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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

We must cultivate our garden.

Voltaire's *Candide* is the story of a naive traveler trying to reconcile his tutor's philosophy that this is "the best of all possible worlds" with the litany of horrifying events and desperate characters he encounters during a long, outrageous journey. Thousands perish in the Lisbon earthquake. Women are raped and owned. Priests get away with decidedly non-Christian behavior. Soldiers are punished for inadequate barbarism. Wealthy countries plunder and enslave those less "developed."

Though *Candide* was first published in 1759, its satirical take on current events is painfully contemporary, given the onslaught of horrifying headlines we're bombarded with daily. Thus, *Candide*'s sense of overwhelming helplessness and exhaustion feels utterly familiar.

His tutor attempts to justify even the worst of society's ills with "everything happens for a reason"-style dismissal. But *Candide* loses faith in this intellectualizing and explaining, which distance him from his own human empathy.

Toward the end of the story, he meets a contented Turk who doesn't overly concern himself with the trials of nearby Constantinople. "I presume in general that they who meddle with the administration of public affairs die sometimes miserably, and that they deserve it," he tells *Candide*. The Turk, instead, has turned his attention to his family's ability to grow sustaining food on their little plot of land.

"Our labour preserves us from three great evils — weariness, vice, and want," the Turk explains.

Martin, *Candide*'s most Taoist traveling companion, agrees. "Let us work," [says] Martin, "without disputing; it is the only way to render life tolerable."

Though ignoring the world at large would be wholly irresponsible, *Candide* is a great reminder that choosing action gains us power over paralysis. And this issue once again features several examples of those spearheading right action locally.

In arguing that "Erie desperately needs a win, having long ago reached a point where financial woes became excuses for doing nothing," sociologist Josh Morgan states that "The McBride Viaduct is a platform for innovation waiting to be utilized." A group of local leaders invites supporters to convene at City Hall on Dec. 16, to convert advocacy into action.

In recommending a few great options for locally-produced gift ideas, Jim Wertz says that "The holidays give us an opportunity to support some pretty great local employers as well as a host of independently employed local people, many of whom give back to the region in ways both seen and unseen, celebrated and unmentioned."

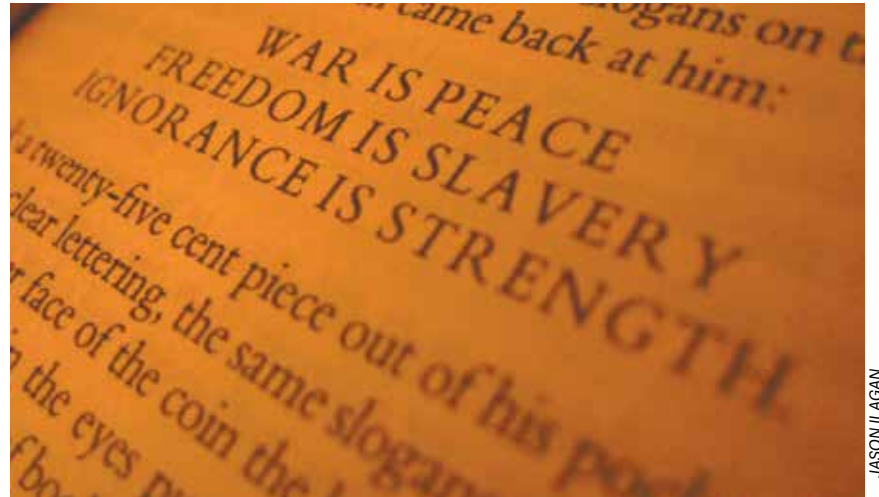
And in explaining how Kraus Department Store has maintained a symbiotic relationship with its surrounding community for over 125 years, general manager Rory Nowosielski tells Matt Swanseger, "I care about *Erie*."

The last line in Voltaire's masterpiece is spoken by *Candide*, himself. Reflecting on all that he has witnessed, he determines the ideal way to make sense of the world: "Let us cultivate our garden."

Likewise, the best shot we have at bettering our community comes from our ability to remain locally active despite intensely distressing news. And as always, we need look no further than our fellow Erieites for inspiration.

Just a Thought

Orwell was right. War is peace. And vice versa.



JASON ILAGAN

By: Katie Chriest

On Marshall Drive, along the fence enclosing Erie International Airport, a sign reads, "Caution: Low Flying Aircraft."

I've driven, biked, and walked that road, but I've never figured out what that sign is trying to tell me. Is it suggesting, in the event an aircraft flies a little too low, that I duck?

Color-coded Homeland Security ratings at airports after the Sept. 11 attacks were similarly baffling. Intermittently, a recorded loudspeaker voice would, with just enough cautionary authority (what were those auditions like?), announce that an "orange alert," for instance, had been issued. Color charts explained just how terrified we should be.

But the most these warnings could ever do was worry us. Generate fear. Breed suspicion. Plant the seed of wariness that grew into defensiveness against our fellow humans.

If there was an orange alert, weren't we more likely to look dubiously at other passengers who fit the racial profile of the accused du jour?

Isn't this exactly where we are right now?

Even Erie's own Tom Ridge, former Homeland Security Secretary, questioned the ratings' viability. As CNN.com reported, "in 2009, Ridge wrote in a tell-all book that sometimes officials such as Ashcroft and Rumsfeld pressured the department to change the level, describing a 2004 event in which his arguments against raising the alert worked."

CNN.com referenced a passage from Ridge's book: "I consider the episode to be not only a dramatic moment in Washington's recent history, but another illustration of the intersection of politics, fear, credibility, and security ... After that episode, I knew I had to follow through with my plans to leave the federal government."

Ridge resigned, and the color-coded threat system was retired in 2011. But the political practice of fear-mongering keeps getting promoted.

Our bodies react to fear via our sympathetic nervous system, creating a "fight or flight" response that ramps up adrenaline and puts us in a reactionary, anxious state.

Conversely, our parasympathetic nervous system – halted during times of panic – is responsible for the "rest and digest" response. It lets us integrate sensory input with earned wisdom. Take a breath. Gain perspective. Then calmly determine how to rationally respond.

After President Bush's post-9/11 statement that America was in a state of war (despite life as usual for most of us), Slavoj Žižek wrote that we entered "a time in which a state of peace itself can at the same time be a state of emergency."

History tells us that peace will not be created by leaders who use fear to manipulate power. We owe it to ourselves to take a deep breath and create our own. Our freedom depends on it.

Katie Chriest can be contacted at katie@ErieReader.com.

Growing Erie by Feeding Erie

It's time to embrace, celebrate, and champion the culinary arts of Erie.



BRAD TRIANA

By: Ben Speggen

Like its Keystone State brethren of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Erie has largely been a shot-and-a-beer kind of place. Maybe it stems from long hours in hot factories relieved by a cold, crisp pilsner. Perhaps it comes from a quick nip of brown elixir to stiffen the spine after a day of backbreaking toil. Perchance simplicity was the order du jour.

Likewise, Erie has been a meat-and-potatoes kind of place. You know, the standard fare of a protein drowned in a sauce borne of its own making, sided with a heavy starch, and garnished by an over-boiled green something served steaming hot. A stick-to-your-ribs kind of sleep-inducing meal that gets you ready to grind again tomorrow.

But in the 21st century, much like our bigger urban brothers, Erie's tastes are evolving. Kind of.

True, macro-produced swill remains on tap and on special for less than two hours of paid street parking at a fair number of Erie establishments. But the Erie region now lays claim to more than ten microbreweries, illustrating that the craft beer movement has found fertile ground in the soils just off of Lake Erie. And while greasy spoon diners and bar-food-slinging pubs still abound, craft food isn't hard to find either.

But the city embraces, celebrates, and champions beer and food differently.

We have the Lake Erie Ale Trail. Spanning north from Westfield, N.Y. to North East, to Venango and Meadville in the south, with Erie situated in between, the trail proves that this Rust Belt region still excels in making stuff – delicious liquid stuff.

The Trail is a no-brainer to market to Erieites and out-of-towners alike. The celebration of good beer made by good people served at good prices knows no age restriction (aside from being over 21). Young or old, people visit regions just to sample craft beer.

So why – aside from the recently-launched and closed-during-the-winter independently-operated Erie Food Tours – aren't we doing the same for restaurants in Erie?

Take Morgantown, W.Va., for example. On Dec. 5, this Appalachian city on the come-up, notching less than a third of Erie's population, offered Morgantown Eats Culinary Crawl: a four-hour, \$35-per-person romp through six different restaurants, organized through the partnership of 20 WVU Reed College of Media students and the Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau, Main Street Morgantown, and the Monongalia Arts Center.

But that's really just the appetizer. On the same day, the First Annual Morgantown Restaurant Week kicked off. During this seven-day stretch, restaurants offered special menu items and reduced prices to attract the never-been-befores and the I've-always-wanted-to-try-that-but-thought-it-might-be-too-expensives.

This concept isn't novel to Morgantown. A lot of urban areas attract foodies with crawls and weeks. These incentivize trying something new and eating something local, aiming to diversify and expand people's palates.

And their success is being noticed outside the culinary realm.

In *Global City Blues*, Dan Solomon, director of Solomon E.T.C., a WRT company, and principal of the architecture firm WRT, writes, "architects and

With creative food options blossoming, including the emergence of food trucks like *The Que Abides*, imagine a restaurant week in Erie where the downtown comes alive to celebrate culinary innovation.

urbanists frequently look with envy to the foodies for their huge cultural accomplishment." They have spurred new American creations, Solomon argues, and they've affected the places around them, like grocery stores and supermarkets, by encouraging a shift from the propensity to stock pre-packaged, processed products to offering fresh produce and more carefully selected ingredients.

Smart cities showcase these achievements, understanding their implications for the city as a whole.

"The analogy between cities and food is clear: In both cases, the changes we are trying to bring about require us to remake an entire industry while at the same time changing deeply held cultural tastes," writes Gabriel Metcalf, president of the urban planning and policy think tank SPUR, in *Democratic By Design*.

We are reconciling our shot-and-a-beer tendencies with our craft-beer curiosities; so should we be shaping Erie's potential through our foodie future – the foundation of which is present now. With creative food options blossoming (here's looking at you, too, food trucks!), imagine a restaurant week in Erie where the downtown comes alive to celebrate culinary innovation. Imagine such a week in winter – when we hear most loudly that there's nothing to do here. Imagine daring to do this twice a year, perhaps also during Celebrate Erie, to enjoy a true, fuller taste of Erie.

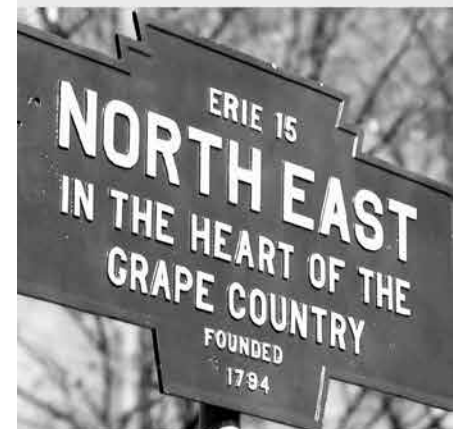
Then, a booming urban core in our future isn't hard to imagine at all.

But if we continue to ignore our food-and-drink crafters, creators and makers of great new products and menus here just might start looking for eager places elsewhere to serve their dishes and drinks in weeklong celebrations and more.

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



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News of the Weird

Now DJs can spin records of the spin cycle.

By: Chuck Shepherd

It's Snot Hygienic

The manager of the agency in Louisville, Kentucky, responsible for, among other things, development planning, zoning changes and historic landmarks revealed in November that his headquarters has a "boogers" problem and ordered users of the third-floor men's room to stop hocking them onto the walls adjacent to the urinals. According to an internal memo cited by Insider-Louisville.com, Metro Planning and Design Services manager Joe Reverman called the mucus buildup "a very serious situation" and had his executive administrator post signs instructing restroom users on the basics of proper disposal of "anything that comes out of or off a person's body." [Insider-Louisville.com, 11-18-2015]

Great Art!

