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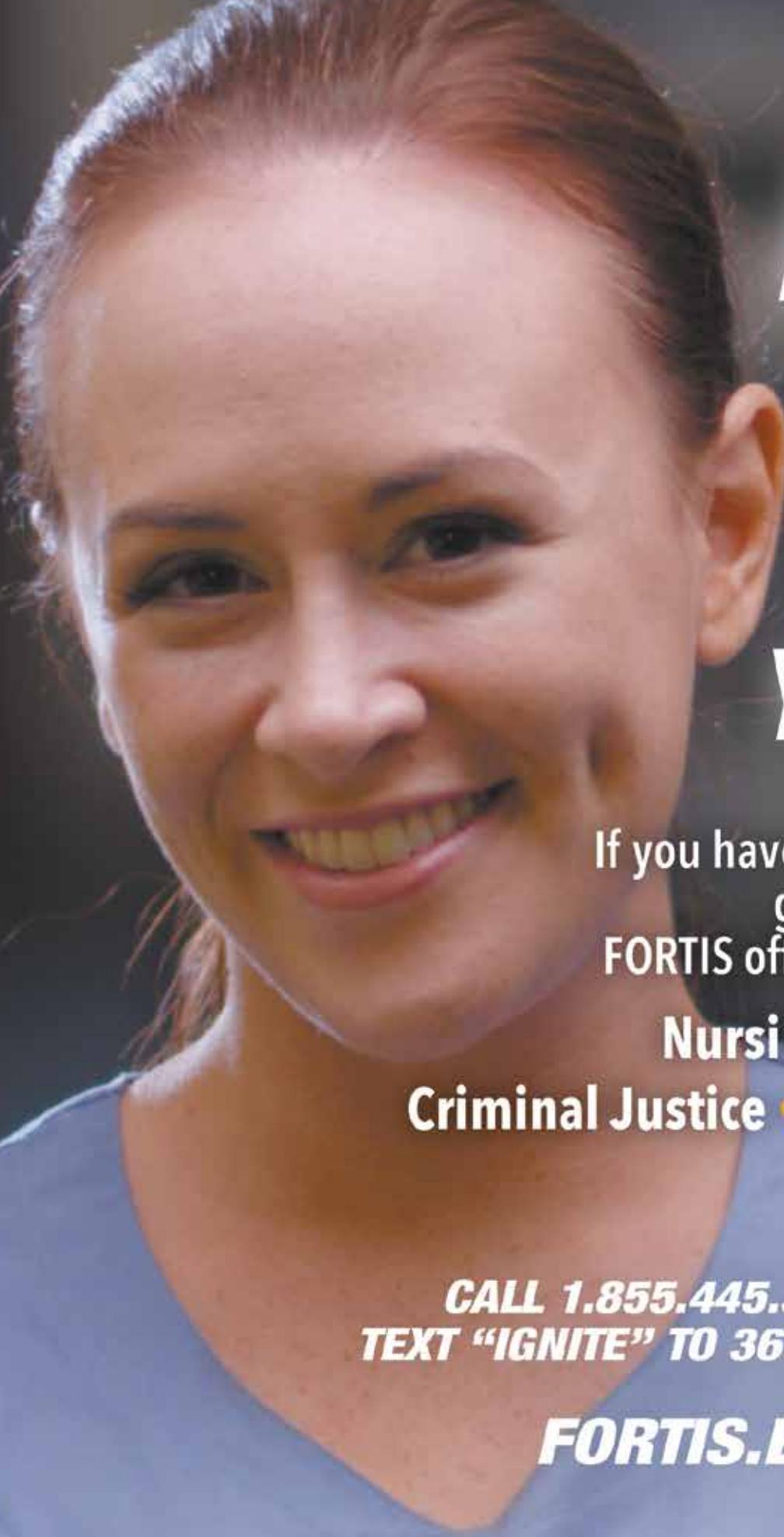
DAN SCHANK CREATES 'PLENTY' TO SEE
AND EVEN MORE TO THINK ABOUT AT THE ERIE ART MUSEUM

GRASPING ERIE'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
CHARLES BUKI'S URGENT LETTER TO THE LEADERS AND CITIZENS OF ERIE



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Editors-in-Chief:

Brian Graham & Adam Welsh

Managing Editor:

Katie Chriest

Contributing Editors:

Ben Spегgen

Jim Wertz

Contributors:

Lisa Austin, Civitas

Mary Birdsong

Rick Filippi

Lisa Gensheimer

Gregory Greenleaf-Knepp

John Lindvay

Brianna Lyle

Dan Schank

Tommy Shannon

Ryan Smith

Ti Summer

Matt Swanseger

Sara Toth

Bryan Toy

Nick Warren

Senator Sean Wiley

Cover Art:

Dan Schank

Cover Design:

Nick Warren

Photographers:

Ed Bernik

Ryan Smith

Brad Triana

Publisher's Assistant:

Emily Hanisek

Intern:

Angie Jeffery

1001 State St. Suite 901

Erie, Pa., 16501

contact@eriereader.com

The Erie Reader is the only 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 300 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

CZB's Charles Buki seems to believe in Erie. Now it's up to us to do the same.

Recently, the City of Erie received the comprehensive plan created by urban planning firm CZB. The plan arrived with a letter from principal consultant Charles Buki, which we have included unabridged in this issue.

Though the full plan is now publicly accessible, and though Pat Howard included passages of this letter in his *Erie Times-News* column on Sunday, April 10, we chose to run it in full to share its impassioned call to action with all leaders and citizens of Erie. We were deeply moved by what is obviously a genuine hope that Erie will find the will and courage to move forward, and we wanted you to see this language firsthand.

