — says that the Mallett Brothers Band is undeniably original, and infestiously self-assured.

Another, from way down south in Texas, says they're of that rare breed of musicians who, by playing to their own muses, challenge the hell out of any standard types of classification.

And, this: "It's like William Faulkner has been resurrected with an electric guitar in hand," writes Bill Copeland of Music News.

All comparisons to Nobel Prize-laureate Southern authors aside, word on the street is that the Maine-based six-piece band puts on a damn good show.

And now, the Mallett Brothers Band will bring that show to the Gem City's Kings Rook Club.

It's another in a long, ongoing series of free shows, brought to us by the fine folks at KRC, that's well worth checking out. — Ryan Smith

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

Tuesday, Nov. 17

I, The Breather Farewell Tour Exhales at Basement Transmissions

After announcing in September that they would be ending their time as a band, Baltimore based metalcore band I, The Breather are stopping in Erie on their farewell tour.

Since forming in 2009, I, The Breather have released three studio albums and one EP, and have played on three different continents. They are certainly not



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

calling it quits without having accomplished a good portion of any band's bucket list.

Supporting acts on the tour are New Jersey's Chasing Safety and Noveists from Paris, France. Local openers have yet to be announced, so any bands looking for a decent gig can contact the promoter at ballpointproduction@gmail.com to have a chance to send this band off in style. — Tommy Shannon

6 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$13 Advance, \$15 day of show

Wednesday, Nov. 18

Explore the Heights of the Himalayas in Meru



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

If you have a fear of heights, stay as far away from Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi's 2015 documentary *Meru* as possible.

The film follows three potentially-insane adventurers as they try to reach the top of Meru peak, a 21,850 foot mountain in the Indian Himalayas. One of the climbers is the co-director, Jimmy Chin, who shot much of the footage while dangling from a rope on his way to the top. The team's leader is Conrad Anker — a legend among extreme sports enthusiasts who discovered the remains of explorer George Mallory along the heights of Mount Everest, nearly 75 years after his death.

Meru goes beyond the usual daredevil antics you might expect from an ESPN short or a "Go-Pro" Youtube video. In-

stead, expect insight into the physical and psychological exhaustion that often accompanies extreme sporting endeavors. Journalist Jon Krakauer, whose 1997 bestseller *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster* documents an equally audacious climb, offers insight and narration as well.

If you're up for a visceral, vertiginous thrill, *Meru* is a film that begs to be seen on the big screen. Drop by the Erie Art Museum on Nov. 18, and leave your faint-hearted friends at home. — Dan Schank

"Age of Chaos" short films screen at 6 p.m., Feature at 7 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 10 E. Fifth Street // erieartmuseum.org/events/film.html

Thursday, Nov. 19

Sinkane Brings the "Best Kind of Chaos" to MIAC

If a mix of Afropop, dubstep, R&B, and psychedelic pop sounds chaotic, well,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

you're not wrong. But it's the best kind of chaos.

Singer/guitarist Ahmed Gallab and his band, Sinkane, are set to take the stage at Mercyhurst University for a night of cross-cultural — but not clashing — influences. Born in Sudan, Gallab's style is gorgeous but defies definition — kind of like the ballet dancers in Sinkane's music video for their 2014 single, "How We Do."

Oh, and Gallab's resume is pretty solid, too: he's played with Caribou, Yeasayer, and Of Montreal (be still, my little hipster heart) and was musical director of the supergroup ATOMIC BOMB!

Need another reason? Arrive early for beer tastings with Lavery Brewing Company. Drinks and a show! — Sara Toth

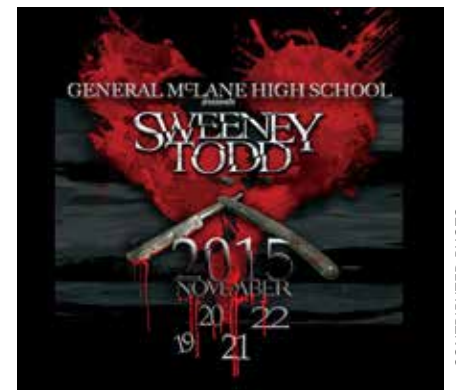
7:30 p.m. // Tickets \$5 - \$18 // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // miac.mercyhurst.edu/events/sinkane

Thursday, Nov. 19

GMHS Stages Sweeney Todd: "A Perverse Tale of the Victorian-era Underclass."

OK, let's see Disney present a high school musical version of this

... Offering local theatergoers an excep-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

tional (or, dare I say, "meaty?") musical with a dark theme that extends beyond most tame and tired high school productions, Edinboro's General McLane High School (GMHS) presents *Sweeney Todd: School Edition*.

Based on a fictional tale that eventually became an urban legend in Britain, *Todd* tells the story of the eponymous barber, who, after disposing of his clientele with his trusty straight razor, "recycles" their remains with the help of a local baker, Mrs. Lovett.

Enough said.

This gutsy, Grand Guingol theme was later adapted into a 1979 Broadway musical by composer Stephen Sondheim.

But, a "school edition?"

"The School Edition is based completely off the original," according to Bruce Yates, director of vocal music and theater at GMHS, via email. "Stephen Sondheim worked closely with Music Theatre International (MTI) to make the proper adjustments in the show to make it appropriate for high schools to perform.

"*Sweeney Todd* is a musical thriller with dark comedic overtones and mature themes," he added. "If I had to give it a rating I would consider it to be PG-13."

Over the years, GMHS's music department has garnered accolades and awards from audiences and official organizations alike. According to a press release, GMHS was selected as a Grammy Signature School Semi-Finalist in 2014.

And according to Yates, last year's production of *Phantom of the Opera* was performed to standing-room-only audiences.

A perverse tale of the Victorian-era underclass, replete with enough scoundrels, n'er-do-wells and other Dickensian-type characters, to, well, fill a book, *Sweeney Todd* appears to promise spectators another mouthwatering theatrical excursion. — Gregory Greenleaf-Knepp

7 p.m. on Thursday, Friday, Saturday; 2 p.m. on Sunday // General McLane High School, 11761 Edinboro Rd., Edinboro // generalmclane.net

CALENDAR

Friday, Nov. 20

Mountain Music of Virginia: Haunting Ballads and Authentic Bluegrass Travel the Crooked Road to the Erie Art Museum



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Roger McGuinn of The Byrds played Mercyhurst University's Mary D'Angelo PAC about ten years ago, to a fully appreciative crowd. But before McGuinn announced his entrance with that trademark Rickenbacker riff from "Turn, Turn, Turn," a diminutive, 17-year-old woman walked onstage. No

LaPrelle continues to keep Appalachian music alive and evolving, as one-half of the duo Anna & Elizabeth.

instruments. No accompanist. Just a voice clear and pure and timeless as the Appalachian ballads she's made it her mission to preserve and proliferate. I recall a beat or two before the audience erupted in applause after her first song. It was as though no one wanted to disturb the mood she'd created. Transfixed by hearing her breath turned to sound, we'd all been holding our own.

That woman was Elizabeth LaPrelle, and on Nov. 20, she'll perform at the Erie Art Museum. LaPrelle continues to keep Appalachian music alive and evolving, as one-half of the duo Anna & Elizabeth (check out their Tiny Desk Concert on NPR!) and as host of the Floyd Country Store Radio Show.

Also on the bill is Southwestern Vir-

ginia band Jeff Brown & Still Lonesome, a group likewise practicing the art of preservation, this time of bluegrass. Country artist Marty Raybon called them "one of the most solid hard-hitting bluegrass bands to be formed in the past 10 years."