The 1968 Cy Twombly "blackboard" painting sold for \$70.5 million at New York City's Sotheby's auction in November (higher than experts' estimate of \$60 million). The painting consists of six horizontal lines of continuous circular swirls (white chalk on a "blackboard") – perhaps the same swirls that might be made by an extremely bored, aggressive first-grader given a supply of chalk and the absence of the teacher. [Artnet News, 11-11-2015]

The Baltimore-based "experimental music" creators Matmos announced the release of their new album, "Ultimate Care II," consisting entirely of "music" made by a Whirlpool washing machine (the Ultimate Care II model). According to a November report in Time magazine, the machine's 38-minute wash cycle will be "sampled and processed" to lighten the original sound. (Matmos previously "played" canisters of helium on stage at Radio City Music Hall and a cow's uterus at the San Francisco Art Institute.) [Time.com, 11-9-2015]

Cultural Diversity

In an enterprise somewhat resembling "American Idol," amateur performers in China become self-supporting online not by soliciting money directly, but through virtual gifts from enthralled fans, with performers getting a cut of each sale. Beijing's YY.com hosts original performances, and two of the site's favorites, Mr. Earth and Ms. Cloud, earned the equivalent of about \$160,000 last year from their universe of 1.8 million fans (according to a November Wall Street Journal report). In an ancillary industry (led by 9158.com), hard-core fans can purchase access (think "virtual limousines," shown "arriving" at a "concert"), giving them bragging rights. (A simple "applause" icon after a song costs about a penny.) [Wall Street Journal, 11-11-2015]

Bright Ideas

The exasperated drug enforcement chief of Indonesia told reporters in November (following confiscation of a massive quantity of methamphetamine from China) that the ordinary death penalty was insufficient for drug runners, who should instead be forced to overdose on their own shipments. Budi Waseso also mused that crocodiles would make better prison guards than humans because crocs can't be bribed and later added tigers and piranhas to the proposed guard roster. Even so, Waseso's boss reiterated that the government is committed to rehabilitation over punishment. [Australian Broadcasting Corp. News, 11-13-2015][Jakarta Globe, 11-22-2015]

New World Order

Watch Your Language: (1) Recently added to the list of words and phrases to be officially discouraged on campus, according to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's website: "political correctness." The phrase is said to be a "microaggression" that might make some students feel uncomfortable or unsafe if they hear it or read it. (2) In November, the University of Vermont held a (voluntary) three-day "retreat" open only to students who "self-identify as white," so that they can study the im-

plications of "white privilege" in society (e.g., "what does it mean to be white?" and "how does whiteness impact you?"). [CampusReform.org, 10-21-2015] [CampusReform.org, 11-18-2015]

Government Inaction

The Queens (New York) Redbird Tourist Information Center was finally ordered to close in July following an extraordinarily unsuccessful seven-year run in which, possibly, not a single tourist ever walked through the door. The New York Post, interviewing neighbors in Kew Gardens, found no one who ever saw a visitor, and the center's lone staff member said she recalled only lunchtime drop-ins from jury duty at the criminal court building down the block. [New York Post, 7-10-2015]

The Continuing Crisis

Marshall University (Huntington, West Virginia), seeking a "star free agent" for its medical faculty, hired neurosurgeon Paul Muizelaar in July despite controversy from his previous work at the University of California, Davis. There, Dr. Muizelaar and colleagues, in a daring experiment, introduced live bowel bacteria into the brain – on lab rats – supposedly to stimulate the immune system when other remedies had faltered. However, Dr. Muizelaar, emboldened, also introduced

the bacteria into brains of a man and two women who had highly malignant glioblastoma tumors (each patient having consented). However, two died within weeks, and although the third survived more than a year, UC Davis found numerous protocol violations. Dr. Muizelaar's new supervisor told the Associated Press that he nonetheless felt lucky to land him because "not everybody wants to move to Appalachia." [Associated Press via Charleston Gazette-Mail, 7-4-2015]

Ironies

Deputy sheriff Michael Szeliga of St. Petersburg, Florida, in Fort Lauderdale for a weekend training session in July, was to receive a commendation at the formal banquet, for exemplary DUI enforcement, presented by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. (This is News of the Weird; you've already guessed the outcome.) He, escorted by two fellow deputies, arrived for dinner "staggeringly drunk" (though he did not drive), according to an internal affairs investigation, and he was ordered to go sleep it off. (Szeliga wrote an apology and was transferred out of DUI work. Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said Szeliga was a good deputy but that the incident was "one of the most ridiculous things" he'd ever heard of.) [WFLA-TV (Tampa), 11-5-2015]



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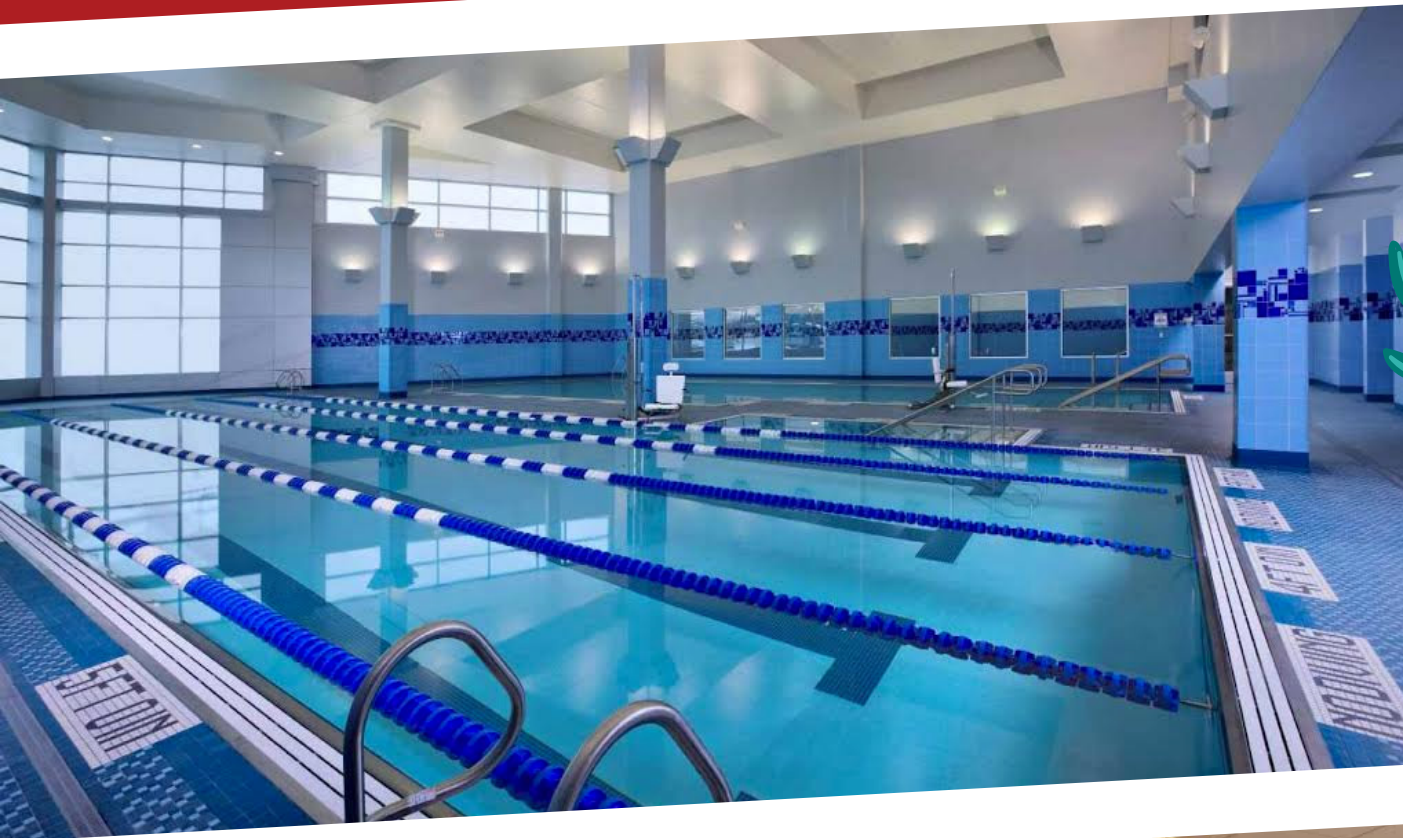
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Erie at Large

Next Generation 911

By: Jim Wertz

A few days before Thanksgiving, the *New York Times* published an op-ed by FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler in which he offered a clarion call for the country's leaders – local, state, and federal – to address the technology behind the nation's network of 911 systems, which he deemed “dangerously out of date.”

“Many local 911 call centers can't receive a text, photo, or video from a person in need,” Wheeler wrote, “capabilities that are considered commonplace for any American with a smartphone.”

Wheeler is looking for government officials in Washington, D.C. and across the country to support what he calls “Next Generation 911” or NG911.

NG911 links emergency call centers to Internet Protocol-based networks that allow responders to handle high call

volumes in the face of a catastrophic event. It also uses mapping software and cellular GPS to route calls and pinpoint real-time location of 911 calls made from mobile devices. Additionally, it supports data, text, photo, and video communication as well as voice calls. In an era when many people have chosen to ditch their landlines for cell phones and voice-over-internet-protocols (VoIP) services like Vonage, Skype, and Google Hangouts, NG911 isn't simply an option. It's the *only* option.

Locally, Erie County government has approved a new \$26.5 million 911 system.

Thus far, the conversation driving support for the new system has focused on the capability for first responders to communicate on a single network using common frequencies rather than the patchwork channels used now, which sometimes prohibit multiple emergency crews at a

single location from talking to one another.

That means if multiple fire companies, police departments, or medical crews are at

“By Jan. 1, we'll be accepting 911 texts,” says Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper. “National standards for photos and video are currently being developed. So in many ways, we in the northwest are ahead of the curve in Pennsylvania and also nationally.”

one fire, shooting, or accident, they may not be able to coordinate their activities, which could cost time, money, or

lives.

The ability of first responders to communicate is crucial. So the value of the new Erie County 911 system in providing this service can't be overstated. It will allow responders to act faster and more efficiently. That will help save lives. But in the wake of Chairman Wheeler's call to action, it seems we may have buried the lede.

Erie County's new 911 is NG911. In fact, it's one of the first in the country.

“By Jan. 1, we'll be accepting 911 texts,” says Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper. “National standards for photos and video are currently being developed. So in many ways, we in the northwest are ahead of the curve in Pennsylvania and also nationally.”

In 2014 Erie County joined what's known as Pennsylvania's Northern Tier 911 Network – a 10-county consortium sharing an NG911 system

that includes computer-aided dispatch, graphical information systems, radio interoperability, and emergency management functions. Joining the network made Erie County NG911-ready. The transition to the new 911 system, which is expected to be fully operational in 2018, will make Erie County NG911.

“Being one of the early adopters positions us in a great place,” Dahlkemper believes. “We're a model for how this can go forward.”

Transforming the nation's emergency ecosystem at the scale necessary to secure communities large and small is going to require regional leadership that is unified, informed, and forward thinking. It's encouraging to know that Erie leads the pack.

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

Why Congress Must Support the Iran Nuclear Deal

Introducing an online series of six articles exploring the JCPOA.

By: William G. Sesler, ESQ.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the nuclear agreement made in Vienna on July 14 between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States – plus Germany (P5+1), and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The agreement is a long-term comprehensive agreement on the nuclear program that Iran will be permitted to carry on. JCPOA will ensure that Iran's nuclear program, henceforth, for the next ten years and probably longer, will be exclusively peaceful, and anticipates that the full implementation of this agreement will make positive and significant contributions to regional

and international peace and security.

Because of the complicated provisions of this agreement and the fact that the diplomatic negotiations actually took place over several years, it is difficult for any article or press release to condense or summarize all prior related or relevant events. Consequently, readers are unable to understand in a comprehensive fashion what has occurred because of the convoluted nature of JCPOA and the confusing reactions of Congress.

It is the purpose of this series of six successive articles to provide a thorough background and review of the important events that have occurred leading to the adoption and acceptance of the agreement, together with subsequent actions of Congress and certain members thereof. This online

series will highlight the very positive, favorable reactions by many American experts on nuclear energy, including diplomats and national security leaders (people who really understand the issue). That perspective will be contrasted with Congressional opposition (primarily Republican), apparently aimed at killing the Iranian nuclear deal; not because of the merits of this accord, but basically for political reasons, particularly knee-jerk reactions to any proposal made by President Obama. This includes the votes of Mike Kelly and Glenn Thompson, who represent Erie County and other counties in northwestern Pennsylvania.

On Sept. 11, the House rejected HR 3461, a bill to approve the JCPOA signed in Vienna on July 14, by a vote of 162 to 269. Kelly and Thompson voted with

242 Republicans and 25 Democrats against the bill.

On the same day, the House approved HR 3460 to postpone until Jan. 21, 2017 the authority of the president to waive, suspend, reduce, or otherwise limit the application of sanctions spelled out in JCPOA. Fortunately, both of these bills went nowhere in the Senate.

The approval and acceptance of this long-term comprehensive agreement by both the U.S. and Iran, and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, would be in bold contrast to the terrible acts of terrorism by ISIS. Let us begin to walk down the path to peace.

The first of this six-article series by William G. Sesler is now available at eriereader.com.

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MIKE LICHT

By: Ben Speggen

Without hearing his name, you know who he is. One way or another, you have a strong opinion of him. Which is unlikely to change despite the mount of gaffes on which he's building his free-speakin', tell-it-as-it-is, people-trust-me-I-have-a-solution-but-won't-tell-you-the-plan-until-you-support-me brand of politics.

Of the clown car of hopeful Republican candidates seeking the Oval Office, he's the lead clown, shoved into the spotlight by his own brazenness and the media's incessant obsession over him.

Why? He's the opposition to the norm. The rule-breaker because he's a self-declared rule-maker. He gets eyeballs. Keeps people talking. A supernova that refuses to fade away after enveloping the rest of the political galaxy surrounding him.

Ridiculing him, criticizing him, standing agape in awe at his ascension to the top has become akin to throwing kerosene commentary into his coal-swallowing furnace.

For American voters, that is.

Because he's also the candidate Republican senators "really want to go away" Bloomberg Politics' Sahil Kapur wrote in July 2015, adding that his "swift rise to the top of the GOP presi-

dential field is not being regarded as a welcome development."

Kapur added that "Pennsylvania Sen. Pat Toomey paused for a long, awkward silence and looked down at the bright carpets in a Capitol elevator," when asked what he makes of this bombastic billionaire's lead in the polls. "Not much," he finally said. After taking another long pause to contemplate Kapur's question as to whether the real estate mogul was good for the GOP, Toomey responded "I'll have more on that for you later."

Luckily for Toomey, later is happening now. Friday, Dec. 11, in fact. In Harrisburg. Over lunch.

On Nov. 25, Republican Party of Pennsylvania Chairman Rob Gleason announced the headliner of the Pa. GOP Annual Commonwealth Club luncheon. In that press release, Gleason called He-who-must-not-be-named "a successful and dynamic businessman," and said that "we are excited to hear about his vision for the future of our country."

Of all the candidates in all of the world, why this one?