As Buki writes, "The time has long passed when Erie had the luxury of assuming future prosperity, and of not having to make hard choices. The only reality now is that future prosperity might come from making choices few will enjoy making."

Erie's comprehensive plan arrived with a letter from principal consultant Charles Buki, which we have included unabridged in this issue. We chose to run the letter in full to share its impassioned call to action with all leaders and citizens of Erie. We were deeply moved by what is obviously a genuine hope that Erie will find the will and courage to move forward, and we wanted you to see this language firsthand.

Encouragingly, though, he adds that "Fortunately, the Erie community is full of energized, smart, hard-working, committed civic voices who both want to make a difference and are prepared, now, to start breaking with the status quo. We detected a significant appetite in the community to be leveled with, and for partnership. But those voices need to be mobilized. That means hearing them, and then being candid with them about the set of choices available, and about the real challenges and the real opportunities and the real work of tackling the former by investing in the latter."

In short: Engaging and celebrating Erie's change agents is critical. Disengagement, on the other hand, could be fatal.

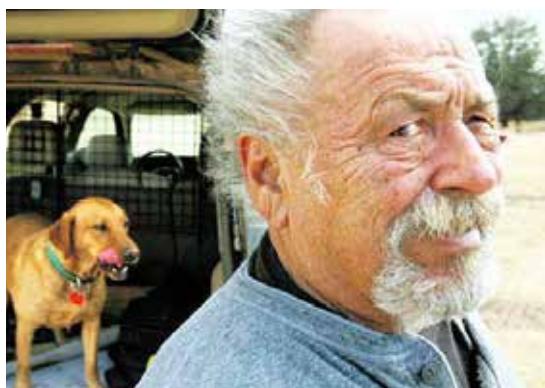
In her book *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, Brené Brown writes, "Disengagement is the issue underlying the majority of problems I see in families, schools, communities, and organizations and it takes many forms ... We disengage to protect ourselves from vulnerability, shame, and feeling lost and without purpose. We also disengage when we feel like the people who are leading us – our boss, our teachers, our principal, our clergy, our parents, our politicians – aren't living up to their end of the social contract."

Brown, whose 2010 Houston TEDx talk on *The Power of Vulnerability* is one of the top five most viewed TED talks globally, has been hired by enormously successful firms to ignite leaders into the sort of risk-taking, inspired dynamism that can propel their organizations boldly.

Her clients – like Google, Facebook, and the U.S. Army, to name a few – count on Brown's groundbreaking acknowledgement of vulnerability as the genesis of rich creation and powerful transformation; and denial of it as one of the most **[Cont. on page 4]**

Just a Thought

“The language your soul would speak if you could teach your soul to speak.”



STATE LIBRARY OF MICHIGAN

Jim Harrison wrote poems about dogs, rivers, wine, and women. In illuminating the ordinary, he reminded readers of the amazement available at any given moment, wherever they are.

By: Katie Chriest

*It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.*

– William Carlos Williams, “Asphodel,
That Greeny Flower”

April is National Poetry Month – the 20th annual, in fact. So we’re a little more aware of those who help us make sense of the world in words; who spend their days tracking bravely through, as writer May Sarton put it, “thickets of undigested experience.”

This year I’m mourning Jim Harrison, who had been my favorite living poet. He died with pen in hand on March 26. When I learned of Harrison’s death, I

actually wept. “He’s not on this earth with us anymore,” I said to my husband. It was an absurd thing to say, but – not being the wordsmith that Harrison was – it was the closest I could come to articulating what I saw in my mind’s eye: images of conspicuous consumption, rampant indoorsy-ness, hyped-up busy-ness, obsessive gadgetry – and no more Harrison to help me make sense (and light) of it all. His assemblage of reality always felt effortless, belying what was undoubtedly a life of deep and heady labor. That, and the stamina to watch modernity unfold without losing his enormous appetite for life and laughter.

In “Sunlight,” Harrison observes:

*In the Salt Lake City airport eight out
of ten
were fiddling relentlessly with cell
phones.*

*The world is too grand to reshape
with babble.*

Great poets courageously step out

of the dopamine-addled information stream. They press the pause button on the tape loops in our minds. They – like other authentic artists – implore us to see the threads of truth stitching our lives together. To love that truth and laugh at folly. And to remain open to the entirety of life’s emotional spectrum.

In “Limb Dancers,” Harrison writes:

*Of course we’re born in the long shadow
of our coffins or urns. So what can we
do except
open ourselves wide to life herself
rather than the numbers game of
time and money?*

As I write this, I am seated at a table surrounded by books of Harrison’s poems, from which I’ve read every day for years. It’s comforting to sit amongst these words. I’m grateful that he trusted himself enough to record them. It took great courage, and years of perseverance when no accolades came from the outside. No invitations. No fellowships. No recognition of the genius within.

I think of our community, and the fact that, thanks to the hard work of a number of similar believers, poetry thrives here. From the organizing efforts of current Erie County Poet Laureate, Cee Williams, to the new “Step into Poetry” venture between Erie Benedictine

Mary Lou Kownacki and poet and artist Joe Gallagher, we are lucky enough to live among numerous poets who help us to look beyond headlines and statistics and to reimagine what we take ourselves and our city to be.

One great gift of poetry is its ability to shift our perception. We look up from the page with different eyes, even at

**I think of our community,
and the fact that poetry
thrives here. One great gift
of poetry is its ability to shift
our perception. We look up
from the page with different
eyes, even at the city we
think we know so well.**

the city we think we know so well.