All that, and the show is free, with a suggested donation of only \$20. — Katie Christ

8 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St.
// Free, suggested donation of \$20 // 459.5477

Saturday, Nov. 21

First-ever Charity Victory Show Takes Over the Warner



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sure, you can find beats anywhere on a Saturday. Rappers and DJs abound in Erie, but what you really want to hear are the professionals: true artists whose poetry touches you and who can lay down a sound that's original and funky. The performers at the Victory Show have you covered. Hot Mess Productions and Stay Focused For The Future will bring live music from Mike Jones & Band, Miguel, Cordel, Shok Jordan, C.Brown, DJ Tony, DJ Salt, and Shai Boogie to the Warner Theatre. It'll be anything but your typical Saturday afternoon party.

This all-ages show also features special performances from Erie Dance Theater. Plus guest speakers Bob Merski and Elvage Murphy — who, along with Stay Focused, are doing what they can to raise up the next generation of leaders for our community. Stay Focused's mentoring programs motivate our youth to set them on a positive course that will aid them in becoming successful. It's a positive message with a different method. — Bryan Toy

1-4 p.m. // Free // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // Free EMTA transportation from the Booker T. Washington Center, Martin Luther King Center, and John F. Kennedy Center.

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Events Calendar

Nov 11 - 24

MUSIC

Glimpse 2

Nov. 11 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. [facebook.com/events/563649390440185](https://www.facebook.com/events/563649390440185).

Dave VanAmburg & Friends

Nov. 12, 19 -- 6 to 9 p.m.
Bel Aire Marriott Hotel, 2800 W. 8th St. [jazzerie.com](http://www.jazzerie.com).

Colony House Band

Nov. 12, 19 -- 6:30 to 9 p.m.
Colony Pub & Grille, 2670 W. 8th St. [jazzerie.com](http://www.jazzerie.com).

Faculty Recital Series

Nov. 12 -- 8 p.m.
Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

Friday Night Jazz

Nov. 13, 20 -- 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. [jazzerie.com](http://www.jazzerie.com).

Mercyhurst Symphony Orchestra

Nov. 13 -- 8 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

Rodger Montgomery Blues Band

Nov. 13 -- 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub).

Free Concert Arundel Wine Cellars

Nov. 14 -- 2 to 5 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E Main Rd. [lakeeriewinecountry.org](http://www.lakeeriewinecountry.org).

Holiday Tour of Homes

Nov. 14 -- 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. & Nov. 15 -- noon to 4 p.m.
Various Locations, eriephil.org.

Saturday Night Blues

Nov. 14, 21 -- 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. [jazzerie.com](http://www.jazzerie.com).

Mercyhurst Jazz Ensemble

Nov. 14 -- 8 p.m.
Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

Guest Artist and Faculty Recital

Nov. 14 -- 8 to 9 p.m.
Dr. William P. Alexander Music Center, 110 Kiltie Rd. [events.edinboro.edu](https://www.events.edinboro.edu).

The Mallet Brothers Band

Nov. 14 -- 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub).

Chris Higbee

Nov. 14 -- 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. [presqueisledowns.com](http://www.presqueisledowns.com).

The Rocket Queens

Nov. 14 -- 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. [facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace](https://www.facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace).

Gem City Concert Band

Nov. 15 -- 2 to 3:30 p.m.
H.O. Hirt Auditorium, 160 E. Front St. [facebook.com/gemcitybands.org](https://www.facebook.com/gemcitybands.org).

The Spanish Fly: Spoken Word and Rap

Nov. 15 -- 7 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 West 11th St. [thecross.cc](http://www.thecross.cc)

Emily Righter

Nov. 16 -- 8 p.m.
Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

I, The Breather Farewell Tour

Nov. 17 -- 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 West 11th St. [facebook.com/beardedbabyproductions](https://www.facebook.com/beardedbabyproductions).

Gem City Jazz Ensemble

Nov. 17 -- 7 to 8 p.m.
Spring Hill Retirement Center, 2323 Edinboro Rd. [gemcitybands.org](https://www.gemcitybands.org).

Trans-Siberian Orchestra

Nov. 18 -- 4 & 8 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Sinkane

Nov. 19 -- 7:30 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

Violinist Midori

Nov. 20 -- noon to 1 p.m.
WQLN Radio, 8425 Peach St. [wqln.org](http://www.wqln.org).

Mountain Music of Virginia

Nov. 20 -- 8 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Intrepid Travelers

Nov. 20 -- 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub).

The Victory Concert

Nov. 21 -- 1 to 4 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Midori

Nov. 21 -- 7:30 p.m.
Cathedral Prep Auditorium, 250 W. 10th St. [gannon.edu](http://www.gannon.edu).

Tropidelic, The Hornitz & Qwister

Nov. 21 -- 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub).

Tennessee Backporch

Nov. 21 -- 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. [presqueisledowns.com](http://www.presqueisledowns.com).

Thanksgiving Eve Party with Steve Troheske's Art Groupies

Nov. 25 -- 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub).

DANCE

The Enchantment

Under the Sea Dance

Nov. 13 -- 7 to 11 p.m.
The Brewerrie At Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

FOOD & DRINK

Holiday Ladies Night Out

Nov. 12 -- 5 to 8 p.m.
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 East 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Friday the 13th Happy Hour with Acoustic Jukebox

Nov. 13 -- 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. [facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace](https://www.facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace).

International Dining Series: Tour of Tuscany

Nov. 19 -- 6 p.m. (Dinner served at 6:30 p.m.)
Lake View Country Club, 8351 Station Rd. northeast. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

Class of 1985 Reunion (Murder Mystery Dinner)

Nov. 20 -- 7 p.m.
The Brewerrie At Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

Thanksgiving Dinner Wine Pairing

Nov. 21 -- 6 p.m.
Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Rd. [piwine.com](http://www.piwine.com).

Happy Hour with Acoustic Jukebox

Nov. 25 -- 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. [facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace](https://www.facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace).

FILM

Deepsea Challenge

Ongoing through Dec. 31 -- noon & 4 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Tiny Giants

Ongoing through Feb. 1 -- 2 p.m. & 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

D-Day: Normandy 1944 Movie

Nov. 11 through Feb. 1 -- 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. & 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Me and Earl and the Dying Girl

Nov. 11 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (1927)

Nov. 12 -- 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

Friday the 13th (1980)

Nov. 13 -- 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

MET Opera - Tannhauser (Wagner)

Nov. 14 -- 12:55 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

Southpaw

Nov. 15 -- 2 p.m.
Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. [mercystudent.edu](http://www.mercyhurst.edu).

MERU

Nov. 18 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Beauty and the Beast

Nov. 19 -- 5:30 p.m.
Corry Area Primary School, 423 Wayne St. corrypa.com.

The Grand Duel (1972)

Nov. 19 -- 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

Warrior

Nov. 19 -- 8:30 to 10:30 p.m.
Edinboro Film Series, 405 Scotland Rd. [facebook.com/edinborofilmseries](https://www.facebook.com/edinborofilmseries).