"The importance of Pennsylvania to the presidential campaign is clear," Gleason said. Having this particular candidate "addressing Pennsylvania Republicans puts us in the middle of the national stage."

It sure does.

And it puts folks like Toomey on the hot seat.

But Toomey's seat is already a bit warm. Perhaps the reason such a fire-eater and firebreather is being brought in to drum up attention.

Irrespective of the temperature of Toomey's seat, it's up for grabs in 2016. While he first needs to win the primary election against security intelligence consultant Everett Stern, most known as the HSBC whistleblower, in the spring, he stands to face a strong challenger from the Democratic Party.

From the Dems, it'll either be Mayor of Braddock dark-horse underdog John Fetterman; former Chief of Staff to Gov. Tom Wolf, who also served as Secretary of the Pa. Department of Environmental Protection Katie McGinty; or former U.S. Representative Joe Sestak. And there's Joseph Vodvarka, who, according to his website, bills himself as "the Democratic Underdog that nobody wants you to hear about!" According to recent research, Nobody has been doing a good job upholding Vodvarka's motto.

But of Fetterman, McGinty, and Sestak, there's a lot of promise given that the race should be tight, interesting, and ultimately the producer of a stronger candidate forged by debates and press engagements. Regardless of who emerges, each would prove to be a real challenge to Toomey.

Which is made all the more interesting by inviting a bull to the china shop to hear his visions for the country and how they would affect Pennsylvania – if elected. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth Club Luncheon is off limits to the press, "following the many years of tradition," the release noted.

But at the risk of poor political prognostication, it appears that for the Pa. GOP, flash trumps substance. Although small talk during the luncheon might get awkward for Toomey, more awkward will be his conversation with the voters afterwards if he saddles up with the bull.

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

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Kraus Department Store

If they don't have it, you don't need it ... but Erie needs them.



Left and opposite: Scenes from Kraus Department Store illustrate a long-held priority of administering to the community's needs, by providing attentive customer service and a dizzying variety of sundries. Neighbors kept Kraus on their feet during the Great Depression and two world wars; Kraus keeps the neighbors – and Erie – afoot now.

By: Matt Swanseger

“If we don't have it, you don't need it.” A bold assertion, but such is the long-standing slogan of Kraus Department Store, Erie's oldest continuously-operating retailer. As a human being, I count among my needs food, water, clothing, and shelter. Kraus has at least three of those covered (I'm a little too big-boned to squeeze into a communion dress at this phase of adulthood). As a freelance journalist and would-be detective, I must also subsist on answers. In this case, *how do they do it?*

The investigation is essentially over before I can adjust my would-be monocle. Within a span of minutes, it becomes blatantly obvious why Kraus has stuck around since 1886. I am acknowledged almost the instant I set foot in the store. I am acknowledged again as I absentmindedly wander into the doorknob aisle, and once more as I absentmindedly wander towards the paint swatches (some people don't even get this much attention in their own homes!). Anywhere I turn, a

Kraus employee is willing and eager to help me.

But I am neither seeking a new lever handle to my solarium nor a coat of Mauve Magic for my bedchamber (where the Mauve

tones general manager Rory Nowosielski. “That's it.”

Nowosielski, 30, is of the fifth generation of store leadership and one of its heirs apparent (along with Ian and Adam). His

The kinship between a small business such as Kraus Department Store and its community is inimitable – and epitomizes civic-commercial mutualism. Communities need small businesses and small businesses need communities. Kraus Department Store has been wed to its Lower East Side neighborhood for nearly 130 years.

Magic happens) on this occasion. Instead, I seek the truth.

And the truth boils down to a simple mantra.

“Customer service, customer service, customer service,” in-

father Tom and Uncle Joe became co-owners in 2001, following the partial retirement of widowed grandmother Lou Ann Miller Nowosielski (husband Dan). He is not only running a store, but also

curating a legacy a century older than him. He holds a degree in entrepreneurship from Gannon University, but it seems almost a formality. He speaks as if he was born for this.

“Notice anything missing?” he asks as he hands me a business card. “No name and no department.” It's unorthodox, but consistent with the mantra. The only department his employees are to concern themselves with is customer service, which implies they are knowledgeable enough about everything to render it, regardless of where a customer is seen standing. That translates to roughly 100,000 items spread out over 11,000 square feet of retail space.

It is an egalitarian system, refreshingly bereft of rank and referrals (in other words, the exact opposite of what you'd expect from someone with a military background). Whereas a trip to a “big box” retailer such as Lowe's or Home Depot might entail more laterals than Stanford-Cal in 1982, Kraus maintains possession of its customers by carrying through from start to finish. It is this combination of consistency and conscientiousness that separates small businesses like Kraus from its behemoth competitors. You came into the store as an individual, and you won't leave as a statistic.

In the natural world, *symbiosis* is defined as the “living together of two dissimilar organisms.” Symbiotic relationships also exist in our (sometimes) civilized world, as businesses and communities – distinct entities with differing modes of self-preservation (making money vs. saving mon-

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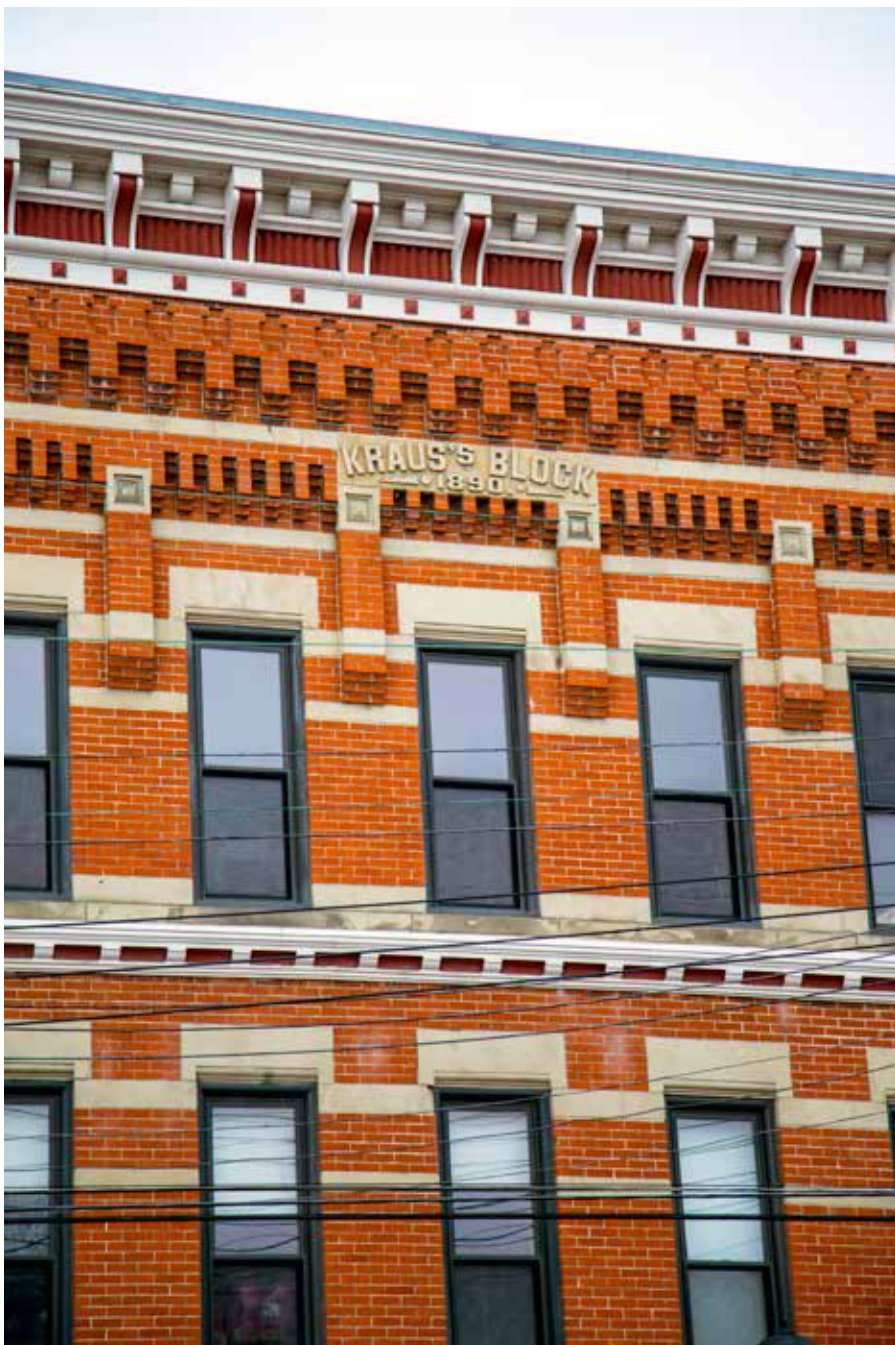
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ey) – live and die together.

The degree and manner in which their fates are intertwined seems to be inversely proportional. For instance, Time-Warner Cable is more inclined to *parasitize* its customers with hidden fees and surcharges (fine print is just barely visible to the naked eye) because it is more likely to get away with it. It is so widespread and pervasive that it's intangible to the common-folk. Sure, they don't want you to flush them out of your system, but if you do, oh well. You are but a grain of sand on the beaches of Presque Isle.

Brick-and-mortar retailers can be seen and felt; they are not an abstraction floating around in the ether. Nonetheless, the franchises *flanking* our community on upper Peach Street are not going to exhibit the same level of interdependence with their customers as small businesses *surrounded* by that community. Circuit City went bankrupt; retailers pop in and out of the Millcreek Mall regularly – very few of us mourn. They're there, but they are not ingrained in our culture or intimately tied to our identity. Grieving the loss of a distant relative does not take the same toll on the psyche as grieving the loss of close kin.

The kinship between a small business such as Kraus Department Store and its community is inimitable – and epitomizes civic-commercial mutualism. Communities *need* small businesses and small businesses *need* communities. Kraus Department Store, located at 810 Parade Street, has been wed to its Lower East Side neighborhood for nearly 130 years. The two have grown

old together, witnessing both good times and bad. While Kraus remains in robust health, the community around it has been slow to recover from the bruises of age and the scars of crime.

"The way I look at the neighborhood is this: They're not going anywhere, and we're not going anywhere either," says co-owner Tom Nowosielski.

There are interesting parallels to be drawn between the social climate way back when and now, as disparate as they may seem. When German immigrant Edward Kraus built his five-and-dime general store in the late 19th Century, Parade Street was the area's premier shopping district, and neither automobiles nor electricity were yet in vogue. The population had recorded a tenth consecutive decade of growth, but would not eclipse 40,000 people until 1890. Given the lack of technology, the community was very much fixed in place.

Lou Ann Nowosielski addresses this phenomenon in a YouTube video honoring the store as 2012 Pro Hardware Dealer of the Year: "In those early years, [the store] had ... whatever [the neighbors] needed, because [they] were here. They weren't walking too far." That included pans, kettles, men's/women's/children's clothing, fishing, and hunting supplies, and even animal feed and farming equipment.

The word "need" echoes throughout the generations. Administering to needs has been the store's priority across the board. As the neighbors kept Kraus on their feet during the Great Depression and two world wars, Kraus keeps the neighbors – and Erie – afoot now. Replacement plumbing? *Kraus* that off the list. Window repairs? Custom lamp restorations? Jackhammer rentals? *Kraus* those off, too.

And road salt after a city-wide shortage in 2014? The management team ordered an entire truck, reserved for Erie *only*.

An out-of-towner offered to buy their entire stock at an increased price, but they would not budge. That's dedication. Said Rory, "I care about *Erie*."

The city may have stumbled as of late, but as long as community and small business continue to prop each other up, we will survive, synergistic organisms taking our next step forward.

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

Events Calendar

December 9 to 22, 2015

MUSIC

Mercyhurst North East Cultural Series: Herald the Season!

Dec. 9 — 7 p.m.
St. Mary's Chapel at Mercyhurst North East, 16 W. Division St. northeast. mercyhurst.edu.

Holiday Performance by New Horizons Music Project of LifeWorks Erie

Dec. 10 — 4 to 6 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Rick Magee & Guest

Dec. 10 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Peter Mayer Stars and Promises Concert

Dec. 10 — 7 p.m.
Wayside Presbyterian Church, 1208 Asbury Rd. blendedspiritsranch.org.

Acoustic Jukebox

Dec. 11 -- 5 to 9 p.m. &
Dec. 18 -- 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Salmon Frank

Dec. 11 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Friday Night Jazz

Dec. 11, 18 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Chris Higbee

Dec. 11 — 8 p.m. &
Dec. 12 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Charlie Wheeler Trio & Haewa

Dec. 11 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

RATM2 (The Ultimate Rage Tribute) & Kevlar

Dec. 11 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Tuba Christmas

Dec. 12 — 1 to 3 p.m.
McGarvey Commons in the Reed Union Building at Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. lifeworkserie.org.

Roger Montgomery

Dec. 12 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Saturday Night Blues, Latin and More

Dec. 12, 19 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Amanda Post and Friends

Dec. 12 — 7 to 9:30 p.m. &
Dec. 13 — 2 to 4:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Mosh for Tots

Dec. 12 — 7 to 11 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 West 11th St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.

A Family Christmas

Dec. 12 — 7:30 p.m.
Cathedral Prep Auditorium, 250 W. 10th St. gannon.edu.

DePue Brothers Grassical Christmas

Dec. 12 — 7:30 p.m.
Struther's Library Theatre, 302 W. 3rd Ave. strutherslibrarytheatre.com.