In *Braided Creek: A Conversation in Poetry*, Harrison and his good friend Ted Kooser collected passages they’d written to each other, including this one:

*If you can awaken
inside the familiar
and discover it strange
you need never leave home.*

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

[Cont. from page 3] destructive, stagnating forces of our time.

And Brown’s language has a lot in common with Buki’s.

As Buki’s research elucidates, Erie is at an indisputably vulnerable point. But the safety of the status quo is at best an illusion and at worst a ticking bomb.

“There is no doubt some in the community will want an easier, softer way,” Buki acknowledges. “With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless in the face of resistance to change and be thorough from the very start. By holding onto old ideas the result for Erie will be nil. Half measures will avail Erie nothing because your city is at a turning point.”

Buki’s team identified “Risk Aversion” as one of the primary stultifying forces in Erie. “Limited trust and overall risk aversion culminates in Erie putting off, or failing to acknowledge, difficult choices,” Buki writes. “The community isn’t prepared to make hard choices unless pushed to do so and no one in the community

– in any sector – has yet shown a willingness to do the necessary pushing.”

As Brown explains, “Rehumanizing ... requires courageous leadership. Honest conversations about vulnerability and shame are disruptive. The reason that we’re not having these conversations in our organizations is that they shine light in the dark corners. Once there is language, awareness, and understanding, turning back is almost impossible and carries with it severe consequences. We all want to Dare Greatly. If you give us a glimpse into that possibility, we’ll hold on to it as our vision. It can’t be taken away.”

Buki and his team have given Erie that glimpse. Now it’s up to us – and not just elected and appointed officials, but *all of us* – to hold on to that vision.

To admit we have a problem, yes. But more courageously, to bypass the blame game and admit that it’s up to *all of us* to solve it.

Brown finds that “The big challenge for leaders is getting our heads and hearts around the fact that we need to cultivate the courage to be uncomfortable

and to teach the people around us how to accept discomfort as a part of growth.”

There’s no denying that Erie is in an uncomfortably vulnerable place. And we’ve already seen some predictably cynical reactions to this plan, in line with the sort of exhausted disengagement Brown identifies. Some would rather move away. Some would rather blame leaders (whom they elected by voting or abstaining) and argue that nothing can be done because of dead weight in office. And some would rather belittle Erie and continue the tired old conversation that this town is hopeless, helpless, and irredeemable.

Are we ready, finally, to let go of that boring, inaccurate storyline? Are we ready to co-author a new one?

“The choice of which road to take is now squarely in your hands,” Buki declares, “as will be the responsibility years from now, for which path was chosen.”

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PEOPLE

Stairways names McBrier to executive team
McBrier to oversee business development at BLOOM Collaborative

Stairways Behavioral Health has named Heather McBrier the new Business Development Director for BLOOM Collaborative, Stairways' arts and wellness program located at 138 E. 26th Street.

McBrier will act as project manager with a focus on development, business strategy and sustainability for BLOOM Collaborative's programs and community partnership.

McBrier holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration, finance and marketing from the University of Denver. McBrier has been a successful business owner for over 10 years in Erie. Her company, McBrier Events, specializes in fundraising, event management and project management.

McBrier has worked with a number of Erie nonprofit and corporate clients, such as UPMC Hamot Health Foundation,

ArtsErie, Peek 'n Peak, Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park, Mercyhurst Prep and Edinboro University.

McBrier has directed Stairways projects in the past, and welcomes this new opportunity to expand her reach and leadership within the agency.

"I believe in Stairways' mission and its long history of helping individuals become better and live fully in our community," said McBrier. "BLOOM Collaborative is a wonderful place that inspires clients and the community through healing arts. As we continue to develop strong programs at BLOOM, we are developing a stronger community."

Lee Steadman, Director of BLOOM Collaborative, is pleased to have McBrier join the team.

Said Steadman, "We welcome Heather's commitment to our mission and are excited to have her with us."

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NEWS & VIEWS

Grasping Erie's Comprehensive Plan

Charles Buki's urgent letter to the leaders and citizens of Erie

March 31, 2016
Hon. Joseph E. Sinnott, Mayor
626 State Street
Erie, PA 16501

Letter of Transmittal: Comprehensive Plan City of Erie

Dear Mayor, Members of the Erie City Council, and Planning Commissioners,

As requested, attached is the final version of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Erie. It complies with all pertinent planning laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and shakes hands with the contours of Emerge 2040. It is now ready for referral to the Erie City Council by the city's Planning Commission once the Commission has conducted its review and made its recommendations. The document you now have is absolute state of the art; nothing like this exists in the U.S. today as a guide for how to dig out of a protracted weak market situation such as the one Erie is now in.

This transmittal fulfills our contract with the City of Erie.

During forthcoming review, first by the Planning Commission and later by the City Council, there will be the opportunity for Commissioners and City Councilors to enter into a dialogue with the community about the long term health of the City of Erie and how to obtain it. We strongly encourage elected and appointed officials to embrace resulting discussions and participate in a full-throttled conversation about what such a future course for the city entails. The time has long passed when Erie had the luxury of assuming future prosperity, and of not having to make hard choices. The only reality now is that future prosperity *might* come from making choices few will enjoy making.

In an important way, *how Erie got here* is a less pressing matter than that *Erie is where it is*. In point of fact, Erie is at a crossroads, and, make no mistake, the clock is ticking.