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MUSIC REVIEWS

Beach Slang

The Things We Do To Find People Who Feel Like Us



Polyvinyl! 4.5/5 stars

If you're a fan of earnest, anthemic punk rock, you're finally in luck. Philadelphia's Beach Slang have constructed a fist-pumping, heartfelt debut. Sure, their hearts feel eerily similar to the Replacements, but that's alright. This record has that strange combination of nostalgia and newness. Singer James Alex Snyder is a little older than the rest of the band, but he has a fire lit under him. He's preoccupied with concepts like life and youth (see: "Young and Alive"). The sound exists in a world fuzzier than early Gaslight Anthem, and folksier than later Japandroids. You get dynamic moments like "Too Late to Die Young," but mostly scorchers like "Bad Art and Weirdo Ideas." The album's title sets the tone far better than the band's misleadingly surfy name ever did. *The Things We Do* conjures up thoughts of finding that first real group of friends in the scene. Desperately navigating through new social groups, you eventually found what felt like a second family. In the ever-shrinking world of good punk rock, *The Things We Do* is a godsend. – Nick Warren



Disclosure

Caracal
Capitol 3.5



Buoyed by their breakthrough single "Latch," Disclosure's 2013 debut, *Settle*, went platinum in their native England while earning a Grammy nomination. The brothers Lawrence successfully bridged mainstream and underground by inflecting Chicago deep house/UK garage with pop/R&B sensibilities, appealing to purists and casual listeners alike. Disclosure reaches further across the aisle to the mainstream on *Caracal*, recruiting guest vocals from The Weeknd, Lorde, Miguel, and Sam Smith (again). As a result, *Caracal* takes on a smoother/softer edge, and somewhat compromises the bipartisan-ship they maintained so deftly on *Settle*. The tracks featuring lesser known singers sound more Disclosure-like than the celebrity-studded ones. But there is no shortage of hooks here. Perhaps the most irresistible come courtesy of "Jaded" with its singalong chorus, and "Superego," which is like being slapped upside the cochleae in the sexiest argument ever. Fussy listeners may not like *Caracal*'s compromises. But altogether, it's still pretty scrumptious. – Matt Swanseger



Neon Indian

Vega Intl. Night School
Mom + Pop Music 4/5 stars



Vega Intl. Night School is a pulsating, after-hours dance club binge. Chill-wave mastermind Alan Palomo has constructed an album drenched in sweaty, synthesized hooks and brooding bass blasts. His vocals hover in the mix like cigarette smoke, owing as much to Prince as to Animal Collective. This cybernetic hybrid of an 80's horror movie soundtrack and the Miami Vice theme pulls you in. The lyrics illuminate the illicit world of discotheque depravity, forming the album's (loose) concept. The group's first release in just over four years finds them darker and evolved. The production is thicker and more polished than *Era Extraña*'s cassette-tape shakiness. As for the name, fans may recognize the titular "Vega" as Palomo's 2009 moniker. The "night school" part was explained by him as well: "Most of what I've learned about human nature in my twenties has happened after dark... I like to call the places I go to Night Schools." Catch Neon Indian live if you make your way down to Pittsburgh. They'll be at Mr. Smalls on Saturday, Nov. 14. – Nick Warren



Bronsen Euard

Press Start
Independent 3.5 Stars



Erie native Bronsen Euard is off at Shenandoah Conservatory studying music, but he has still managed in his absence to add generously to the Erie music catalog with his five-song EP, *Press Start*. This mellow jazz/funk guitar and vocal project is thoughtfully constructed. Intricate George Benson-like melodic strumming trades the foreground with Euard's vocals, which are like a cross between Brandon Boyd and Joe Jackson. The phrasing is redolent of Jackson's songwriting as well with layered backing vocals and lyrics like "Maybe I will end up where I started, maybe I will end with nothing... who am I to understand why I am?" The album nevertheless has weak spots as so many freshman efforts do. The distorted, noodling solo creeping around in the background of "Geometry" is a discordant mess that ends an otherwise well-produced first effort on a sour note. You can check it out for yourself at bronseneuard.bandcamp.com/album/press-start-ep. – Bryan Toy



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Gamera vs. Guiron (1969)

Nov. 20 -- 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

MET Opera - Lulu (Berg)

Nov. 21 -- 12:55 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

The Phantom of the Opera (1925)

Nov. 21 -- 4 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Nothing Sacred (1937)

Nov. 21 -- 6 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

House on Haunted Hill (1959)

Nov. 21 -- 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Visual Arts

Assembly Required
Ongoing through Dec. 4
Bruce Gallery, Doucette Hall 215 Meadville St. brucegallery.info.

American Landscapes

Ongoing through Dec. 4 -- noon to 7 p.m.
Bruce Gallery, Doucette Hall 215 Meadville St. brucegallery.info.

Stitches: Contemporary Fiber Art Show

Ongoing through Jan. 3 -- 9 a.m.
Cummings Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Land, Sea and Sky: Details from Nature

Ongoing through Jan. 8
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Ian Brill: Storm

Ongoing through Jan. 10
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Connect: Grassroots Efforts to Reshape Our Community

Ongoing through Jan. 10
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartsandculture.org.

Art of the Comic Book

Ongoing through Feb. 7
Erie Art Museum, 411 State

St. erieartmuseum.org

Minyao

Nov. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Cylical Beauty & Recent Sculpture

Nov. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 East 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Water Water Everywhere: Paean to a Vanishing Resource

Nov. 11 through 24
Allegheny College Art Gallery, 520 N. Main St. allegheny.edu.

Water: Elemental, Mutable, Essential

Nov. 11 through 24
Allegheny College Art Gallery, 520 N. Main St. allegheny.edu.

Clay and Fiber Partners

Nov. 13 through Dec. 13 (Opening Reception Nov. 13 -- 7 to 9 p.m.)
Heeschen Gallery, 910 Market St. artsmeadville.org.

Big Zipper Project

Nov. 15, 16, 17, 18 -- 3 to 6 p.m. (Opening Reception Nov. 14 -- 6 to 9 p.m.)
Meadville Neighborhood Center, 245 Chestnut St. facebook.com/MeadvilleNeighborhoodCenter.

Afternoons with Henry

Nov. 21 through Jan. 5 (Opening Reception Dec. 4 -- 7 to 10 p.m.)
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 East 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

THEATRE

Don't Blame it on the Movies

Nov. 11 -- noon
The Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

American Salute

Nov. 11 -- noon
Riverside Inn at Cambridge Springs, One Fountain Ave. theriversideinn.com.

The Producers

Nov. 11 -- 7:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

University Players One Acts

Nov. 12 -- 7:30 p.m.
Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 217 Meadville St. events.edinboro.edu.

Stardust and Sanctuary: Two shows by Annie Pie

Nov. 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 -- 7:30 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. paca1505.com.

Honk!

Nov. 13, 14, 20, 21 -- 7 p.m. & Nov. 14, 15, 21, 22 -- 2 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Medieval Fest at Riverside

Nov. 13, 14, 20, 21 -- 7 p.m. & Nov. 15 -- 2:30 p.m.
Riverside Inn at Cambridge Springs, One Fountain Ave. theriversideinn.com.

Things My Mother Taught Me

Nov. 13, 14, 20, 28, 29 -- 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. & Nov. 15, 22, 29 -- 3 to 5 p.m.
All An Act Theatre, 652 W. 17th St. allanact.net.

Waiting for Godot

Nov. 13, 14, 20, 21 -- 8 p.m.
Renaissance Centre, 2nd Fl. 1001 State St. dramashop.org.

A Canterbury Feast

Nov. 13, 20 -- 7 p.m. & Nov. 14, 21 -- 5:30 p.m.
The Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

The Forever and Ever Endeavor

Nov. 16 -- 7 p.m.
Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 217 Meadville St. facebook.com/LaughRiotErie.

Sweeney Todd

Nov. 19, 20, 21 -- 7 p.m. & Nov. 22 -- 2 p.m.
General McLane High School, 11761 Edinboro Rd. generalmclane.net.

Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella

Nov. 19, 20, 21 -- 7 p.m. & Nov. 21, 22 -- 2 p.m.
Mercyhurst Preparatory School, 538 E. Grandview Blvd. mpplakers.com.