MoChester + Andy & Adam of Six Year Stretch

Dec. 12 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Six Years After

Dec. 12 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Madball

Dec. 13 — 5 to 10 p.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Hundredth

Dec. 14 — 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 West 11th St. facebook.com/beardedbabyproductions.

Messiah

Dec. 15 — 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
St. Peter Cathedral, 230 W. 10th St. eriephil.org.

Big Dog Acoustics

Dec. 17 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Acoustic Jukebox

Dec. 18 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Punk Acoustic Christmas

Dec. 18 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 West 11th St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.

The Highlife

Dec. 18 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Blues Beaters

Dec. 18 — 8 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Gnosis CD Release Party & Stereo Nest

Dec. 18 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Hodge Podge

Dec. 18 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Tiger Maple

Dec. 19 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew

Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

The Breeze Band

Dec. 19 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Yosemigh

Dec. 19 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Six Year Stretch

Dec. 19 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks Erie PA, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Kenny Rogers

Dec. 22 — 7:30 to 10 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

DANCE

2015 Barber Christmas Ball

Dec. 12 — 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier barberinstitute.org.

The Nutcracker

Dec. 19, 20 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

FOOD & DRINK

Quick and Easy Appetizers

Dec. 11 — 1 to 3 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Breakfast with Santa

Dec. 12, 19 — 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. & Dec. 13, 20 — 10 a.m. to noon
Erie Children's Museum, 420 French St. eriechildrensmuseum.org.

Breakfast with Santa

Dec. 12 & 19 — 9:30 a.m.
Riverside Inn at Cambridge Springs, One Fountain Ave. theriversideinn.com.

Christmas in the Vineyards

Dec. 12 — noon to 5 p.m.
The Grape Discovery

Center, 8305 W. Main Rd. grapesdiscoverycenter.com.

Christmas Small Bites Pairing

Dec. 12 — 3 to 7 p.m.
Liberty Vineyards & Winery, 2861 Rte. 20 Sheridan libertywinery.com.

Ethnic Holiday Lunch: Greek Cuisine

Dec. 14 — 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

High Tea at the Stonehouse Inn

Dec. 15 — noon to 2 p.m.
Stonehouse Inn and Spa, 4752 W. Lake Rd. lifeworkserie.org.

Ethnic Holiday Lunch: Hanukkah

Dec. 18 — 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

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

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

Some Guy Who Kills People (2011)

Dec. 11 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Met Live in HD: The Magic Flute

Dec. 12 — 1 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing

CALENDAR

Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

It's a Wonderful Life (1946)

Dec. 12 — 8 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

Scrooge (1935)

Dec. 17 — 8 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

The Dicks from Texas Documentary and live band, Maniacal Device

Dec. 18 — 8 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

Bolshoi Ballet - Jewels

Dec. 20 — 12:55 p.m.

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Christmas Evil (1980)

Dec. 20 — 8 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

Elf (2003)

Dec. 23 — 8 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. [facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse).

VISUAL ARTS

Clay and Fiber Partners

Ongoing through Dec. 13
Heeschen Gallery, 910 Market St. artsmeadville.org.

Senior Projects & Advanced Studio Projects

Ongoing through Dec. 13
Allegheny College Art Gallery, 520 N. Main St. allegheny.edu.

Stitches: Contemporary Fiber Art Show

Ongoing through

Jan. 3 — 9 a.m.

Cummings Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Afternoons with Henry

Ongoing through Jan. 5

Glass Growers Gallery, 10 East 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

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.

Assembled Visions

Ongoing through Mar. 26

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

Holiday Show

Dec. 13 — 1 to 4 p.m.

Bayfront Gallery, 17 E. Dobbings Landing
npaaonline.org.

Second Sundays

Dec. 13 — 2 to 4 p.m.

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

THEATRE

A Taffeta Christmas

Dec. 9, 15 — noon & Dec.

11, 12, 18, 19 — 7 p.m. &

Dec. 13 — 2:30 p.m.

Riverside Inn at Cambridge Springs, One Fountain Ave. theriversideinn.com.

A Christmas Story the Musical

Dec. 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19 &

Jan. 2 — 7:30 p.m. & Dec.

13, 20 & Jan. 2, 3 — 2 p.m.

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

Christmas Memories

Dec. 10 — 4 p.m. & Dec. 11, 18

— 7 p.m. & Dec. 12, 19 — 5:30

p.m. & Dec. 13, 20 — 2:30 p.m.

The Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

The Twin Menaechmi

Dec. 10, 11, 12 — 7:30 p.m.

& Dec. 13 — 2:30 p.m.

Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 219 Meadville St. laughrioterie.com.

Twelfth Night

Dec. 10, 11, 12 — 8 p.m.

Schuster Theatre, 109 University Square gannon.edu.

Next Fall by Geoffrey Nauffts

Dec. 12 — 8 p.m.

Renaissance Centre, 2nd Fl. 1001 State St. dramashop.org.

Cirque Dreams Holiday

Dec. 14, 15 — 7 to 10 p.m.

Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Black Nativity

Dec. 19 — 7:30 p.m.

The Bethany Center, 254 E. 10th St. bethanyoutreachcenter.org.

COMMUNITY/VARIETY

Lighting the Presque Isle Lighthouse

Ongoing through Jan.

1 — 5 to 9 p.m.

Presque Isle Lighthouse, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

"Time of the Season" Student Art Sale

Dec. 9 — noon to 7 p.m.

(Reception 5 to 7 p.m.) &

Dec. 10 — noon to 5 p.m.

Bruce Gallery - Doucette Hall, 215 Meadville St. events.edinboro.edu.

Evening Fireside Talk: Mammals in Winter

Dec. 9 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Rotary Pavilion, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Ms. Loretta's Story Time

Dec. 10, 17 — 11 to 11:30 a.m.

Erie Children's Museum, 420 French St. eriechildrensmuseum.org.

Lachlan Patterson

Dec. 10 — 7 p.m. & Dec 11,

12 — 6:40 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.

Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Vine Decorations

Dec. 11 — 1 to 3 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

12th Annual Holiday Art Show & Sale

Dec. 11 — 5 to 8 p.m.

Blossom's Clay Studio, 138 E. 26th St. bloomcollaborative.org.

The Christmas

Tree Ship

Dec. 11 — 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Erie Maritime Museum, 150 E. Front St. flagshipniagara.org.

Basement Transmissions T-shirt Contest

Dec. 11 — 6 to 9 p.m.

Basement Transmissions, 145 West 11th St. [facebook.com/basement.transmissions](https://www.facebook.com/basement.transmissions).

Winter Wonderland

Dec. 11, 12, 13, 27, 28, 29,

30 — 6 to 9 p.m.

Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Harmony for the Holidays

Dec. 11 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Jefferson Education Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Erie BayHawks vs. Maine

Dec. 12 — 7 to 10 p.m.

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

Families Go Hiking

Dec. 13 — 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Presque Isle Lighthouse Parking Area, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Make a Holiday Centerpiece

Dec. 15 — 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Make and Take Jewelry with Kathy Denning

Dec. 16 — 1 to 4 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Talk, Chanting and Meditation with Kedarji

Dec. 16, 23 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The Bhakta School of Transformation, 1421 W 41st St. bhaktaschool.org.

Outside the Window: Winter Birds

Dec. 17 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Discovery Room, Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Presque Isle After Dark: Pine Tree Trail

Dec. 18 — 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Beach 10 Parking Lot, 301 Peninsula Dr.

events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Walter Campbell

Dec. 18, 19 — 6:40 & 9:30 p.m.

Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Erie Otters vs. Sudbury

Dec. 18 — 7 to 9:30 p.m.

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

Natural Noise Makers

Dec. 19 — 10 a.m. to noon

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Natural Christmas Ornaments

Dec. 19 — 1 to 3 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Holiday LEGO Build & Film Challenge

Dec. 19 — 1 to 4 p.m.

Box of Light Studios, 419 State St. boxoflight.org.

Erie Otters vs. Sarnia

Dec. 19 — 7 to 9:30 p.m.

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

Ugly Christmas Sweater Party

Dec. 19 — 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Riverside Inn at Cambridge Springs, One Fountain Ave. theriversideinn.com.

Sugar Plum Fairy Party

Dec. 20 — noon to 1:30 p.m.

Community Room at First Niagara Bank, 801 State St. lakeerieballet.org.

A Festival Service of Lessons & Carols

Dec. 20 — 4 p.m.

The Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul, 134 W. 7th St. cathedralofstpaul.org.

All Aboard The Polar Express

Dec. 22 — 10 to 11:30 a.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Winter Stroll in the Park

Dec. 23 — 10 a.m. to noon

Presque Isle Lighthouse Parking Area, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

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Spotlight on Erie

December 9 to 22, 2015

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Take a Shot at Some Classic Christmas Fun with *A Christmas Story: The Musical*



As we launch head-long into the frenzy of the holiday season, the Erie Playhouse is offering up *A Christmas Story: The Musical* to take both adults and children to the brink of anticipation as they follow Ralphie and his brother Randy through those last agonizing few weeks before Christmas.

Modeled after the 1983 movie of the same name (which is based on the writings of radio humorist Jean Shepherd), this story is well known to most who have an affinity for Christmas. The time is the 1940s, Ralphie Parker longs for a Red Ryder BB gun from Santa, and he's scheming to figure out a way for his parents to be aware of his desires. In the classic charm of a bygone era, he and Randy have to face the neighborhood bullies and put up with the smothering attention of Mom, who wants to make sure her children are well fed and dressed warmly for the cold.

The Old Man, meanwhile, curses up a blue streak from the basement and falls in love with his quirky new prize from a crossword puzzle contest: The now famous leg lamp.

All set to perky music and including numerous dance numbers, *A Christmas Story* follows the storyline of the movie quite closely. So it should please traditionalists who love the movie, entertain fans of Broadway-style musicals, and keep antsy kids occupied for at least a couple of hours.

And no one will get his or her eye shot out. What more could you need? — Mary Birdsong

Dec. 3 to Jan. 3, Thursday through Saturday, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 West 10th St. // 454.2852

Thursday, Dec. 10

Twelfth Night Continues at Gannon University's Schuster Theatre

"If music be the food of love, play on." These, the opening lines of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (or *What You Will*), hold a promise for the following play. And when it comes to music, and love, Gannon University's production of *Twelfth Night* is sure to have both in spades.

The play, halfway through its run at the Schuster Theatre, looks (based on the promo video making the rounds on Facebook) simple and straightforward in its presentation — shades of white, mostly, with a sparse set. It's the kind of thing that lets the words take center stage.

And what words, indeed. *Twelfth Night* is one of Shakespeare's most-loved comedies, and one of the most



enduring (why do you think you giggle so much at Amanda Bynes in *She's the Man*?). There are misunderstandings, assumed identities, a dash of slapstick, and a fair amount of gender-bending thrown into the mix as characters find themselves falling in love with one another. Get thee to the Schuster! — Sara Toth

8 p.m. Dec. 10-12 // Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras // 871.7494 // gannon.edu/Visitors-and-Community/Area-Attractions/Schuster-Theatre

Saturday, Dec. 12

Next Fall: A Staged Reading at Dramashop

Think of a staged reading as an audio book where you can see the actors' expressions. It's also a theater experience, which is to say that as an audience member, you are a participant in the drama rather than a passive con-

sumer of the words. The ambiance of the Renaissance Centre theatre, located in the tallest building in Erie, with its jazz age murals and intimate seating arrangement, makes the experience of live theater even more satisfying.

Dramashop's Staged Reading Series brings a play's words from the page to the stage, with no blocking or sets and minimal cost.

Dramashop's Staged Reading Series brings a play's words from the page to the stage, with no blocking or sets and minimal cost. Scripts in hand provide a unique opportunity to focus on the author's written words spoken aloud.

Director David Baltusavich has assembled a cast of newbies and old pros to present *Next Fall*, a Tony Award-nominated drama about an unconventional love affair and how people come together in the face of loss and tragedy. Luke (read by Nicholas Emmanuele) is a godly man in a relationship with Adam (read by JR Fabin) who is an atheist. *Next Fall* paints a portrait of modern romance, asking hard questions about commitment, love, and faith. — Bryan Toy

8 p.m. // Dramashop, 1001 State St., Second Floor // dramashop.org

Saturday, Dec. 12

Punk Rock Flea Market at Basement Transmissions



Winter is coming. To many yard sale and flea market fanatics, this too means the end of thrifting season. But fear not, fellow bargain hunters: Basement Transmissions has just the cure: the Punk Rock Flea Market.

Although this writer prides himself on scavenging punk rock rarities while

thrifting, don't let the name fool you into thinking this sale is themed strictly around punk paraphernalia. This is the same as any flea market, save for the fact that it's indoors, and inside a punk music venue. Expect to find just about anything from old records, to dusty old board games, and anything else you can imagine. And if you're interested in selling, contact blackeglegoods@gmail.com to reserve a table. — Tommy Shannon

10 a.m. - 6 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$1 entry

Saturday, Dec. 12

Punk Rock Holds True at Bobby's Place



"It's a punk rock show — nothing fancy", Carlos Rivera asserted. The Mala Sangre frontman knows there's no need for a spectacle when you have raw energy. Bobby's Place will be bringing together bands that share the same DIY roots on Saturday, Dec. 12. Local mainstays Mala Sangre (spanish for "bad blood") will bring their lightning-paced, hardcore punk to the stage. Anyone who knows the word "hardcore" will become an instant fan. Erie's own Till the End will open the show, representing the harder edge of 90's style skatepunk. Pittsburgh veterans the Crooked Cobras will lay down their chaotic buzzsaw sound, reminiscent of later Black Flag. Acoustic songwriter Bill Jasper — who recently overcame a rare hearing disorder — will growl out his Rust Belt roots setlist midway through the night. Lastly, back-to-back REMA award winners, Oh NO! It's Mustard Gas, will be a hit for any fan of the Bouncing Souls who likes a dash of ska thrown in. Singer Roman Glass exclaimed that the band might "add some fun changes to our set." Noting that "consistency is awesome for a band because it gets people familiar with your

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work, but shaking it up is always a recipe for awesomeness!!” — Nick Warren

10 p.m. to 2 a.m. // 1202 W. 18 St. // 455.9840

Sunday, Dec. 13

Madball Sets it Off at Sherlock's



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Legendary New York Hardcore band Madball is coming to Erie, playing alongside a set of Lake Effect Hardcore veterans.