- There are some 4,700 vacant housing units in Erie – the equivalent of a small, empty city. Assuming that this equates to 2,500 empty structures, and that each of those properties will cost roughly \$10,000 to acquire and demolish, that's a \$25 million bill. Or if it costs \$50,000 on average to acquire and rehabilitate those proper-

ties into a marketable condition, the bill is \$125 million. Erie only has a fraction of these amounts on hand, so being really smart with the few dollars it does have will mean deploying them in politically unpopular ways in order to make any difference at all.

- Erie now has 33 percent fewer middle and upper income households in the city than it had in 1969; so there are far fewer tax dollars available to take care of a city that now has 40 percent more infrastructure than it needs. Again, being really smart with the few dollars the city does have will mean spending them in ways sure to disappoint some constituencies; leadership will be required to find a bal-

We strongly encourage elected and appointed officials to embrace resulting discussions and participate in a full-throttled conversation about what such a future course for the city entails. The time has long passed when Erie had the luxury of assuming future prosperity, and of not having to make hard choices. The only reality now is that future prosperity might come from making choices few will enjoy making.

ance between being purely smart and creating a sense of fairness.

- Erie County's population has been flat for 36 years, so the region isn't in a position, never mind of a mood, to bail the city out, no matter how culpable it may be for the state of the city by virtue of suburbanization. Yet partnership is a must. Where will leadership on this front come from?

- The average sale price of a house in very good condition is \$157,000 when the house is surrounded by similar properties. That price drops to \$91,000 when the house is on a block where maintenance standards are in the middle – with numerous properties showing at least small signs of disinvestment. And the price falls to \$52,000 when that very good house is on a block that is noticeably distressed – a scenario that costs the city approximately \$1,200 in property tax

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revenue each year as a result of stunted property values. Who in a position of authority will walk the community through the net benefit-cost ratios of the various approaches available to the city?

There is no doubt some in the community will want an easier, softer way. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless in the face of resistance to change and be thorough from the very start. By holding onto old ideas the result for Erie will be nil. Half measures will avail Erie nothing because your city is at a turning point.

Of course, the sky is not falling, and there is ample cover to be found under the protective skirt of inaction, or of work avoidance, or of staying the course with business as usual. If Erie's near future is characterized by a continuation of the status quo – beginning with how this draft comprehensive plan is rolled out and debated, then the city's long-term future can be seen by visiting Camden, New Jersey, Flint, Michigan, Youngstown, Ohio, or Gary, Indiana. The choice of which road to take is now squarely in your hands, as will be the responsibility years from now, for which path was chosen.

Fortunately, the Erie community is full of energized, smart, hard-working, committed civic voices who both want to make a difference and are prepared, now, to start breaking with the status quo. We detected a significant appetite in the community to be leveled with, and

There is no doubt some in the community will want an easier, softer way. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless in the face of resistance to change and be thorough from the very start. By holding onto old ideas the result for Erie will be nil. Half measures will avail Erie nothing because your city is at a turning point.

for partnership. But those voices need to be mobilized. That means hearing them, and then being candid with them about the set of choices available, and about the real challenges and the real opportunities and the real work of tackling the former by investing in the latter.

In the course of working on this long range plan for the City of Erie, our team was honored to work with and learn from many of the city's outstanding employees. Our team worked closely with the excellent staff of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, busi-

ness owners, residents, members of the city council and planning commission, staff of the Downtown Partnership, staff and board of the Community Foundation and the United Way, the Superintendent of Erie's Public Schools, the Chief of the Police Department, and the outstanding leadership at the Erie Redevelopment Authority. We were fortunate to meet with county officials, representatives of Gannon, Penn State, and Mercyhurst, members of the clergy, and a number of community developers and activists. The Steering Committee for this effort worked hard over many months to guide the project and they deserve recognition.

What we consultants were left with was the deep conviction that the Erie community is ready to get to it and get on with long overdue revitalization work. This is a powerful asset that must not be ignored. Indeed, in a city full of citizens hungry for community improvement, one spirited individual stands out.

Our first contact with the city – in the fall of 2014 – was with the late Melanie Johnson, who pleaded with our team to leave no stone unturned and no fact hidden in the effort to begin the process of rebuilding her beloved city.

We did not know at that time that Ms. Johnson was undergoing treatment for cancer. Only later, several months into the project, did we discover the extent of her illness; certainly her presence and energy at every **[Cont. on page 34]**