A Life of Galileo

Nov. 19, 20, 21, 22
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St. allegheny.edu.

White Christmas

Nov. 19, 20, 21 -- 7 p.m. & Nov. 22 -- 2 p.m.
Struthers Library Theatre, 302 W. 3rd St. strutherslibrarytheatre.com.

COMMUNITY/VARIETY

Healthy Eating Making Every Nutritious Bite Count

Nov. 11 -- 9 to 11 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Veterans Appreciation Day

Nov. 11 -- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Veterans Day Observance

Nov. 11 -- 11 a.m.
Reeder Hall, 219 Meadville St. events.edinboro.edu.

Vets and Pets

Nov. 11 -- 11 a.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Veterans Luncheon - Sponsored by Highmark

Nov. 11 -- 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Creativity Matters

Nov. 11 -- 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Talk, Chanting and Meditation with Kedarji

Nov. 11, 18 -- 7 to 8:30 p.m.
The Bhakta School of Transformation, 1421 W 41st St. bhaktaschool.org

Lecture: Stress-Related Brain Dysfunction: Implications in the Legal System

Nov. 11 -- 7 p.m.
Ridge Library Great Room, 16 W. Division St. mercyhurst.edu.

Jackass Superstar Preston Lacy

Nov. 11 -- 7 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Fall Homeschool Day - Winter Survival

Nov. 12 -- 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Evening Fireside Talk - Presque Isle's History and Lore

Nov. 12 -- 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Rotary Pavilion, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Puerto Rican Cuisine & Culture with Maria Comstock

Nov. 13 -- 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Harvest Celebration

Nov. 13 -- noon to 5 p.m. & Nov. 14, 15 -- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Lake Erie Wine Country, lakeeriewinecountry.org.

Brass Master Class with Guest Artist, Ben Berghorn

Nov. 13 -- 4 to 5:30 p.m.
Dr. William P. Alexander Music Center, 110 Kiltie Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Painting with Dawn Ziegler

Nov. 13 -- 6 p.m.
North East Arts Council, 25 Vine St. northeastarts.org

Erie Otters vs. Oshawa

Nov. 13 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Boy Scout Troop 52 Garage Sale

Nov. 14 -- 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
West Ridge Fire Station, 3142 W. 26th St. crmdeescott@verizon.net.

Zentangle Jewelry Class

Nov. 14 -- 9 a.m. to noon
North East Arts Council, 25 Vine St. northeastarts.org.

Mercyhurst University Fall Open House

Nov. 14 -- 9 a.m.
Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Adorable Asbury Woods Owls

Nov. 14 -- 10 to 11 a.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Fall Spiritualist Expo

Nov. 14 -- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
ZemZem Shrine Club, 2525 W. 38th St. facebook.com/events/875381775886061.

Christmas in the Country Craft Show

Nov. 14 -- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. & Nov. 15 -- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

Artisan Fair & Music Festival

Nov. 14 -- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. & Nov. 15 -- noon to 3 p.m.
Erie Day School, 1372 W. 6th St. [facebook.com/events/204404053223973](https://www.facebook.com/events/204404053223973).

TedX Erie

Nov. 14 -- 1:30 to 5:30 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Children's Storytime and Craft

Nov. 14 -- 3 to 4 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Erie Otters vs. London

Nov. 14 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

2015 iBelieve Gala

Nov. 14 -- 8 to 11 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier partnershippeps.org.

Erie Friends Worship Group

Nov. 15 -- 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Community Room of the Whole Foods Co-op, 1341 W. 26th St. leym.quaker.org/erie.

Eastside Connections & The Community

Nov. 15 -- 2 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartsandculture.org.

Erie Playhouse Mainstage Auditions

Nov. 15, 16 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Erie Playhouse Youtheatre Auditions

Nov. 16, 18 -- 4 to 6 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Erie Together Community Forum

Nov. 17 -- 9 a.m. to noon
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erietogether.org.

Wise Words for Wellness with Rebecca Wise, PharmD

Nov. 17 -- 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

The Science of Sails

Nov. 17 -- 12:30 to 2 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Gentle Yoga with Karla Bretz

Nov. 17, 24 -- 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Mercyhurst North East Fall Open House

Nov. 17 -- 6 to 8 p.m.
Ridge Health & Safety Building, 16 W. Division St. northeast.mercyhurst.edu.

Mindfulness, Movement & Meditation Class

Nov. 18, 25 -- 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Reiki Therapy Sessions with Paula Pontillo

Nov. 18 -- 2 to 4 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Ask an Expert

Nov. 18 -- 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Millcreek Municipal Building, 3608 W. 26th St. lifeworkserie.org.

Throwaway Society

Nov. 18 -- 6:30 to 8 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Lecture: The 52nd Anniversary of the JFK Assassination: Unanswered Questions

Nov. 18 -- 7 p.m.
Alex Theatre, 16 W. Division St. mercyhurst.edu.

Vibrant Life Series

Nov. 19 -- 12:30 to 2 p.m. & Nov. 23 -- 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Rolling the Dice: The Intersection of Fair Use & Free Speech with Copyright Law

Nov. 19 -- 4 to 6 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartsandculture.org.

Fall for Arts & Culture

Nov. 19 -- 5:30 to 10 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieartsandculture.org.

Art for Education

Nov. 20 -- 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. & Nov. 21 -- 11a.m. to 3 p.m.
The Swan Tavern, 6610 W. Lake

[Rd. facebook.com/1897Events](https://www.facebook.com/1897Events).

Erie Bayhawks vs. Delaware

Nov. 20 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Erie Polar Plunge

Nov. 21 -- 9 a.m. to noon
Presque Isle State Park - Beach 7, 301 Peninsula Dr. specialolympicspa.org.

Pennsylvania Yo-Yo Slam

Nov. 21 -- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

Camp Presque Isle

Nov. 21 -- 2 to 4 p.m.
Pine Tree Pavilion, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Erie Bayhawks vs. Sioux Falls

Nov. 21 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Schooner Porcupine: Help Float the Boat

Nov. 22 -- 1 to 4 p.m.
Bayfront Maritime Center, 40 Holland St. [facebook.com/schoonerporcupine](https://www.facebook.com/schoonerporcupine).

Thanksgiving at Lifeworks

Nov. 24 -- 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Presque Isle After Dark - Gull Point Trail

Nov. 24 -- 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Gull Point Trailhead at Beach 10, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Festival of Trees

Nov. 25, 27, 28 -- 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. & Nov. 29 -- 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

The Great Pumpkin Jam & Thanksgiving Eve Revelry

Nov. 25 -- 7 p.m.
The Brewerrie At Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

Rumble on the Bay Live Boxing

Nov. 25 -- 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Wake Me Up Before You Yo-Yo

... at the Pennsylvania Yo-Yo Slam

By: Matt Swanseger

Walking the dog or cradling a cat is not unheard of on a late autumn afternoon. Nor is engaging either of these activities at Erie's Bayfront Convention Center – after all, it has played host to American Kennel Club events before. But if you're expecting a pet show there on the afternoon of November 21st, you're in for a shock – there will be no Yorkies, only yo-yos when the Pennsylvania Yo-Yo Slam returns to town for a third consecutive year. Nonetheless, the skills on display take hours upon hours of meticulous grooming.

"The tricks that these young adults are doing, they evolve every year. These people aren't just walking the dog [a basic trick in which the yo-yo hovers just above the floor beside the leg] anymore. They're doing cool things that you didn't even know could be done with a yo-yo," says Emily Biddle, communications director of the Erie Sports Commission.