Madball was a pivotal band in the 1990's hardcore scene, being one of the bands that helped give hardcore a heavier, more metal influenced sound, which is a staple of the scene even today. The 1994 release *Set It Off* will go down as a seminal album in the annals of hardcore history.

Locals on the bill are Human Animal, an Erie hardcore supergroup made up of members of former Erie bands like Brother's Keeper, Disciple A.D., and Shockwave. Also on the bill are Erie's straight edge kings, xRepresentx (the irony of a straight edge band playing in a bar is not lost on this writer), and Livid Life, the newest band to carry the Lake Effect Hardcore torch. This will be Livid Life's debut performance, so expect to be handed a demo CD at some point during the show. — Tommy Shannon

5 p.m. // Sherlock's, 508 State St. // All Ages // \$12 advance, \$15 at the door

Monday, Dec. 14

Hundredth Headlines at Basement Transmissions

The melodic hardcore scene is alive and well, and few bands embody that sound better than South Carolina's Hundredth.

And now, Hundredth is bringing their sound to Basement Transmissions, along with Capsize, Royal/Revise, Motives, and Hellsent. Hundredth released their third full length album *Free* this summer, which carried the same mood as their previous releases – contrasting fast, heavy guitars with slower melodic leads that complement

each other in an almost perfect way. Reviewers, however, criticized the album for being possibly too similar to previous releases and lacking any truly memorable tracks.

Seven years into their career, Hundredth has toured the world over, and along the way gained a great amount of empathy for the struggles of their fellow human beings. This perspective and emotion is not only reflected in the band's music, but in their actions as well. In 2012, Hundredth launched Hope Into Humanity, a nonprofit organization described by vocalist Chadwick Johnson as “about realizing our human responsibility of doing everything we possibly can to help other people, whether it be across the world or in a backyard.”



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Capsize and Motives both play a similar style to Hundredth, while Royal/Revise takes on a more metal sound, and Hellsent, made up of members of Erie's xRepresentx and Domestic War, puts a darker, thrashier spin on the classic Lake Effect Hardcore style. — Tommy Shannon

6 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$12 advance, \$14 at the door

Friday, Dec. 18

Gnosis Mines for Silver Matter at their CD Release Party



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Erie favorites Gnosis have their new album in mind. The jam band's first full-length effort, *Silver Matter* will be available for the first time on Friday, Dec. 18, and Kings Rook Club will host the band's free celebration. Get your brain ready for a night of progressive instrumental improvisations and agile

compositions.

At the end of January, the band launched a IndieGoGo page to help fund the record. Less than a month later, they exceeded their goal. Drummer Sam Edwards thanked their donors, updating that “We're so blessed to have the love and support to help us reach our next big goals!”

Crowdfunding completed, the band sat down with producer and Erie native, John Beveridge, at Walking and Chewing Gum Studios. Judging from the groove of “Shall We,” listeners will be treated to a crisp recording that showcases their prowess as musicians.

Fans will be able to pick up the self-released album at the show. IndieGoGo donors will have the opportunity to see the fruits of their support right in time for the holidays. Be sure to also check out trance loopmaster Stereo Nest, who will open up the show. — Nick Warren

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

Saturday, Dec. 19

Erie Theater Company Presents Langston Hughes' Black Nativity



JACK DELANO

Drawing from the Gospel of St. Luke and combining poetry and gospel music, poet, playwright, and social activist Langston Hughes first reimagined the classic Nativity story in December 1961. What was one of the first off-Broadway productions written by a black man and performed by an all-black cast has since become a holiday tradition presented throughout the world.

This year, that includes Erie, Pa. The beauty and endurance of Hughes' work comes from its room for exploration. Local companies are free to imbue their flavor, making each performance distinctive. Likewise, as a well-crafted narrative planted firmly in the soil of the Nativity story, it highlights the universality of the holiday season and its

message of hope, love, and tenderness.

To celebrate one year of productions in the Gem City, Erie Theater Company will conclude its inaugural season with a one-night-only exploration of the text, music, and choreography of Hughes' holiday masterpiece: a critically-acclaimed play featuring classic holiday songs but also including a few numbers crafted specifically for this interpretation.

So while the historically long runs of this production continue in cities ranging from Boston to Seattle, you don't have to travel far for literary wonder brought to life on stage. — Ben Spегgen

7 p.m. // The Bethany Center, 254 E. 10th St. // \$15 // 646.406.1546; ErieTheaterco.org

Saturday, Dec. 19

Six Year Stretch and Strangers and Liars Rock Sherlock's



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mark your calendars, kids: 'Twill be the week before Christmas when some good 'ol body-and-soul-moving rock will raise the roof all through Sherlock's house.

Teaming up for the night to get some things stirring, hometown rockers Six Year Stretch and Strangers and Liars are bringing their best bags of grooves to Sherlock's.

“Infectious melodies, tight harmonies, and music that is good for your soul!,” is how Six Year Stretch describes itself.

That five-piece, three-brother-bearing band finds much love in fans of the sounds of the Dave Matthews Band, 3 Doors Down, Maroon 5 and other alternative-pop heavy-hitters. Strangers and Liars, billing itself as “Original Electrified Music in the American Tradition,” is a group of longtime musicians with ears and instruments well-tuned to classic stylings more along the lines of Tom Petty, Rolling Stones, and The Band.

Whether you've been bad, or good (or, kinda both), some solid, cool rock 'n roll could probably get you straight into the holiday spirits.

Er, spirit.

You know what I mean. — Ryan Smith

10 p.m. // Sherlock's, 508 State Street // facebook.com/sixyearstretch



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Great gifts made in Erie

By: Jim Wertz

Small business Saturday has come and gone, but the spirit of shopping local lingers like a hangover in the midst of perpetual holiday fetes. And there's plenty of reason to embrace it.

If you didn't get a chance to swing by the Made In Erie Marketplace hosted by the Bayfront East Side Taskforce on Thanksgiving weekend, all is not lost. You can check out many of the participating vendors on the Made in Erie Marketplace Facebook page. You'll help support the burgeoning Maker Movement that's gaining traction across the region and looks poised to have a strong 2016.

Events like this Marketplace provide local entrepreneurs a great opportunity to get in on the holiday action, but they also accentuate the variety of skilled artisans, artists, and moonlight moguls who dot our local landscape.

With that in mind, we wanted to highlight a few – just a few – of our favorite items that not only make great gifts, but are also made in our own backyard.

(\$ = under \$50, \$\$ = \$50-\$75, \$\$\$ = \$75-\$100, \$\$\$\$ = over \$100)

RLB Art Box Studio (\$-\$\$\$\$)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Has your brother ever wanted to replicate the Kandinsky that hangs in dad's study? Or has mom mentioned that she'd like to make faux stained glass out of paper to mirror the rose window above your entryway? The RLB Art Box Studio may be just the

solution.

The Art Box Studio is a monthly subscription service that delivers all the artistic tools you'll need for one great art project. Whether the medium is pastels, watercolors, craft paper, or pencils, the box contains supplies and instructions to get you started.

Don't assume this craft kit is for kids. Each box is designed for teens and adults, but there are options available for younger kids ages 5-12. One month subscriptions begin at just \$25, but if you're committed to art and the person receiving it, you can pre-order up to two years in advance. Check out the total package at rlbartboxstudio.com.

Beer (\$-\$\$\$)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Brewerie at Union Station, Lavery Brewing Company, Erie Ale Works, Erie Brewing Company, Millcreek Brewing Company, Sprague Farm & Brew Works, Voodoo Brewing, Blue Canoe Brewery, TimberCreek Tap & Table

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There are nine great craft brewers in northwestern Pennsylvania, and we rightfully and routinely celebrate the trade and all the joy it brings. Give the gift of liquid gold – in one of its many varieties – and share the love.

Here are a couple of ideas to get you started: The holidays are a great time to initiate new members into the annual mug clubs at Brewerie at Union



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Station (\$35) and Lavery Brewing (\$50). Membership has its privileges including Tuesday night specials at the Brewerie for card-carrying members of the mug club, not to mention the couple extra ounces you get in that big ass stein. Lavery mug club members get a free pint on Wednesdays. Both Lavery and Brewerie have end-of-year parties at which you can renew your membership and from which you walk away with your collectible mug. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

If mugs aren't your thing, there's plenty of other great swag (\$) to go around. Whether you're ringing the cowbell at Voodoo Brewery in Meadville, playing a round of disc golf behind Sprague Farm and Brew Works in Venango, or taking the taste testing tour at Erie Brewing Company, you'll feel like part of the team in branded gear from one of these fine breweries.

And what better way to show gratitude to your holiday party hosts than with a branded growler (\$) filled with hoppy, heavenly brew. Just a note on etiquette: pour the beer, leave the growler. It's part of the gift and the experience. Who knows, it might even show up refilled on your doorstep someday soon.

SleepPhones (\$-\$\$\$\$)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

If your partner complains because your sleep apnea is in overdrive when you come home from the pub, Dr. Wei Shin Lei has the prescription for a solid

night's rest. Since she made the move from M.D. to marketeer, SleepPhones have revolutionized the world of sonic sleep aids, taking the Consumer Electronics Show by storm last year and winning the 2015 Ben Franklin Big Idea business competition.

These flat headphones wrapped in a soft headband have been featured on national television and an abundance of online tech sites. The headband connects to your mobile device wired (\$) or wirelessly (\$\$\$) with lots of options in between, allowing you to slip into REM to your own tunes or something from the SleepPhone CD collection. Everything is available online at sleepphones.com or through a variety of national retailers.

Memberships (\$-\$\$\$\$)

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Now's your chance to let relatives set you up for a whole year with memberships to some of the region's best cultural attractions and amusements.

your friends have kids and you're looking to earn some points — this town has you covered. What's particularly great about memberships is that you can drop in for an hour rather than multiple hours and still feel like you got your money's worth.

Experience Children's Museum (\$-\$\$\$\$)



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pre-teens. Kids can role play in the second floor mini-town, roll and tumble on the ground floor, create art of their own, and just be kids. The museum also hosts birthday parties and special events including the ever-popular Noon Year's Eve Party that allows families with young kids to ring in the new year before the sun goes down. Memberships range from \$55-\$130 depending on the size of your family. More info: eriechildrensmuseum.org.

The Erie Zoo (\$\$)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Erie Zoo is one of the most underrated treasures in Erie County. Cities this size rarely have zoos. If you don't get there at least a few times a year, you're missing out. In addition to the nearly 400 animals, there are



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

educational activities and programs, indoor and outdoor play areas, small amusements, and, of course, train rides around the zoo. Memberships begin at \$65, but for an extra \$10 you get a family pass that includes 10 guest passes. More info: eriezoo.org.

Waldameer (\$\$-\$\$\$)

Season passes at Waldameer are perhaps the most cost-effective way to indulge your children and your inner child during the summer months. It's



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

free to enter the park and use the public picnic grounds. But access to Water World can get expensive fast, especially if you're a repeat visitor. A single season pass, which includes rides and Water World, is \$73 for the under 48-inch crowd and \$93 for the big kids. That's the cost of three single combo passes. So whether you like rattling along at

Season passes at Waldameer are perhaps the most cost-effective way to indulge your children and your inner child during the summer months.

more than 60 mph on the Ravine Flyer II, or smooching with your partner atop the ferris wheel overlooking Lake Erie, the season pass will keep you from raiding the reserves to pay for your next big thrill. More information: waldameer.com.

Erie Art Museum (\$-\$\$)



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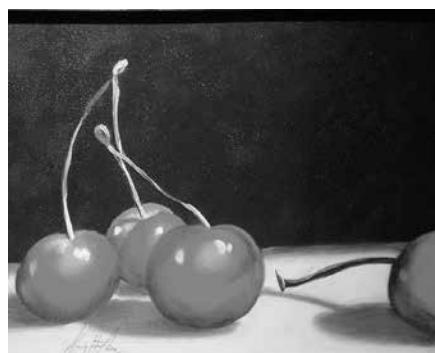
If you've outgrown the children's museum and you're ready to move into

high art, you can support one of this community's most celebrated cultural assets with a membership to the Erie Art Museum. The museum hosts multiple exhibits throughout the year featuring painters, sculptors, and photographers, among others, with

If you want to help your friends get rid of the poorly framed Monet posters they've been moving around since dorm days, do it by supporting local artists.

national and international acclaim. If chiaroscuro isn't in your vocabulary, galleries that feature "Art of the Comic Book" and multimedia like the upcoming Ian Brill installation that uses light and sound as part of an interactive experience might be for you. Memberships, beginning at \$20 for students, include unlimited admission to the museum and reduced tuition for EAM sponsored art classes. More info: erieartmuseum.org.