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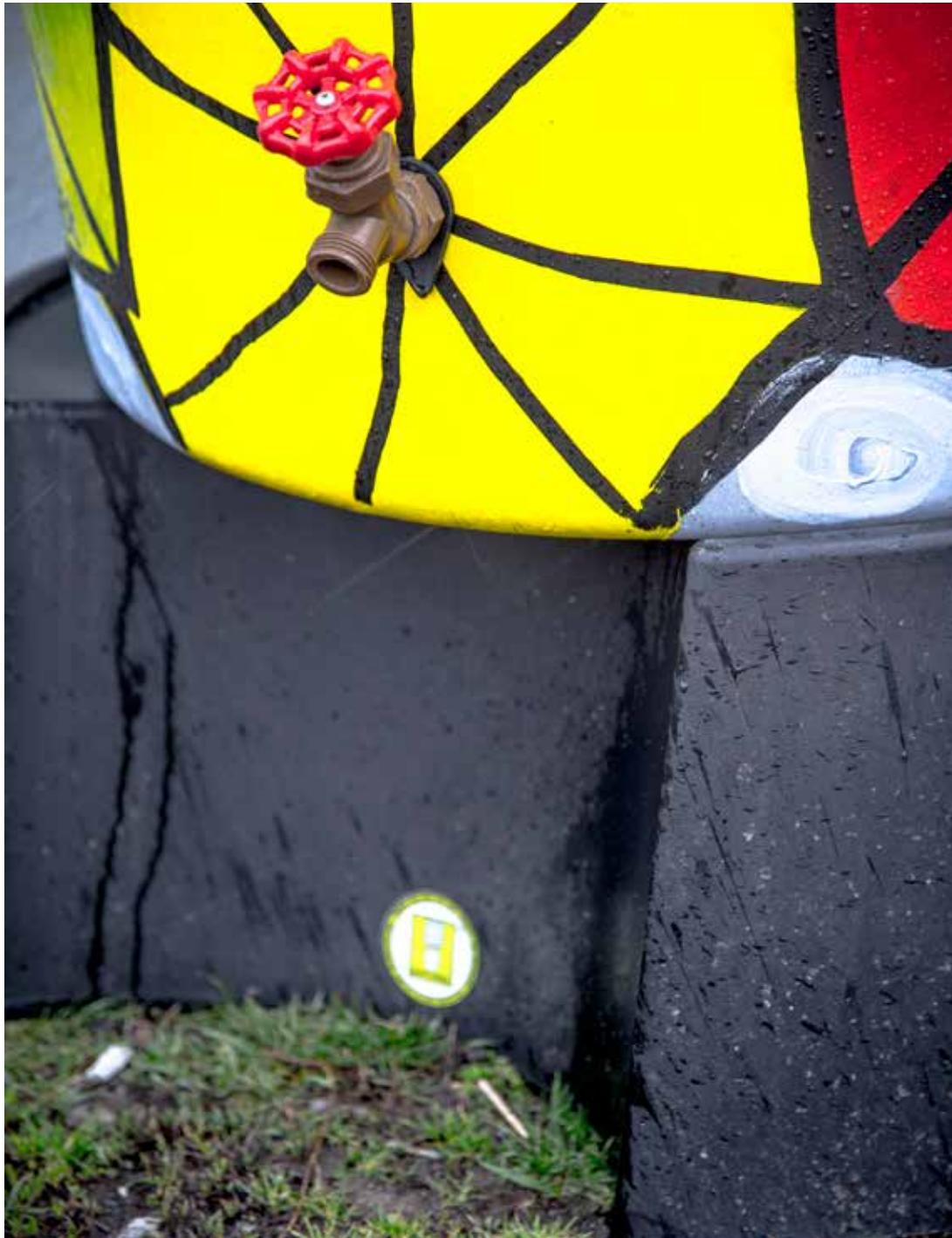
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We Have Met the Raindrops and They Are Ours

The 'Don't Give Up the Drip' rain barrel project goes public.



The second phase of the project will take the barrels to the streets as they get installed by early May at sponsor and host sites across the county. Many are already in place, including this one at Art's Bakery on West Ridge Road.

wood, metal, and plastic, the barrels on display not only provided beauty, but also brought home a water conservation message.

Making the barrels both pretty and functional was appealing to the artists in the project. Christine Salva, who made "Swirling Symphony," says she made her barrel because she "saw this as a fantastic opportunity to participate in a project supporting the arts and environment."

And Bryan Toy, maker of "Steelhead Upstream" and "Starry Night," says "Public art changes the world. The message of these rain barrels is 'conserve.' The art gets them noticed so the message can come across."

Peggy Brace's "Blue Planet People" depicts humans intermixed with the globe, sky, and ocean to get across her message, "Whatever people do in the name of progress that is harmful to our environment is harmful to all of us. I wanted to remind people we are 60-70 percent water and we need to be in harmony with our environment."

The sponsors of the project were just as eager to share an arts and environmental message. Alice DeGeorge, who sponsored Salva's "Swirling Symphony," says she just loves the idea of an

art piece both functional and helpful to the environment. Plus, she says, "I love supporting local artists!"

Penn State Behrend went two steps further by sponsoring three barrels to be installed at key locations around campus. Ann Quinn, Director of Greener Behrend, says, "I got involved in the project because I am very interested in Lake Erie and storm water management. At Behrend, we have many best practices for storm water runoff in place, so this project was a perfect fit."

It was a perfect fit for the Erie Coun-

Making the barrels both pretty and functional was appealing to the artists in the project. Christine Salva, who made "Swirling Symphony," says she made her barrel because she "saw this as a fantastic opportunity to participate in a project supporting the arts and environment."

ty Department of Health, too. Karen Tobin, Director of Environmental Health Services, says, "I wanted to have a rain barrel at the Health Department building so that we could practice what we preach. Many of our programs involve protecting the environment and our water resources. Now we support a project involving the entire community and we can help spread the word about water usage."

Currier was gratified to hear many people at the Expo say they were happy to see this project in Erie, and how important it was to collect and reuse water. But, she says, "I was amazed that not all people were familiar with the concept of collecting rain water for future use."

She's hoping *Don't Give Up the Drip* will change things. So far, just the

By: Mary Birdsong

Since December, 46 Erie area artists have been toiling in studios, garages, basements, and apartments to bring their creations to life for the *Don't Give Up the Drip* rain barrel project hosted by EnvironmentErie and the Erie County Conservation District. Some broke out paints and brushes, others carving tools, and some even power tools. The latter is what my husband, Mike Plyler, and I did to make "Bloomin' Can-tastic."

On March 17, the artists' creations, 52 barrels in all, were unveiled at the Erie Home and Garden Expo. The crowd loved them. Kristen Currier, Environmental Educator at the ECCD, said it was great to hear the oohs and aahs of the visitors. "Everyone good-naturedly complained they couldn't choose their favorite, they were all so good," she added.