Like Biddle, I was previously an outsider to the yo-yo tournament, which has elevated this ancient toy to modern performance art. Where and when the yo-yo originated is a matter of dispute among historians, with some claiming it was a spinoff of the Chinese diabolo (another still-existent skill toy) and others attributing it to the Greeks. Among those backing the Greeks as the inventors, some contend yo-yos were merely spools for thread or hanging drapes, a mother's instrument rather than a child's. Others point to a painting on a Grecian vase depicting a boy that *appears* to be playing with a yo-yo. All antiquity has left us is a static image, so all we can do is make assumptions (for the lack/impracticality of terra cotta animation panels).

Drape-hanging apparatuses are fun and all, but men like Filipino businessman Pedro Flores were wise in recognizing the yo-yo's potential as a plaything. Flores immigrated to the U.S. in 1928 with a revised design, wherein the string was *looped* around the axle rather than tied. With this innovation came what many consider the godfather of yo-yo tricks, The Sleeper. By tugging ever so slightly near the bottom of the throw, the string catches on the axle and allows the yo-yo to "sleep," or continue spinning at its current height, instead of snapping back into the palm. As a slumbering roommate is the ideal canvas for freestyle cosmetologists, a slumbering yo-yo is the ideal starting point for freestyle string-choreographers.

Freestyle routines are that the axle which tournaments like Yo-Yo Slam revolve around and they are limited only by the imagination and talent level of the performers. Some spin two yo-yos simultaneously, weaving their bodies in and out of the yo-yos' trajectories like a scene from a *Matrix* movie. Others dabble with ratios (e.g., two yo-yos to one string) or opt to go no strings attached, snatching yo-yos out of midair like a gecko snagging his breakfast. It is impressive to behold, especially if you've never witnessed it before.

Mitch Silver, tournament organizer and owner of Fairview skill toy superstore YoYoSam, is hoping for



ROCKFANG

increased visibility for this Yo-Yo Slam by introducing a more TV-friendly format. "At Yo-Yo Slam, we buck the [National Yo-Yo Association] system in favor of presentation and viewership ... It turned the community upside down - some people are very angry about this. But a couple years from now, it should be the premier format for yo-yo competition."

Why are yo-yo vets so wound up about Yo-Yo Slam? First of all, there will be live scoring and feedback from the judges, so both players and viewers can track their progress and evaluate their chances in real-time. In traditional yo-yo contests, no one knows the results until the very end. The second and perhaps most radical departure from the norm is the addition of audience voting to the final round. The spectator vote is of equal weight to each of the three judges at 25 percent, which "heightens the drama and challenges players to ham it up and play to the audience."

Pressure, fates hanging tenuously by a string - this has been the cornerstone of human entertainment for millennia, particularly since the advent of reality television. The structure and construction of the yo-yo has received several tweaks over time, especially within the past 30 years or so. In the early 80's, the Yomega Brain was released, featuring a revolutionary clutch-driven auto-re-

turn system. The clutch grabs the string as the yo-yo spins down, returning it to the player. This helped cultivate an entire generation of new players because it is more forgiving to novices. The materials yo-yos are formed from have likewise been upgraded, with top-flight versions containing up to 75 percent aircraft-grade aluminum and costing upwards of \$200 (Silver has done his part to make aluminum yoy-os more affordable with his Yoyo Zeekio brand and Skill Toy Supply wholesaler).

The constitution of the competitor remains a constant, however. "The competition circuit is - well, competitive," says Silver. "It can be intimidating [for beginners]." He doesn't expect more than 55 yo-yoers to turn out for the tourney, approximately 35 professionals and another 20 amateurs. Past audiences have numbered about 200, but he is positive that the new format will draw bigger crowds - and spawn bigger shows (via sponsorships) in the future.

What goes around, comes around, so come on down to the Bayfront Convention Center on November 21st (it's free, too, so it won't pull on your purse-strings).

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mswanseger@eriereader.com. You can follow him on Twitter @SwazzySwagga or read his blog at squanderoza.com.

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CALENDAR

Special Olympics Pennsylvania hosts Polar Plunge

Party at Beach 7 November 21!



DORI

By: **Mary Birdsong**

You read that right. The first ever Polar Bear Plunge will rock Beach 7 as heartier souls take to the water, while the rest of us watch in horror and admiration.

Why, oh why? Because Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) needs your help raising funds to support athletes and their local programs. According to Jessica Kury, Special Events Manager for SOPA, everything the organization provides, from travel to equipment, is free to the athletes. And the athletes don't just compete once per year, says Kury. "They practice and compete all year long and attend multiple sporting events and competitions."

Kury is anticipating 250 to 300 plunging participants and a total of 350 to 450 total attendees, including spectators. "We are rounding the bend to 200 at this time and there [is] still [time] left to register."

Signing up to plunge can be done in two ways: Individually or as a team. There is a \$50 minimum donation per plunger. Interested? Visit at www.plungepa.org to register yourself or a team.

Not sure you want to commit without a few details about the requirements? Here's the good news: Plungers can go in as far (or not far) as they wish. You are not required to stay in for any particular length of time. "Typically people run in and out," says Kury. The event is more about having fun and being silly than about the plunge itself. "It's an energetic and fun environment that anyone can participate in. You don't need to train for it and you don't have to have a special talent or equipment to participate."

Not interested in plunging but still want to support the cause? You can visit the website and support a registered plunger. Or, you can become a "Too Chicken" sponsor by yourself, or put together a "Too Chicken" Team. Incentive merchandise for a wide variety of donation levels is available online.

Whether you are watching or plunging, Special Olympics have an array of activities to keep you amused and warm in Plunge Town, as they're calling it. Sheetz will be on hand with free coffee and hot chocolate, which you can sip while grooving to the soulful rock of The Vendettas or the up-and-coming M4, an Erie band named the 2015 Tri-C High School Rock Off winner earlier this year at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Food vendors will be available, but they encourage tailgating, so bring your own food, too (no "open containers" or open flames). Pitch a tent to stave off chilly winds, but be sure to come out of it to watch the ice carving demonstration and enjoy juggler extraordinaire, Geoff Bach.

Action Shots of Erie will be on hand to photograph the brave plungers and will make available on-site a wide range of products from photos to photo gift items ranging in price from \$8 to \$25. Mementos will also be available online after the event.

Whichever way you decide to participate, this event supports more than 18,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities across the state. Very cool.

Registration 9:00 to 11:30 a.m., plunge at Noon // Beach 7, Presque Isle State Park // \$50 minimum donation to plunge; free to spectators // plungepa.org

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Ellis Looks Back to See Forward

Local artist selected to screen film on immigration



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: Ben Spегgen

We can often trace our roots to it. That single point at the tip of the funnel that served as the gateway to independence, opportunity, and a land of the free and home of the brave. Where dreamers could dream, makers could make, and doers could stare out at the horizon bearing witness to plentiful potential. For many, Ellis Island was the chamber through which the old world passed into new.

Captured in a narrative, short film, *Ellis* explores immigration with Academy Award Winner Robert De Niro at the center, Academy Award Winner Eric Roth behind the words, and renowned anonymous French artist JR guiding the direction. Thanks to local artist Michael Engro, the film will be screened at the Erie Art Museum at 6:45 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 11, with a ticket price of \$5.

"I have followed the artist JR and his large-scale collaborations for about ten years now," Engro said. "JR posted an open call on Instagram to host screenings nationwide, and I jumped on it ... and was selected to host a screening in Erie."