Art (\$-\$\$\$\$)



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Buying art for others is always a risky proposition. Because let's face it: changing one's wallscape is a personal endeavor. But if you've got an artist's eye and you want to help your friends get rid of the poorly framed Monet posters they've been moving around since dorm days, do it with gusto and support local artists. Erie's vibrant art community produces enough gallery worthy sculpture, pottery, woodwork, painting, drawing, etc., etc. to ensure that you'll never again need to look at mass-produced media in your home or the homes of your friends. Prices range from inexpensive to refinancing your

mortgage, so your investment is based on solely on your interest in supporting local artists. If you're downtown, check out Glass Growers Gallery, Ur-raro Gallery, PACA, and the Bayfront Gallery. But there are great galleries



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throughout Erie County, each specializing in its own niche collections.

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We talk a lot about the value of jobs in our community. The holidays give us an opportunity to support some great local employers as well as a host of independently employed local people, many of whom give back to the region.

in the local economy, according to the American Independent Business Alliance. Compared to the \$43 that stays in the local economy when you shop at a big box retailer and the \$1 that trickles in from online sales, shopping locally just makes cents – lots of them.

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

MUSIC REVIEWS

Forq
Batch
groundUP
★★★★★

The union between bassist/composer/producer Michael League and jazz-fusion ensemble Snarky Puppy has been a fruitful and prosperous one, with nine beautiful albums and two more on the way. Although he may seem like the model bandleader, he's been known to Forq around. Forq's sophomore effort is a sure sign of good times, as the capable quartet of League, Chris McQueen (guitar), Henry Hey (keys), and Jason Thomas (drums), prod at listener expectations while twisting through a diverse blend of influences. "Gerrard" begins as something between Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" and Jimi Hendrix's "Third Stone From the Sun" before the Doors barge in with a psychedelic organ solo. "Burr" sounds like John Scofield carousing with Tribal Tech, as a drunken Mellotron flute staggers along to a dirty blues shuffle. "Lenburu" whisks together elements of Weather Report, Brand X, and Headhunters-era Herbie Hancock with Latin spice for a track that truly cooks. If you have a palate for musical mischief, there is a place set for you with Forq. – Matt Swansger



Sunn O)))
Kannon
Southern Lord Records
★★★★★

Soak up the drone metal swells of Sunn O)))'s latest. It's been six years since Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson have released a proper album. *Kannon* fires out three eponymous tracks, clocking in at a relatively brief 33 minutes. The band's signature wall of high-gain sound comes cranked out of the amplifiers of the same name. Sunn O))) ruminates on feedback, along with full, fuzzy tones. Vocal parts range from guttural croaks to monastic mantras. But unlike some of the more distracting sections of *Monoliths and Dimensions*, everything blends seamlessly into the overall tone. There's an entire spectrum of heaviness to take in here. This album could undoubtedly serve as the doorway to many people's first foray into the slow-motion world of ambient noise. Light a candle and see how this could be a meditative experience, literally. The title of the album comes from the bodhisattva known as the Goddess of Mercy and Compassion, Kannon (a.k.a. Guanyin). Interestingly, this stoner doom has even been adopted by Pittsburgh's Black Yo)))ga collective. – Nick Warren



Sudakistan
Caballo Negro
PNKSLM Recordings
★★★★★

As South Americans living in Sweden, Sudakistan drafts up a borderless nation of hypnotic rhythms. Imagine this album as mistranslated world music, as told by the MC5. A slow, intense burn fires up during the first section of *Caballo Negro*. The frenzied tracks of "Mundo Mamon" and "Dale Gas" raise the energy levels to a fever pitch. A raucous, unique sound slowly begins to take shape. The band employs a full-time bongo player, in addition to an already hard-hit drum kit. Swirling phasers underpin the psychedelic guitar riffs. Spanish and English are used interchangeably from song to song. The sing-alongs are slurred enough amidst the drunken atmosphere that you might not even notice right away. The echoey pulses of modern garage bands like Thee Oh Sees and Ty Segall shine through (and it's more entertaining than a T. Rex cover album). Bouncing, dance-demanding beats blend with punk rock to create something wholly original. As the debut album from a relatively unheard of band, *Caballo Negro* truly could be quite the dark horse. – Nick Warren



Shovels and Rope
Busted Jukebox Vol. 1
Dualtone Music
★★★★

It's easy to fault cover albums. Usually thrown together in haste, they conjure up images of a band riding out their record contracts. Collaborative albums can hint at the same kind of writer's-block stagnation. *Busted Jukebox Vol. 1* is simultaneously both of these, while hinting at neither. With only three albums under their belt, Shovels and Rope certainly aren't in a career slump. The husband and wife team of Michael Trent and Cary Ann Hearst is an instantly lovable one. This alt-country duo has no problem winning over fans of all genres. Their sweet harmonies and rootsy instrumentation blend into an authentic, hipster-friendly hoe-down. The Charleston troubadours have invited all of their best friends over to curate a variety hour worthy of the Grand Ole Opry. Every track has a guest star. Standouts like Shakey Graves, the Milk Carton Kids, and Butch Walker highlight the bunch. Even the most over-played covers ("Perfect Day", "Peace, Love, and Understanding") get a satisfying arrangement. While no masterpiece, it's a respectable little modern-folk mixtape. – Nick Warren



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COUNTRY FAIR

Overlooking the East Side

Viaduct SOS: Stop city hall's biggest mistake since the downtown mall.



Pedestrians, especially students going to school and workers going to their jobs, routinely make use of the McBride Viaduct. Demolishing it would require them to cross the tracks using only the 9-foot wide, much longer Bayfront Connector bridge.

Other benefits

Jane Jacobs and other urban studies researchers have long observed that the connectivity of a neighborhood is linked to the quality of life and social capital its residents enjoy. In general, more pathways between neighborhoods tend to correlate with safer, more positive living experiences. Converting the Viaduct into a permanent pedestrian and bike path would likely parallel an increase in social interests, as well as increases in positive social forces over time. We have found that this is already happening for the Viaduct, and that benefit will continue to grow, enriching the local population.

The McBride Viaduct pedestrian and bike path is a landmark in the making. If cleaned up, painted, and lighted, the bridge could reenergize the surrounding economy and instill a sense of pride among residents of the east side. As is, the McBride Viaduct is an unquantified channel of social capital, trust, and reciprocity for east siders and the city at large, as the bridge enables countless social interactions among the residents who use it.

The retention of the McBride Viaduct path will symbolize generosity and trust from the city government toward residents of the east side, social dimensions that are now grossly deficient.

The potential effects of demolishing the McBride Viaduct

LRK's preferred alternative of demolishing the Viaduct would offer two benefits: the removal of structure in need of repair, and the quashing of a debate for an outgoing administration. However, demolition would cause significant problems for surrounding neighborhoods.

LRK has recommended that pedestrians and bicyclists be directed to cross the Bayfront Connector at the Broad Street or East 12th Street intersections. They acknowledged that these routes would result in longer walking and biking times, but LRK failed to assess their practicality.

Because the Via- **[Cont. on page 35]**

By: Josh Morgan (with Civitas members Lisa Austin and Adam Trott)

Mayor Joseph Sinnott, who deserves applause for getting Erie's budget under control, seems to believe that the McBride Viaduct is just a liability haunting the city. Some in the administration suppose that the Viaduct could become a financial debacle, undoing the Mayor's hard work. The firm of L.R. Kimball (LRK), contracted to determine the most prudent course of action for the Viaduct, nurtured such concerns.

It is important to note that despite John Nolen's century-old call for Erie to hire someone with urban design expertise, the City of Erie does not have a city planner. Lacking an articulated vision for a walkable, bikeable community from their "employers" (the City of Erie), the LRK team of traffic engineers naturally focused on moving cars and trucks through the east side. Sadly, walkability – a key urban planning strategy to promote health, protect

the environment, and foster economic development – was not adequately on LRK's radar.

Money and jobs

To build the Viaduct today, the price tag is estimated to be \$15-\$20 million. Estimates of the cost to tear it down have risen from \$1.2 million to \$2.3 million (and are likely to rise further when all environmental hazards are identified). Whatever the cost ends up to be, the demolition and clean up money will likely go to out-of-state contractors. In contrast, the \$3 million needed to stabilize the Viaduct (for its current use as a pedestrian and bicycle bridge) can be tied to a Community Benefits Agreement ensuring that locals get the jobs.

Railroad divides Erie

Erie's east side neighborhoods have terrible north-south connectivity. From the Ash Street underpass to Downing Avenue – a mile and a half – only the Viaduct and the highway cross over the tracks. In LRK's vision, automobile traffic – especially on the

highway – should become the preferred mode of transportation on the east side, even though travel by car is a privilege unavailable to many.

Rather than making a bad situation worse, the Viaduct should remain in place as a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the railroad tracks.

Safety

The proposal to retain the Viaduct in its present use has been criticized as an unsafe municipal liability attracting crime, injuries, and even suicide. However, there is no known record of any of this occurring during the Viaduct's five years as a pedestrian and bike path; these criticisms are frivolous.

LRK and the supporters of demolition claim that Viaduct users will be safely and adequately accommodated with only the 9-foot-wide path along the Bayfront Connector. We suggest the next time it rains or snows, take a comparison walk. Having children and teens traveling to school along a four-lane highway with 22-ton trucks barreling by is not something a responsible community should endorse.



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K2 Madness

Synthetic cannabinoid abuse spikes in Erie.



DAMANY S. COLEMAN

By: Ryan Smith

A form of synthetic marijuana is filling local emergency rooms,” read one *Erie Times-News* story’s lede.

Another, a few days later: “The Erie Bureau of Police issued another warning to the public about the dangers of ‘designer drugs’ ... known as K2 or Spice, in the wake of more overdoses in the city.”

In one night’s handful of cases, a group of seven teenagers who were partying together were all rushed to Erie hospitals – some even later transferred to Pittsburgh for further emergency treatment – after reportedly overdosing on “synthetic marijuana.”

One early afternoon not long after that, authorities were called to a downtown McDonald’s, where three adults had reportedly OD’ed, too, and were likewise taken to city hospitals’ ERs.

Their symptoms? Weird and dangerous stuff, along the lines of those crazy “bath salts” freak-outs we hear

about every once in awhile (but, by all accounts, happening a lot more often). Wild hallucinations. Severe breathing problems. Seizures. Violent psychotic outbursts. Worse.

Now, I’ve heard some stories over the past decade or so – some pretty scary ones, too – about the rising abuse of products containing synthetically-engineered cannabinoids: the stuff most people call “K2” or “Spice,” but which actually goes by a glut of different pseudo-brands and varieties.

But after multiple local headlines about spates of recent emergency room visits, I became more curious. Before I began calling local authorities, I read local news stories about how investigations into cases involving synthetic marijuana ingestion were developing in Erie (people freaking out and/or getting ill from smoking “K2,” or “Spice,” or “potpourri,” or “synthetic weed,” or whatever it’s called).

Then, I checked out other reports, including some of vice.com’s extensive coverage: interesting, eye-opening,

First appearing on the market around 2006, synthetically-engineered cannabinoids, commonly referred to as “K2” or “Spice,” have become frighteningly more ubiquitous of late. Here in Erie, law enforcement and medical professionals are struggling to respond to increasing abuse cases.

and alarming (like much of that independent NYC-based alternative news source’s content).

And I headed to erowid.org, a nonprofit online resource for open, honest, reliable, and accurate information-sharing about psychoactive drugs – legal, illegal, or otherwise – and their effects.

As erowid.org notes immediately (and, as user experiences and reports here, there, and everywhere demonstrate), “K2”-type synthetic cannabinoid-containing products have been around for some time. But for any number of reasons, those products (usually sold as inert plant material that’s been sprayed or coated with the synthetics) have reportedly become more dangerous this year.

From the sounds of it, they’re morphing into a set of Frankenstein chemical cocktails that have batches causing real, true, and – when it comes to long-term effects – still-unforeseen problems for many, if not most, users.

And there is no shortage of horror stories.

One guy who smoked a product containing one or more synthetic cannabinoids was convinced it triggered a full-on, long-lasting, terrifying psychotic break.

“It felt as if my body was dying, piece by piece, before me,” the 24-year-old wrote in his account of the experience.

After three bong-hits of one branded “K2” product, “I felt horrible,” stated a 17-year-old in another self-submitted user report.

“I couldn’t relax,” he added. “It was constant struggle, constant discomfort. No haven in sight.”

His only connection to reality for some hours, he says, were the piles of vomit soon spewing from his wretched-feeling guts.

And, as is becoming universally apparent, those experiences aren’t unique whatsoever.

Indeed, for a whole lot of people, things in the wide, wild world of cannabinoid abuse have gotten that bad and

even worse: There’s a lot of talk about hardcore addiction – the real, physical kind.

Horrible freak-outs, and even some seemingly life-threatening ailments – often leading to long (and crazy-weird) emergency-room visits – are reported with alarming frequency by users, as well as in disturbing news features nationwide.

And so it’s been in Erie, too.

Around mid-October, it started being reported that police and medical personnel around the city were seeing a major spike in synthetic pot overdoses. UPMC Hamot alone had approximate-

Around mid-October, it started being reported that police and medical personnel around the city were seeing a major spike in synthetic pot overdoses. UPMC Hamot alone had approximately 20 cases in one week, according to local news reports. And not much has changed since.

ly 20 cases in one week, according to local news reports.

And not much has changed since, according to local drug investigators and healthcare officials.

While there have also been arrests in Erie on K2-related cases as recently as early December, when a 34-year-old woman was apprehended and jailed for allegedly selling unspecified quantities of the drugs from her East 12th Street residence, “we went two or three weeks [recently] where it was ridiculous. It was nonstop,” Det. Ryan Victory of the Erie Police Department’s vice unit tells me.