The variety was stunning. From re-creations of famous paintings to three-dimensional fish rendered in

exposure at the Expo has already helped. "More than one person mentioned that they intended to do rain barrels for years," Currier says, "and this project kicked them into gear." The ECCD sold out of the unadorned rain barrels they had for sale at the show, and Nate Millet, Education Manager for EnvironmentErie, says registration numbers for the agency's rain barrel workshops saw a big uptick over the weekend.

But wait, there's more. The second phase of the project will take the barrels to the streets as they get installed by early May at sponsor and host sites across the county. "We will be teaching the sponsor sites how to care for them and use them this summer, and also working with them this fall to make sure they are properly disconnected and stored for the winter."

A map of all the locations was printed and will be available at all barrel sites, as well as online at erieconservation.com and environmenterie.org. As the rain barrels are deployed

from Fairview to North East and south to Edinboro, the potential exists to save at least 3,000 gallons of rainwater, just this season. If the project inspires others to install one of their own, the savings county-wide could be exponentially more.

"Nate and I are hoping Erie takes off with this idea and we see original rain barrels popping up all over Erie," says Currier. "It doesn't have to be fancy. Stencil your family name on it, or your house number. Find an artist friend to do an original design or have your little ones put their handprints on it. Or leave it blue like the sky and just use the free water."

Free water. To use on a sunny day when your flowers and veggies need a drink and the rain's not coming down. Now there's some artful conservation.

Mary Birdsong can be contacted at mBirdsong@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Twitter @Mary_Birdsong.



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Considering the City

Don't miss Toni Griffin on April 28th.



In her TED Talk, Toni Griffin proposed an entrepreneurial future for Detroit in which local business owners own property in "live-make neighborhoods." On April 28, she'll speak in Erie.

stand that, to stop the decline, Erie must embrace dramatic change.

Opportunities abound. The City of Erie has received Charles Buki's comprehensive plan. Movers and shakers are pushing ahead with an Emerge 2040 plan. Even the *Erie Times-News* has joined the conversation with their recently launched "Erie Next" project.

But are these projects visionary enough?

In her TED Talk, Griffin proposed an entrepreneurial future for Detroit in which local business owners own property in "live-make neighborhoods." At the Booker T. Washington Center last August, Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove noted that one antidote for unjust cities is "planning to stay." A commitment to a place helps one take the longer view. John Norquist, the former mayor of Milwaukee and the 2015 PE Greater Erie Awards keynote speaker, encouraged us to end the war on congestion, encourage housing downtown, better connect pedestrians with the waterfront, and preserve the McBride Viaduct as a convenient walkway connecting east side neighborhoods.

Erie leader Cindy Purvis says "our community has so much potential" but "we have to start building it up." We must embrace a vision, commit to the work, and collaborate across traditional divides.

Two Opportunities to Hear Toni Griffin Speak in Erie

Everyone is invited to a free, first-come, first-served luncheon at noon on April 28 at Shiloh Baptist Church, 901 East Fifth Street (Perry Street entrance). Following lunch, local journalist Liz Allen will moderate a panel discussion with Griffin and Reverend Richelle Massey-Harris (former city planner in Buffalo) and Adam Trott (principal of AJT Architects). Titled "Bridging Erie's Divides: A Panel Discussion on Urban Design, Race & Economic Development," this event is collaboratively hosted by Preservation Erie, Shiloh Baptist Church, Civitas, and the new east side advocacy

group ErieCPR (Connect + Respect). Allen has volunteered to moderate the panel because she knows "this is a critical time for Erie's future" and that we must "learn how other cities have turned themselves around."

Griffin will deliver her presentation "Design for the Just City" during the PE Greater Erie Awards, which begin at 5:30 p.m. on April 28 at the Masonic Temple, 32 West Eighth Street (second floor ballroom). The 2016 honorees are Curry's Spectacle Shop in the former Bank of Wesleyville, U Frame It in a former soda fountain and drug store at West Eighth and Liberty Streets, and the Victory Christian Center on Pennsylvania Avenue at East 12th Street in the former St. John's Romanian Orthodox Church buildings.

PE Greater Erie Chairman Eric Dahlstrand commented that this event "engages the community by recognizing accomplishments," inspires attendees with nationally-renowned speakers, and provides residents with an "opportunity to step back and realize what a great city we have." Tickets to the PEGE Awards are \$35 and may be purchased online, from a PE board member, or at the door.

Who needs to hear Griffin?

Besides you, dear reader, representatives from all of the regional municipalities, educational leaders from local universities and Erie's Public Schools, and leaders from Erie Next, Erie Together, Unified Erie, the United Way, and other anti-poverty and social justice organizations should all hear Griffin. Likewise, folks involved in health-related fields, environmental efforts, and community organizations like neighborhood associations and watch groups should attend, as should local spiritual leaders. Furthermore, anyone involved in zoning, architecture, real estate, manufacturing, or business should be at one of these two events.

Once again, volunteers are offering Erie a gift, a vision. Will Erie accept?

Civitas members can be reached at civitaserie.com, via Facebook at [CivitasErie](https://www.facebook.com/CivitasErie), by emailing Lisa@civitaserie.com, or by scheduling a Friday morning meeting at the Civitas office in the Masonic Building.

By: Civitas Member Lisa Austin

Of the more than 100,000 architects practicing in the U.S. today, only three tenths of a percent are African-American women. One member of this select group is the visionary planner Toni Griffin.

Trained at Notre Dame and Harvard, Griffin is the founding director of the J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City at the Spitzer School of Architecture, City College of New York. Through the Bond Center, Griffin has worked in Chicago, New York, Detroit, and other cities to create a "shared vision for equity, inclusion, and access." On April 28, thanks to Preservation Erie (PE) you have two chances to hear Griffin speak about designing a Just City.