JR's *UNFRAMED* art installations depicting immigrants and their stories populate an abandoned Ellis Island Hospital complex that serves as the setting for the "forgotten story of the immigrants who build America," the film's description reads. "It is the story of the ghosts of our country's past, the individuals who fled poverty, discrimination, and dictatorships for a chance at a new life." The film's dark images augur similar struggles endured by New Americans and capture challenges faced by immigrants throughout the world seeking something better

somewhere else.

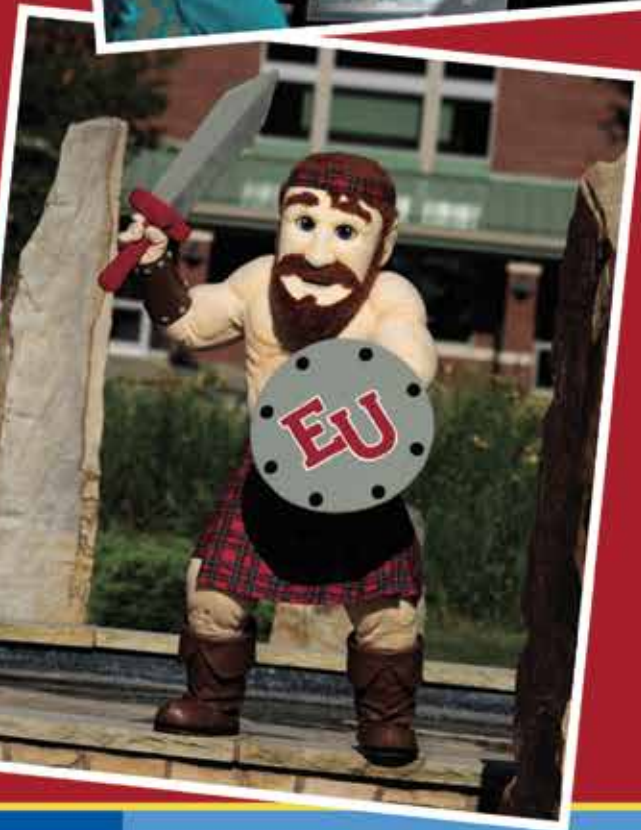
"As an artist, I'm honored to be able to share an important work by one of my favorite artists with my hometown," said Engro, whose own ancestors passed through Ellis Island on their way from Italy to America. "I spent a lot of time doing street art in Philadelphia, and JR is arguably one of the top five most influential street artists on the planet. JR and his works regularly influence my own artwork. I hope

Captured in a narrative, short film, *Ellis* explores immigration with Academy Award Winner Robert De Niro at the center, Academy Award Winner Eric Roth behind the words, and renowned anonymous French artist JR guiding the direction.

to create art on the giant scale that he does with my own works someday soon."

Engro, along with Erie Mural Arts partner Tom Ski, will conduct a live mural during and after the screening, as part of fulfilling the mission behind these nationwide screenings to be "creatively implemented" and provide "an opportunity for conversation on immigration today."

Ben Spегgen can be contacted at bSpегgen@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpегgen.



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CONNECT for the Community

Exploring Erie's east side opportunity

By: Ben Speggen

Say east side to someone in Erie and certain images, phrases, and descriptions rush to mind. "Opportunity," "potential," and "development" are chief amongst the responses for the folks behind a recently installed exhibition at the Erie Art Museum.

Spread corner to corner (even with details sprawled out on the floor), *CONNECT: Grassroots Efforts to Reshape Our Community* currently occupies the Hagen and Katzwinkel Galleries. The exhibit's description is stirring, yet poignant and worthy of a slow, careful read:

The bones of this city are still beautiful, but major arteries have been severed. Violence and hopelessness prevail in communities cut off from financial, educational, environmental, and aesthetic resources. This exhibit examines the health of the whole city through several visionary projects that seek to diagnose its ailments, proposing a treatment plan that takes into consideration the people most afflicted. Let's come together – connect, communicate, and collaborate on a solution to make Erie great.

CONNECT will be up until Jan. 10, 2016. The last *CONNECT* for the Community Event, however, where attendees will look at the projects and plans in this exhibit and then gather for a facilitated discussion on how they connect to the Erie community, will be held at the Erie Art Museum on Sunday, Nov. 15 at 2 p.m.

There, Chris Magoc, a Mercyhurst University

history professor, will join with the Sisters of St. Joseph East to ignite dialogue through the architectural history of east Erie.

Erie politicians are weighing in, too. The "Lake Erie Quadrangle" proposed by County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper explores the establishment of a federally designated marine sanctuary to protect the more than one-hundred shipwrecks that populate Presque Isle

The City-County collaborative energy between architect and City Councilman Dave Brennan and County Councilman Jay Breneman aims to convert the former 19th Street railroad tracks into a green-space to serve as a walkway, a bikeway, and an overall welcome alternative to the overgrown and neglected brush blighting it now.

Bay and Lake Erie, snaking along New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

The City-County collaborative energy between architect and City Councilman Dave Brennan and County Councilman Jay Breneman aims to convert the former 19th Street railroad tracks into a green-space to serve as a walkway, a bikeway, and an overall welcome alternative to the overgrown and neglected brush blighting it now.

Also on the east side, the East Avenue Task Force, spearheaded by City Councilman Bob Merski, targets – you guessed it – East Avenue, to revitalize an area wracked by gun crimes.

There's a 24-hour youth center concept (Steve DeAngelo Arrington Community Center, championed by City Councilwoman Sonya Arrington); a novel aquaponics facility to be built at the Joyce A. Savocchio Business Park (headed by the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation's Gary Horton); and a Civitas-led initiative to steer the future of the McBride Viaduct from demolition to repurposing.

The Jefferson Alliance for Community Progress illustrates a vision to connect the east side to Presque Isle with an underground tunnel, while Bike Erie seeks to expand the existing path hugging the Bayfront Parkway to a twenty-mile urban trail. And Ross Schlemmer and Kim Powell showcase narrative-based artworks that map out how Erie sees its reflection in the mirror of art.

In all, there's a lot to see – and even more to consider. What's greater yet is the opportunity for interaction. After all, productive, open dialogue spurred by art at a community meeting that's free and open to the public seems like a damned fine way to spend a Sunday afternoon, and chart out the future of a region still ripe with dreamers and doers.

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

Kindred Spirits

Conversation and Book Reading with Sister Joan Chittister at the new Studio at St. Mary's on Nov. 18



Left, Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, voted "Best Resident" in the Reader's Best of Erie Awards, now turns her writer's eye towards the human connection with animals.

made me aware of another whole level of what it means to be alive. They gave me a much broader vision than it would have been if I had shaped it for myself ..."

Sure, pets are family members, but can they also be spiritual guides? Sister Joan Chittister thinks so. She'll explain why in a discussion and reading of her latest book, *Two Dogs and a Parrot: What Our Animal Friends Can Teach Us About Life*, at the newly formed writing Studio at St. Mary's, located in the former St. Mary's elementary school.

Two Dogs and a Parrot relates the relationships Chittister had with the dogs Duffy and Danny, and a parrot, Lady. Each story is a relatable tale in which she learns profound life lessons beyond the simple narrative of a minor event.

Chittister writes, "animals drew me out of myself and

The event will also include excerpts from the new biography of Chittister, *Joan Chittister: from Certainty to Faith*, written by Tom Roberts.

Light refreshments will be provided and several of Chittister's other books will be available for purchase and signing.