And still, “we’re getting upwards of six to 12 calls a day where our patrolmen

are responding to these cases of ‘K2’ overdoses.”

That’s up to a dozen calls *every day*, police say. And it’s considered a quieting down since the uptick of local emergency cases back in October.

All, mind you, among people who are apparently just seeking cheap, easy ways to catch something like a weed buzz. And who, in the process, are often encountering something altogether way different.

Here’s a bit of further background on the whole cannabinoid/synthetic pot phenomenon, courtesy of the researchers at erowid.org’s Erowid Center:

First appearing on the market sometime around 2006, Spice, or K2 (as the mixtures are now known generically) were and still are branded product lines, “sold as a legal herb-based alternative to cannabis,” and “perhaps the

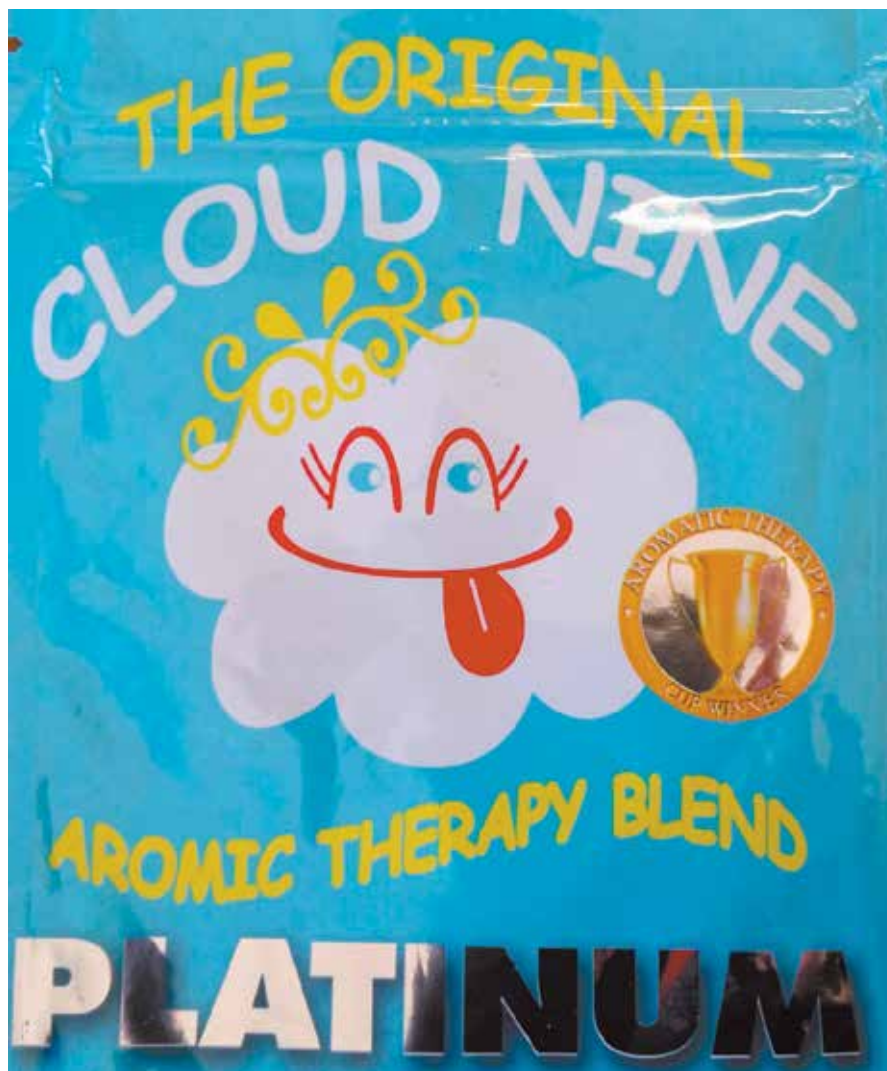
“We’re seeing an increase in the volume of patients suffering from the side effects of K2 or ‘Spice’ ingestion,” says Wayne Jones, D.O., Saint Vincent Emergency Department’s medical director. “We started seeing this type of drug probably five years ago, but not to a high degree. ... It [currently] seems to be a worsening trend.”

first [products] to popularize synthetic cannabinoids deposited on plant material as alternatives to natural cannabis.”

The ingredient lists on the “Not for Human Consumption”-marked packages (which, again, are actually often packaged under a wide range of pseudo-brands) contain only safe, friendly, all-natural herbs, and no cannabinoid chemical compounds.

That said, the ingredients are “suspiciously unlikely to produce [the products’] reported effects,” states erowid.org.

Because of that, after the products started gaining wider popularity and availability as quasi-legal highs – and causing the kinds of headlines across the U.S. being seen locally now – nu-



merous international organizations began testing the stuff. They found products to include varying ranges of research chemicals (or designer drugs): synthetic cannabinoids like JWH-018, HU-210, and CP-47,497, among many others.

State and federal bans followed soon thereafter, including new laws set forth here in the Keystone State.

But as with many other unregulated, legal-gray-area compounds (again, think of some of the things sold as “bath salts”), producers and vendors of synthetic pot have thus far largely been able to stay ahead of the law with fast-developed and ever-shifting sets of cannabinoid chemicals being synthesized far more quickly than they can be added to legal ban lists.

And, of course, they have their ubiquitous – and, utter bullshit – “Not for Human Consumption” labels.

But people do consume it. That is why it’s made.

And whether it has to do with new generations of compounds being rolled out to stay ahead of those ban lists, or

just bad batches, or potentially myriad other reasons, it’s creating a lot of problems for a lot of people.

Whatever the cause, “we’re seeing an increase in the volume of patients suffering from the side effects of K2 or ‘Spice’ ingestion,” says Wayne Jones, D.O., Saint Vincent Emergency Department’s medical director. “We started seeing this type of drug probably five years ago, but not to a high degree. ... It [currently] seems to be a worsening trend.”

And, being that the modern era of marijuana prohibition keeps spawning all-new, ever-changing generations of high-tech – and sometimes highly dangerous – pot substitutes, it’s hard for both police and medical officials anywhere to speculate how or when things may get better – or worse.

“I’m not a professed expert in K2,” says Victory, and “I haven’t met anyone who is. It’s such a new and evolving thing.”

But as with other scourges like heroin, meth, and crack, some things stay the same in the hard-drug game. Whoever they are, “the people who are deal-

ing this stuff have only one concern: money,” Victory adds.

And in the meantime – so long as what comes and goes stays controlled from the underbelly – people get hurt.

Now, it seems to me that humanity’s basic desire for recreational and consciousness-altering drugs and the experiences they engender – which crosses generations and societies despite prohibitions and controls – may never go away.

And all the problems caused by prohibition-born drug markets won’t go away, either. Not until society at large thinks harder about changing its views on, approaches to, and demands for drugs in general. To think, for example, about the plain-as-your-nose, obvious differences between naturally-occurring plants, and the literal, dangerous chemical reactions that repeatedly occur in the absence of those plants’ acceptance and availability.

On that note, I found some more worthwhile food for thought published in a 2009 Erowid research article. Considering where things have ended up – and could be headed – it reads a lot like a premonition:

Spice is a fascinating test case for unusually potent drugs of the future. The Spice story is part sci-fi, part Prohibition-style bootlegging, and part crass commercial venture. This new generation of recreational “research chemical” cannabinoids and cannabinomimetics are in the first wave of high-tech crypto drugs, more of which may be just around the corner. The evolutionary pressures of the last century have created a climate where new potent drugs are [obscured] using specialized technical knowledge that even expert laboratories have difficulty sorting through.

The Spice phenomenon gives us a glimpse of the complexities to be faced in the future when providing harm-reduction and health information for an ever-shifting, ever-expanding profusion of psychoactive drugs, drug combinations, and technologies.

Sound scary? Maybe.

Our worn-out drug policies are worth considering as part of the problem instead of the solution. It’s time to start thinking straight – with awareness and information guiding the way – about where we’re headed now, everyone.

Ryan Smith can be reached at rsmith@eriereader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @ryanmsmithplens.

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CULTURE

Geeked Out

It's about damn time!



By: John Lindvay

Jessica Jones is the latest Netflix Original Series in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, or MCU, and also the first entry starring a woman. Where *Daredevil* was punchy, in many senses of the word, *Jessica Jones* is hard-boiled noir that is dark, brutal, and sometimes difficult to watch.

Jessica Jones was released on Netflix on Nov. 20. Normally I binge on these things over a weekend, but it proved to be a bit more challenging this time around. This is not because of a lack of quality. The acting is excellent: Krysten Ritter does a fantastic Jessica, and David Tennant, whom you might know from *Dr. Who* or *Harry Potter*, is *chilling* as the series villain, Kilgrave. The challenge has much more to do with the content and themes that are dealt with in this series.

Comics have always wrestled with issues of our time. Jessica Jones, who is somewhat of a lesser known super-heroine, was a great choice for the next storyline entering into MCU Hell's Kitchen. Whereas in *Daredevil* we saw the birth of a superhero as he struggled to distinguish himself from men like the Kingpin, Jessica Jones shows us what happens when the good fail, and the personal trauma that follows.

Jessica discovered at a young age that she had powers. She is extremely strong, and though she can't fly, she can jump and fall great distances. She tries the superhero thing; but as she saves someone from the streets, she bumps into Kilgrave. A sociopath, his special

power is mind control. He speaks a command and victims are impelled to complete the action. Subconsciously, his captives are aware they are doing something unusual or forced, which adds layers of terror to this power. Kilgrave spots Jessica's strength and falls in love, commanding her to follow him and do his bidding.

From there he abuses her, rapes her, and forces her to commit murder. Finally, she summons the willpower to break free from him, and attempts to kill him. Thinking she has succeeded and wanting to flee the scene of where she just murdered another one of Kilgrave's victims, she splits before confirming Kilgrave's death.

This is the start of the series. From that point, Jessica opens a private investigation business and tries to deal with her PTSD from the Kilgrave event. She drinks, she investigates

Comics have always wrestled with issues of our time. Jessica Jones, who is somewhat of a lesser known super-heroine, was a great choice for the next storyline entering into MCU Hell's Kitchen.

cheating couples, and in general she is pretty miserable.

This series is much grittier and more powerful than *Daredevil* as its content is very heavy. I applaud the writing and directing for bringing these issues to bear and treating them with respect, giving audiences a very adult experience. Many comic book adaptations hold onto the more lighthearted nature of comics (see *Guardians of the Galaxy*, which is great!). But I've always been a fan of comics that focus on the drama within the adult issues of love, sex, and personal trauma.

Jessica Jones delivers on these aspects in what is best described as an excellent noir thriller: Where bad things happen to good people, and good people need to do bad things to make it right.

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

[Cont. from page 29] duct serves as a channel for human interaction and connectivity on the east side, removing it would have depressive social and economic effects. The effects of urban isolation have been documented in case studies by political scientists and urban sociologists. It is reasonable to expect crime and violence to increase after the Viaduct is demolished.

It is safe to assume that everyone who uses the Viaduct does so because it is safer and more pleasant than the one alternative route. Students going to school and workers going to their jobs, two key groups that currently use the Viaduct, would have no choice but to cross the tracks using only the 9-foot wide, much longer Bayfront Connector bridge.

Sadly, people under no pressure to cross would avoid the longer routes and stop crossing as often.

The impacts on life in the east side would be measurable, and would also include declines in civic engagement, local business revenues, and labor force participation. A 2011 study out of Penn State University found that walking and biking infrastructures in the U.S. facilitate long-term job creation by an average of 12 new jobs per \$1 million invested.

Removing the Viaduct would further hinder the ability of the east side's economy to support itself.

LRK's flawed urban study

LRK did not properly acknowledge that demolishing the Viaduct would disrupt the lives of individuals who rely on it to cross the CSX railroad tracks between East 12th Street and East 19th Street. Shockingly, they based their recommendations about the Viaduct on data collected on two winter days.

LRK's methodologies and case for demolition lacked scientific rigor, particularly in their assessments of pedestrians' and bicyclists' needs. For reference, the entire study can be downloaded at mcbrideviaduct.com, under the "Getting Involved" section.

For one, LRK conducted pedestrian and bike counts at intersections near the Viaduct and near the site of their proposed Buffalo Road interchange (in Appendix D1 of the study), but they only collected data during peak hours on two dates: one in November 2011, and another in December 2012.

Given that these types of traffic vary



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

by time of day, time of year, weather, temperature, visibility, and other factors, data for two points in time are not enough to allow for any significant analysis.

The reliability of these counts is also unclear because LRK did not provide a methodological statement to support them. What other studies have used the same or similar research methods? What did those other studies observe? LRK chose not to explain. Thus, the precedent for their research method is unknown.

Despite poor transparency, LRK's data show that pedestrians and bicyclists used the Viaduct more frequently than the Bayfront Bikeway or other routes, which they ignored during their recommendations. Further research is needed to indicate how people walk and bike in the area year-round.

One of the study's most blatant offenses comes from their survey of residents about the Viaduct (in Appendix C2). According to LRK, "Nearly 1,000 surveys were distributed via email, postal mail, and hand delivery. Ninety-eight responses were received."

This dismal response rate to LRK's survey is a failure of survey design, not of the target population to respond, and would be embarrassing for any professional survey firm to publish. Among survey researchers, 20 percent is considered the low end for accept-

able response rates. This survey did not deliver 10 percent.

Had the survey's authors attempted to draft a proper methodological statement, perhaps they would have discovered that a sample size of 98 is nowhere near large enough to represent the total population of their study area. As it stands, the statistics they calculated from their survey are not reliable and should be recalculated from new, more reliable data.