A Just City

In her 2015 essay, "Defining the Just City Beyond Black and White," Griffin outlined three typical "conditions" of urban injustice. They are: 1) "concentrated poverty" that creates "spatial and social isolation"; 2) "divestment, crime, and the architecture of fear ... with uninviting, barrier-like building materials ..."; and 3) "socio-economic isolation" by natural or man-made physical divisions. As solutions, Griffin suggests 10 values from which residents may choose to help collectively create a just city: equity, choice, access, connectivity, ownership, diversity, participation, inclusion, and belonging, plus beauty and creative innovation.

This is a perfect time for Erie to discuss the idea of a Just City.

Faced with increased poverty and crime, a sea of blighted properties, ongoing job losses, long-term school funding issues, a shrinking tax base, and an ever-growing underclass trapped in poverty, residents under-

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News of the Weird

Honoring the dead by parking, and other triumphs of the human spirit.

By: Chuck Shepherd

The Power of Precedent

Department of Veterans Affairs employee Elizabeth Rivera Rivera, 39, was fired after her arrest (followed by a February guilty plea) for armed robbery, but when she was sentenced only to probation, an arbitrator ordered the VA to rehire her and give her back pay she “earned” while sitting in jail awaiting trial. (She had been the driver for a man arrested for a street robbery in San Juan, Puerto Rico.) Rivera’s union had demanded the reinstatement without salary penalty for “fairness” because the same Puerto Rico VA office had earlier hired a convicted sex offender, and the office’s hospital director, recently charged with DUI and drug possession, avoided VA discipline because of technicalities about the traffic stop. [Daily Caller, 3-22-2016]

Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle

Turmoil in Selma, Alabama, March 1965: The historic “Bloody Sunday” at the Edmund Pettus Bridge ultimately became a turning point in the battle for voting rights. Turmoil in Selma, Alabama, March 2016: The town is riven by demands for stricter enforcement of the ordinance requiring horses on the street to be wearing diapers a campaign led by Ward 8’s Councilman Michael Johnson (an African-American): “I’m tired of it because there’s other things I could be doing than dealing with horses.” [Selma Times Journal, 3-23-2016]

Compelling Explanations

Urges: (1) Ms. Ashton Barton, 33, charged with shoplifting a vibrating sex toy from a CVS pharmacy in Largo, Florida, in February, tried for police sympathy by explaining that she was in a troubled marriage. “My husband doesn’t want to touch me anymore,” and “I would rather do this than be unfaithful.” (2) Neighbors of a loudly frisky couple in a Stockholm, Sweden, apartment building were so frustrated by the noise that they reached out to the country’s health minister, Gabriel Wikstrom who took the side of the randy couple (according to a translation by Stockholm’s The Local): “Sounds nice for them, I think. Good for their wellbeing and thus public health as well.” [The Smoking Gun, 2-29-2016] [The Local, 3-11-2016]

Nice Tries: (1) Benjamin Grafius, 39, charged with several instances of indecent exposure to Amish people near New Holland, Pennsylvania, told police that he targeted them because he knew they would not use phones to call police (March). (2) Valerie Godbout, 33, visiting Orlando from Montreal and charged with drug possession after alerting police with erratic driving, told the officer that she was on the wrong side of the road because that’s the way traffic works in Canada. (It’s not.) (March). (3) Emily Davis, 21, caught by police displaying her recently deceased grandmother’s handicap-parking badge, explained that she was merely “using it in her honor.” (Portsmouth, England, February). [Associated Press via KDKA-TV (Pittsburgh), 3-22-2016] [Orlando Sen-

tinel, 3-16-2016] [Metro News (London), 2-26-2016]

Breakthroughs in Science

German researchers, publishing in March, revealed that female burying beetles uniquely discourage their mates from pestering them for sex after birth thus explaining how the male of this species is observed actually helping with child care. The females apparently release a chemical “anti-aphrodisiac” to the father’s antennae. Said the lead researcher (a woman), “They are a very modern family.” Said another biology professor (also female), “Burying beetles are supercool.” [New York Times, 3-23-2016]

Science magazine called the “but-thole” “one of the finest innovations in the past 540 million years of animal evolution” in that, until it developed, animals’ only channel of waste removal was through the same opening used for food intake. However, the recent discovery, announced at a March conference by a University of Miami biologist, that gelatinous sea creatures called comb jellies can excrete via other pores, was labeled by the magazine as “stun(n)g.” [Science, 3-23-2016]

The Emerging American “Right” of Rejecting Science: In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared that measles had been eliminated in the United States, but by 2014 Americans had resurrected it (677 reported cases), and researchers from Emory University and Johns Hopkins set out to learn how and recently found the dominant reason to be the purposeful decision by some Americans to