Reservations are appreciated, and should be made by calling 459.9224 or sending an email to Sister Mary Ellen Plumb at maryellenosb1@yahoo.com by Nov. 16. – Mary Birdsong

5 to 6:30 p.m. // *The Studio* At St. Mary's, 310 East 10th St., use parking lot entrance // 459.9224

Free Office Space Contest for Veterans

Renaissance Centre, LTD is giving away free office space (including utilities) for one year. Owner Tom Kennedy wants to give back to those who have served our country by helping a business – new or existing. Up to 2,000 square feet of space will be given to the winner. Kennedy stated, "Given the amazing response and success of our contest last year to support small business, we wanted to do something even more special this year, and decided it would be great to serve veterans and their families who would benefit from a hand up in their busi-

ness." Veteran-owned businesses are an underserved segment of the economy, and when Kennedy looked back on his own experience in the Navy and how much it helped him in his business, it seemed like a natural fit to make veterans the focus of this year's office giveaway.

To enter, go to RenaissanceErie.com and submit a paragraph stating how free office space would benefit you and your business. You will then be contacted to schedule a tour of the building. U.S. veterans, those who served, as well as spouses and children are eligible. A panel of judges unrelated to Renaissance Centre will choose the winner.

Geeked Out

Thanksgiving board game recommendations for conflict-free family contests.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

German-style board games like *Carcassonne* and *Ticket to Ride* emphasize player interaction with a small element of chance to keep things fresh.

By: John Lindvay

Thanksgiving is fast approaching and it's high time I share some kick-ass board games to play on my favorite holiday. Board games are the perfect post-turkey *digestif*. Classics like *Scrabble* and *Monopoly* work fine to bring loved ones together, but allow me to suggest some other top-notch games that won't have you cursing at your sibling for stacking hotels on Park Place.

Carcassonne and *Ticket to Ride* are both German-style board games that have achieved popularity outside Europe.

So what is a German-style (or European-style) board game, exactly? Where American classics like *Monopoly* often heavily rely on random dice rolls and chance, German-style games emphasize player interaction throughout the game with a small element of chance to keep things fresh.

Carcassonne is one of those great games often held next to *Settlers of Catan*, which has been referred to as "the game of our time." *Carcassonne* won the *Spiel des Jahres* (Game of the Year) in 2001. Thematically, the game is based on the French medieval fortified town, Carcassonne. Players build up the village by placing tiles. On a

turn, a player blindly selects a tile and then must connect it to existing tiles on the board, ensuring that the edges match. A farm edge must match another farm, and roads must connect to other roads. The game is complete once all the tiles are placed.

Placing tiles provides that same satisfaction as piecing together a puzzle. But in *Carcassonne*, there is an added layer of strategy revolving around placing followers — or "Meeples" as they are affectionately called — on farms, roads, and cities. After all tiles are placed, players receive points for the areas their followers inhabit, and for the number of tiles they've contributed to each farm, road, or city.

What I love about this game is its layer of personal strategy. Trying to work against other players isn't as valuable as focusing on your own play. This removes some of the antagonistic practices that board games are notorious for. *Carcassonne* shares qualities with dominos or jigsaw puzzles, but with modest strategy. It's often referred to as a great "gateway game" to the growing world of tabletop.

Ticket to Ride is another *Spiel des Jahres* winner. The game's board shows train lines on various continents, depending on which version

you're playing. The American version's train routes cross the continental U.S. Players draw a hand of cards depicting colored train cars. Routes between cities can be constructed by players drawing up a set of matching colored train cars that equal the same distance between cities. For instance, the route between Chicago and Detroit might be three cars long, so matching three of any color allows a player to place her train on that route and claim it. The game is over once one player's trains are all placed, and then players tally scores to find a winner.

Ticket to Ride shares many of the same principles I love in *Carcassonne*: The gameplay is strategic, but individual players have very limited actions per turn. This keeps the

Trying to work against other players isn't as valuable as focusing on your own play. This removes some of the antagonistic practices that board games are notorious for.

game moving and prevents that one relative from taking *forever*. (Seriously, those people are the worst!) Both games allow for some aggressive play, but make it hard to be that guy or gal who is out to screw everyone else over; it's much better to focus on your own goals. This allows the board game to become a context for conversation over the dinner table after enjoying a mighty feast.

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

[Cont. from page 17] place can we stand and say "This is us"? It's almost as if our economy's gutting by corporate downsizing and outsourcing in the 90s and the apprehension and further calamity created by the Great Fuckery of 2008 have turned us into a collective teenager: gangly, unsure, and plagued by an almost-hormonal desperation for identity, a point made previously in the *Reader* by Jim Wertz.

And this reversion to primordial form is, on balance, an entirely enviable place in which to be, because it means that we are now positioned to decide finally and for ourselves to become *whatever we want*.

What is Hope, or Sunsets Don't Save Lives (Thanks, Johann)

In order to own who and what we are, we must first make certain determinations.

About six years ago, an old industrial space on the east side was removed so that the property owner could save money on the improved-property taxes he annually paid, a loss to the city of almost \$100,000 per year. Though the details are lost to memory, one thing remains sharp: when asked about the loss of the much-needed yearly income, a council member — or some other kind of politician — said that the deficit represented a hit to Erie's already-fraught circumstances but that we ought to continue to hope for improvement, as if to say — like Dickens' foolishly hopeful character Micawber — "Something will turn up." In this case, what does his suggestion mean?

Nothing, actually. It's just words. It's useless, other than as a sound bite.

Our Eyes Are in Wrong

Most people think of hope as simply an optimistic attitude or good wish for the future. And to a large extent that is the case. However, positive thinking does little good when the issue one faces is forward progress. One can hold out as much hope as possible, but without action, nothing actually *happens*. Erie should at this time not be casting its bread upon the waters of the world, as the politician seemed to suggest, but should re-frame hope. That is, we ought to begin to see hope as the product of a well-lived past. Hope, in reality, is what one gets when that well-lived past allows one to look forward to the successful repetition of desirable and useful patterns: todays which will im-



Left: Two faces of the Boston Store Clock tell two different times. If that's not weird, we don't know what is. Below: Erie artists John Vahanian and David Seitzinger's whimsical 1978 piece Nimbus invites Erie Art Museum visitors to keep looking up.

prove because of a solid foundation of yesterdays.

So regarding these actions — owning ourselves, growing up, and so on — what can we do?

Don't Keep Erie Weird — Rather, Make Erie Weird

Let's conduct a thought experiment. For our touchstone, we will take a type of periodical which has appeared in book stores in the past few years: post-apocalyptic survival guides, magazines which are designed to sell high-quality survival gear such as rip-stop fabric jackets, paracord, tortoise-shell backpacks, machetes, tactical boots, and so on. The covers of these magazines and the adverts therein are very telling of the mindset to which they are meant to appeal. A lone protagonist walks through black rain in the remains of an urban area brought to waste by social, economic, and environmental collapse, walking well-camouflaged and confidently apart from unseen terrors in a high-contrast, slick-as-HD, *Mad Max*-style movie scene.

Tough, gritty, and self-contained, he is clearly ready for whatever the waste of the world can throw at him.

Cinematics aside, contemplating a collapse of our country or even of the whole world is not too far of a walk

— even for the most sober-minded among us. Again, 2008 showed us that the economically-globalized world is, for all its power, an interconnected system that privileges few without consideration to the vast majority of people and is tenuously placed, at that. Peak oil is not far off. Environmental issues abound, and large corporations operate with virtual impunity on the principle that everything can and should be owned. In fact, economic architects Geithner and Bernanke were given executive-level positions in the government instead of jail sentences, and so far four of Hillary Clinton's campaign's top ten contrib-

utors are banks who precipitated the global economic collapse in 2008. Here, we hear that Erie is dead or at least dying and some of us are looking ahead to relatively dark times, the ultimate outcome of which might resemble the inside of those post-apocalyptic magazines.