LRK's flippant environmental analysis

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires all state and federal contractors to conduct at least a Phase I environmental site assessment on projects that would modify the built environment. Generally speaking, a Phase I assessment identifies obvious environmental liabilities, and involves combing through public records, interviewing property owners and neighboring residents, and surveying a site for environmental clues. LRK conducted a Phase I assessment of the Viaduct, as required.

The problem is that the Viaduct sits on an industrial site that was active for decades before EPA regulations. There is a real risk of soil contamination that will require extensive cleanup if the Viaduct were to be demolished. Such a cleanup would require millions of dollars over budget that LRK's assessment

does not anticipate, and that the city is not prepared to take on.

Had LRK assumed due diligence and conducted a Phase II site assessment, the next step above general fact-finding, the debate over the Viaduct's future might carry a different weight.

Overall, LRK's approach to urban design is subjective in that they would prefer all forms of human movement on the east side to conform around motorized traffic. This auto-centric approach to urban design is almost as old as the automobile, and is facing obsolescence in many settings — not automobiles themselves, but their dominance over urban mobility.

LRK's preferred alternative works against the natural patterns of pedestrians and bicyclists on the east side instead of with them. Granted, LRK tailored its recommendations to the city's limited terrain and resources, but the methods in which it chose to do so should be revisited.

LRK published an incomplete study that was lax in its methodologies, muddying the debate over the Viaduct's future.

Recommendations

Mayor Sinnott and city council must be urged to table their plans to demolish the McBride Viaduct. Ideally they should move forward with stabilizing this city asset, and work with community organizers to help establish a public-private partnership (like LEAF at Frontier Park) to help the city care for the Viaduct.

At the very least, the current administration must address the shortcomings of LRK's study by undertaking the following three recommendations:

One, a longitudinal study of intersections around the Viaduct, accounting for pedestrian and bicycle traffic throughout the year, should be a priority. Two examples of successful models for counts like these can be found with Ann Arbor's Transportation Authority, and in a 2012 study of non-motorized traffic in Minneapolis by Steve Hankey and associates.

Two, a more extensive survey research to identify the needs of those who rely on the Viaduct would be ideal. Emails, requests via postal mail, and phone calls will receive fewer responses than face-to-face interactions, so volunteers would have to be rallied for such an effort — not an impossible task.



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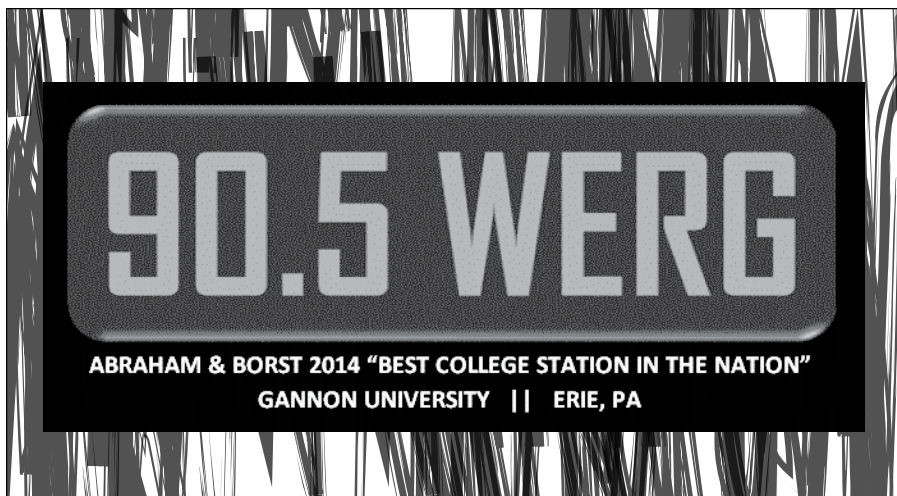
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FEATURE

Three, a Phase II assessment of soil quality should inform the city's final decision about the Viaduct site. Otherwise, Mayor Sinnott's progress toward financial stability could be challenged.

Still, the demolition of the Viaduct remains a stubborn possibility. Should that come to pass, here are two more recommendations:

One, pedestrians and bicyclists need routes to travel beyond LRK's preferred alternative. Period. There is a mile and a half between East 12th Street and Broad Street where people live and cannot cross the CSX railroad tracks safely without the Viaduct. Expecting residents to follow the alternate routes without consequence dismisses our rational tendencies as humans. Unfortunately, the Viaduct is the only north-south track crossing that aligns with the only north-south business corridor in this region of the east side: East Avenue. Demolishing it greatly diminishes East Avenue's attempts at economic turn-around.

Two, proper signage, education, and beautification would improve the safety and usage of alternate routes. LRK's recommendation to install fencing and barriers at dangerous crossing points in the area is callous and does not go far enough. A 2014 study of American adolescents suggested that it may be possible to persuade pedestrians to walk farther by providing high-quality, stimulating routes.

Opportunity

The McBride Viaduct is a misunderstood asset. With commitment, Erie could use it to attract and retain residents and entrepreneurs in unique ways. East siders need comfortable and convenient ways to walk, bike, and enjoy the outdoors, and the Viaduct can facilitate all three. In addition, Erie needs to repair its self-image problem, with or without the Viaduct, but that will never happen as long as city officials allow their fear of risk to override their desire for innovation.

It makes sense for Mayor Sinnott and other critics to question the Viaduct's feasibility, but LRK's unreliable findings have tainted their opinions. LRK's study of the Viaduct was flawed in that their research methods violated scientific standards. Also, their recommendations focused on financial factors, not social ones, and they implied that driving should be the dominant mode of transportation, despite national

trends to the contrary.

The McBride Viaduct is a platform for innovation waiting to be utilized. Erie desperately needs a win, having long ago reached a point where financial woes became excuses for doing nothing. Those who are moving away are doing so to escape that tired, old narrative.

Last Fall, Pittsburgh hired a new Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator to improve its walking and biking infrastructure. Buffalo is now rolling out its new Green Code, an overhaul of the city's development strategy that encourages pedestrian and bicycle-friendly construction. In February, the Cleveland City Council approved a plan for a pedestrian bridge on its lakefront, among other improvements.

In June 2015, the former Milwaukee Mayor, John Norquist, wrote in his *Erie Times-News* op-ed that "the Viaduct should be preserved as a convenient walkway." At the Booker T. Washington Center last August, the Columbia University professor, Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove, urged Erie to keep the Viaduct in order to create a "Safe and Connected City."

Let's keep pedestrians safe and create local jobs.

Let's seize this unique Erie opportunity.

Let's rethink the McBride Viaduct.

What do you think about this? The Mayor and City Council will soon decide the Viaduct's fate. Come and voice your opinion during the first-come-first-serve segment of the "(Viaduct) Citizens-to-be-Heard" portion of the City Council meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 16, at City Hall, 626 State St. Details on Facebook: Rethink the McBride Viaduct.

Josh Morgan, a sociologist and freelance writer for the Washington Post and other publications, specializes in quantitative research and produces The Plural of You, a podcast about people helping people. Architect Adam Trott, a member of Civitas, can be reached via his website, ajtarch.com. Lisa Austin, a social sculptor and co-founder of Civitas, can be reached via civitaserie.com, via Facebook at CivitasErie, by email Lisa@civitaserie.com, or by scheduling a Friday morning meeting at the Civitas office in the Masonic Building, 32 West Eighth St.

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ER Sports

A tribute to Dan Brabender

By: James R. LeCorchick

Many times people call me with a question about local sports, and when I don't know the answer, I give them Dan Brabender's phone number. I remember a lot of things, but no one comes close to Danny: a true sports historian with unmatched knowledge of past greats from Erie athletics.

If you don't agree, I will provide some evidence and let you be the "judge." As a matter of fact, I will anoint him King of Research because I firmly believe some of the details I pass on will stun and amaze you.

I have known him for 40 years, but even I was shocked at his commitment to detail when I sat down with him at his home and we discussed his past and ongoing projects. If I said it once that evening, I said it numerous times: "incredible."

Brabender, a highly-respected attorney for many years, is now a judge for the Erie County Court of Common Pleas. The work ethic in his professional life that he carries over to his "hobby" absolutely amazes me.

When asked about this talent, he credits his father for getting him headed in the right direction. "I used to go through the newspaper with him at a very young age and we would look at schedules, standings, and statistics," he explained. "I was always into stats and details."

And is he ever.

A former Cathedral Prep wrestler, he was captain of the Rambler grapplers in the 1969-70 season, and wrote a book about the history of C.P. football that dazzled sports fans of all schools. When he told me he was going to do this, I thought, "How nice. It should be done in about six months."

Six was close. But six years – not months.

His motivation first arose in 1983, as he pointed out, "Craig DeMarco caught a long touchdown pass against Gateway High School in the first game of the season and the Erie paper reported that this was probably the longest touchdown reception in Prep history.

"This showed me that Prep must not have any records if the school didn't pass this on to the paper."

Brabender then talked about how Coach Mina George may have been the all-time leading rusher in school histo-

ry, but no one knew for sure. That was when he knew this had to be done.

"It was almost like a calling," he said. "I wrote a history of the fraternity I was in when I was at Dayton. I love writing histories of things and details so it came naturally. Once I started I was almost possessed."

He started on Oct. 31, 1993, when he went down to the Erie Public Library (the one that had to cut hours because of the wonderful job our state politicians did with the budget) and became immersed in old newspapers and yearbooks.

The sad part of this story showed up when I asked why he remembered the exact date, and he said, "That was the day my mother died in a car accident."

He admits three years into the project it was almost overwhelming. But he felt if he didn't do it, it wouldn't get done.

A fan of all Erie teams, he added that he didn't want it to be just Prep, but all the schools.

And when he was done, he'd written a history of Prep (and Erie) football that contained over 900 pages, weighed over three pounds, and was nearly three inches thick.

In his search to get everything correct he visited high schools as far away as Texas. The Erie paper was at the mercy of the school calling in. Many times, they didn't have the correct names of the opposing players, so they made up names. Brabender, through thousands of hours of going through yearbooks and out-of-town papers, corrected these errors.

He added that he received hundreds of letters and not one person said, "You should've done it this way or that way." That's the ultimate compliment from Erie people.

So what has he been doing for the past 12 years? What else would you think he's been doing? Writing a history of Cathedral Prep basketball.

And during our interview, I could just feel the pride he has in this effort as he commented, "There's nothing else ever done like this in Erie. You won't find this information anywhere in the world.

"It's done and ready to go. It will be out before next basketball season."

He gave me a sneak preview and the book is going to be beyond belief.

It starts with the 1924 season and it's almost impossible to quit reading, as he

includes some incredible features that will blow you away. Also, he showed a collection of over 1,000 photos that he still has to go through to decide which ones will make the final cut.

His features include – my favorite – a section that has every basketball player who performed on the varsity at C.P. and where they went to grade school. Yes, you read this correctly. He also did unprecedented work for the Erie School District, as he has the yearly records of all the local teams.

Included in this amazing publication will be chapters on the 1920s through today, with C.P.'s greatest victories, plays, and defeats, opponents greatest plays, all-time records, awards and honors, yearly records of local teams, C.P. OT games, three-point play, C.P. records against opponents, Catholic champs (all

tournaments), and an unbelievable section on the Erie Parochial League.

Just before I left he showed me his collection of yearbooks for all the local schools. I can't wait to go back and start perusing them cover to cover.

One book that caught my eye was the 1966 CP yearbook, which I had never seen before. When they wrote about the 1965 baseball season, they thought my name was spelled LeChorchick and not LeCorchick. But I was still just as proud of being on that championship team.

I hope you're as excited about this book as I am.

As I said earlier, "Incredible." And let me add, "Thanks, Judge!"

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

DANIEL J. BRABENDER, JR FILE

GRADE SCHOOL: St. George (1966)
HIGH SCHOOL: Cathedral Prep (1970)
COLLEGE: University of Dayton (1974)
GRADUATE: University of Dayton Law School (1978)
SIBLINGS: Mary Ann, Tim
CHILDREN: Alexis 15, Rachel 13
HALL OF FAME: Cathedral Prep
OCCUPATION: Judge for Court of Common Pleas

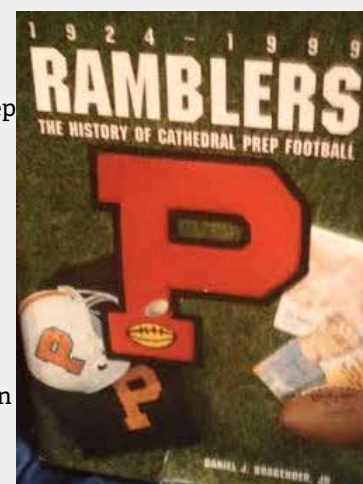
FAVORITE CHILDHOOD MEMORIES:

1. Sitting on my father's lap as a 6-year-old and reading baseball standings and schedules out of the paper.
2. Attending Prep games with my father, who was a Prep grad.
3. Going to the "Audi" to watch Gannon basketball from the mid-50s on.

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS: Captain of the CP wrestling team for the 1969-70 season.

FAVORITE SPORTS MEMORIES:

1. The 1967 East-Prep football game won by Prep 13-6. East had a "dream team" and was heavily favored. (ed. note – The Warriors were coached by Dan's uncle, the legendary Billy Brabender.)
2. The 1965 Strong Vincent-Prep wrestling match that the Ramblers rallied to win, 23-22. (ed. note – The Colonels were coached by another uncle, Billy's twin brother Bobby.)
3. Bill Mazeroski's home run when the Pirates beat the Yankees in the 1960 World Series. "I ran home from grade school and saw the final two innings," Danny explained.



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