Consider this, however: between where we are now and where the hysteria of those magazines points us, hundreds of things will have to happen. The future is not etched in marble, monolithic. Let us pretend for a moment that the dire reality of one of those magazines has in fact materialized, though.

Living in that reality and looking backward, what would we wish we had done? Living in that reality and trying to survive, what would we then do? Re-localize the economy? Why not. Change our ideas about what constitutes "work?" Sure. Maintain indoor, urban gardening in unused spaces? Of course. Build and rely upon wind and solar power? The grid is no more, so yes. Re-fit roadways for foot, bike, or even horse traffic? Indeed. Grow hemp against federal law for use as fuel and textiles? What federal law?

One could easily go on to list any number of things that, in such circumstances, we ought to have done or will need to do. So, the question is this: Why not simply do all of those things now?

As the philosopher Griffith indicated in one of his inspirational tags, no one is watching us. We are on our own and are able to do whatever we want to. We can do as a city what the poet Rilke suggested Kappus do as a creative person when asked how to proceed as an artist: go within and act from our own sense of what is true, without regard to the customs and mores of larger society. "Nobody can advise you and help you, nobody," Rilke said. "There is only one way. Go into yourself."

There is no such thing as endless, upward economic growth. Even if there were, we can dismiss it as nothing more than a tool of control. Contribute to the progress or you are no longer part of meaningful society; watch your credit rating, or you won't be able to easily belong; get that FICO score to at least "Above Average"; become eligible — all of these are little more than carrots held before the mule of the economy as it currently exists. An economy which promises endless growth but does nothing more than deliver money where money already existed. No endless economic growth. There is, however, no limit to *human* growth. The world is as we make it. The world can be whatever we wish. In this, we have the power of the Universe: we can make ideas reality.

So, *Make Erie Weird*.

Online extra: We've included a few choice excerpts from Richard Boler's 1982 Showcase piece that just may have started the whole "Keep ___ Weird" phenomenon. Check them out at eriereader.com.



ER Sports

Local “Super Fans” make it easier to face the snowy months ahead.

By: James R. LeCorchick

With college basketball underway already, it's time to forget football for a bit and take a look at some hoops. And one of the first things I think of is the reappearance of “Super Fans” that help make this an exciting area for basketball.

This means it's time for Pat Dunn (Mercyhurst) and Everett Wensel (Gannon).

I love the passion of this dynamic duo and it certainly helps me get through the snowy months ahead. Here are a couple short bios on our “Super Fans.”

EVERETT WENSEL

AGE: 26

HIGH SCHOOL: Maplewood

COLLEGE: Gannon (2011) undergraduate; (2012) graduate

OCCUPATION: Accountant



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This fanatic laughed as he explained, “I have always been for the teams of the schools I attended. I went to Maplewood High School where I was the manager of the football team.” You could feel the passion as he added, “I’ll never forget the day we beat Union City in football, ending our 33-game losing streak.”

That passion transferred to Gannon University when Wensel moved north as he is now a fan of all Gannon sports, and in attendance at many of the contests home and away. And that’s not easy, considering he lives in Rouseville. So, actually, away games are sometimes easier for him to get to than home games. But that doesn’t stop him

from trekking to the Hammermill Center in blizzard-like conditions where he is a fixture – with his face painted – for hoops.

He pointed out that he was in the stands for several Golden Knight soccer games this season and it’s no surprise to see him show up for any event that has a GU team competing – home or away. “I just love these games,” he explained.

When asked about some memorable moments from his college alma mater, Wensel said, “The year the women’s basketball team had a 37-1 record was great, but watching them fail to hold on to an 18-point lead in the national semi-finals was extremely painful.”

The game was played in Missouri and was Everett there? Of course he was.

Regarding Mercyhurst “Super Fan” Pat Dunn, GU booster Wensel commented, “I know him. He’s their one loyal fan. He’s really a good guy. We have a lot of fun before Gannon and Mercyhurst games, and we text back and forth before them.”

PAT DUNN

AGE: 64

HIGH SCHOOL: Academy

COLLEGE: Mercyhurst (1979)

OCCUPATION: Employed at Lord Corporation

The “big fella” sitting in the front row at Mercyhurst games, showing off his trademark over-the-head clap, is Pat Dunn, a 1978 MU graduate. Some opposing fans find him irritating and obnoxious, while I find him passionate, entertaining, and enjoyable.

Think what you want, but nothing is going to change Dunn’s fervor for Laker athletics.

While in high school, Dunn was on the Lions’ bowling team and he told me, “I used to go the football and basketball games, but my interest level was not the same as for Mercyhurst sports.”

When asked if he knew exactly when he developed his love for Hurst athletics, he quickly answered, “1983! That was the year my daughter was born.”

While admitting basketball “is [his] favorite sport,” he did point out that a couple of his favorite MU moments came off the hardwood. He fondly re-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Left: Gannon “Super Fan” Everett Wensel’s now-famous countenance after a loss; Above right: Pat Dunn, Wensel’s “colleague” at Mercyhurst, in the midst of his trademark over-the-head clap.

members Richard Stokes scoring five touchdowns against rival Gannon in a win and also a Thursday night thriller at Edinboro University when the Lakers emerged victorious after the Fighting Scots missed a couple of golden opportunities to claim the win late.

One of his favorite hoops memories came just last season when the Lakers garnered an NCAA bid. “This was really special,” he explained. “After all

or Mercyhurst fan to enjoy the excitement created by the “Super Fans.”

Congratulations to Mercyhurst University’s men’s hockey coach Rick Gotkin, one of the all-time nice guys in Erie sports. The Laker boss picked up his 500th win recently when the Lakers defeated The Air Force Academy.

And good luck finding someone who doesn’t have something nice to say about Coach Gotkin.

I love the passion of this dynamic duo and it certainly helps me get through the snowy months ahead.

these years of waiting, and being so close many times, it was a thrill to see Coach Manchell and his team get the selection.

“Coach promised this when he first took the job and he delivered.”

Dunn also enjoys the effort of baseball coach Joe Spano and his squad.

However, with all the successes he has witnessed on the playing fields, he is extremely proud that he was presented the Sister Damien Spirit Award in 2009. He explained, “There was no bigger fan than Sister Damien. I will never forget her passion for Mercyhurst and I can still see her showing up at the games with a cow bell in one hand and holy water in the other.”

Regarding his colleague at Gannon, Dunn says, “Everett is absolutely terrific. We hit it off right away and it has made this great rivalry even more fun.”

And you don’t have to be a Gannon

It’s time to get serious as high school football playoffs are set to get underway. After a solid season of pigskin picks, it’s time to clean the slate and start selecting anew.

HIGH SCHOOL PLAYOFFS

Sharpsville 45 Maplewood 12
West Middlesex 22 Iroquois 20
Farrell 48 Eisenhower 14
Wilmington 21 Cambridge Springs 20
Sharon 26 Harbor Creek 20
Greenville 26 Fort LeBoeuf 22
Hickory 34 North East 20
Fairview 28 Slippery Rock 18
Conneaut 49 East 14
Central Tech 42 Franklin 34
Cathedral Prep 35 Meadville 21
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NOVEMBER 21 - Division Street Machine (Unplugged)

NOVEMBER 27 - Mid-Life Crisis (Unplugged)

NOVEMBER 28 - Saxsation



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IN NOVEMBER

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FRIDAYS AT 8PM • SATURDAYS AT 9PM

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NOVEMBER 14

Chris Higbee

NOVEMBER 20

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NOVEMBER 27

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