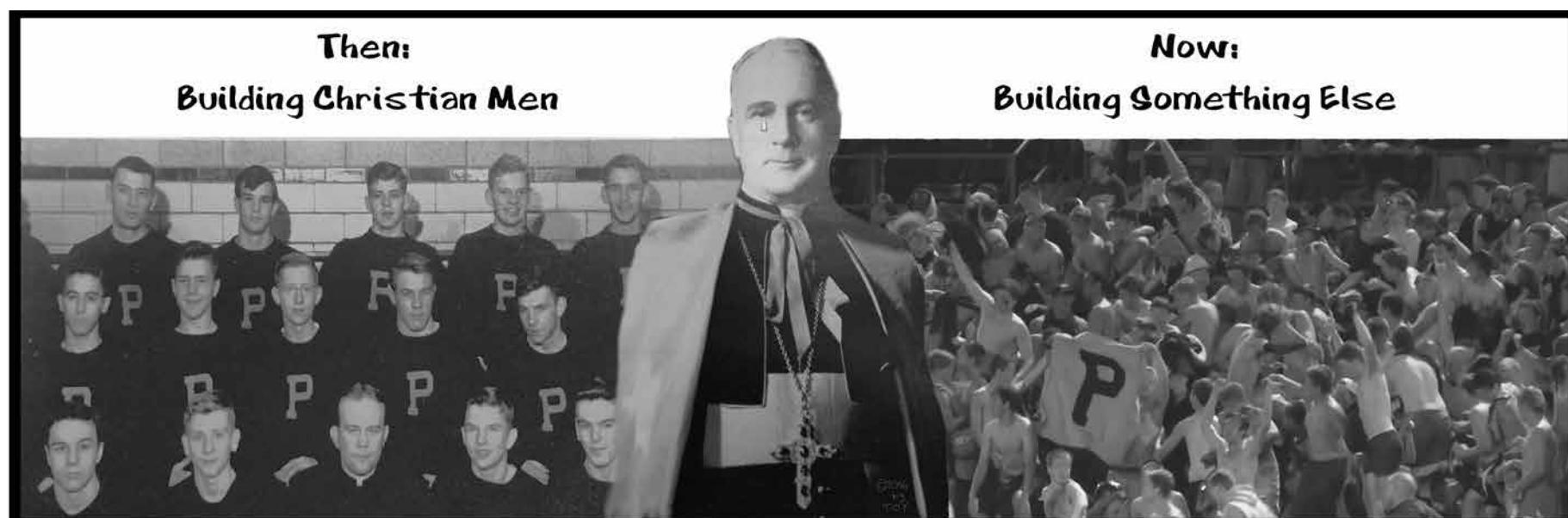
refuse or delay widely available vaccinations (especially for their children). (The researchers found similar, but less-strong conclusions about whooping cough.) [Slate.com, 3-25-2016]

Undignified Deaths

An 86-year-old woman died in February in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, when she tripped and got her medical alert necklace caught on her walker, strangling herself. (2) A 25-year-old off-duty New York City police officer was killed on a highway near Elizabeth, New Jersey, in March. According to the police report, the officer had rear-ended another car and had gotten out to “discuss” the matter, then suddenly pulled his service revolver and threatened the driver using road rage-type language. As the officer backed up while pointing the gun, a passing driver accidentally, fatally struck him. [Associated Press via WNEW-TV (New York), 3-2-2016] [WABC-TV (New York City), 3-2-2016]

Fine Points of the Law

Joe Vandusen said he has had no contact whatsoever with his estranged wife for “16 or 17 years” and that both moved long ago to other relationships (Joe currently living with a woman, raising both his two children and her two, as well). Nonetheless, Vandusen’s “real” wife recently gave birth, from another father, and, without claiming Vandusen as the father, filed in February for child support from him. In the Vandusens’ home state of Iowa (like the law in many states), he must pay, irrespective of any DNA test (unless he gets an expensive court order to “de-establish paternity.” [WQAD-TV (Davenport, Iowa), 3-23-2016]



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NEWS & VIEWS

Ironies

Ervin Brinker, 68, pleaded guilty to Medicaid fraud as CEO of the Summit Pointe health care provider in Michigan and was sentenced in January to 32 months in prison. He had embezzled \$510,000 in "mental health" payments and apparently spent it all on a Florida fortune teller. (2) Two of the three candidates for the Republican nomination for county property appraiser in Erwin, Tennessee, in November died before the election, leaving Rocky McInturff the only survivor. However, he is ineligible for the nomination because he lost badly on election day by one of the two dead candidates. [Associated Press via Daily Mail (London), 1-13-2016] [WCYB-TV (Bristol, Tenn.), 3-2-2016]

Least Competent Criminals

Albuquerque police encountered Leonard Lopez, 26, inside a Chevy Cobalt car (that was not his) just after midnight on March 30 after neighbors reported a man screaming inside, flashing the car's headlights. A panicked Lopez was upside down, with his feet on the dashboard and his head and shoulders wedged under the steering wheel, hands and arms tucked inside his sweatshirt. He was charged with burglary, and police guessed he was probably going through opiate withdrawal. [Albuquerque Journal, 3-30-2016]

Recurring Themes

Yet Another Way to Tell If You're DUI: Maryann Christy, 54, was arrested in Roselle, Illinois, in January when police spotted her driving through town with a 15-foot-tall tree firmly lodged in the grille of her car, sticking straight up. She was apparently too intoxicated to recall where she "acquired" the tree or how many minutes earlier that was. (2) Peak Truck-Spill Karma: On March 23 on Interstate 95 near Melbourne, Florida, two tractor-trailers collided, spilling their contents on the road. One truck was carrying Busch beer and the other various Frito-Lay products. [Chicago Tribune, 3-7-2016]

A News of the Weird Classic

Anti-Theft ID Breakthrough: For people who become stressed when asked to prove their identities by biometric scans of fingerprints, hand prints or eyeballs, Japan's Advanced Institute of Industrial Technology has developed a chair frame that authenticates merely by sitting down: a butt-scanner. Professor Shigeomi Koshimizu's device produces a map of the user's unique derriere shape, featuring 256 degrees of pressure at 360 different points and could be used not only to protect vehicles from theft, but also, when connected to a computer, to prevent log-ons by those with unauthorized posteriors. [TechCrunch blog via PhysOrg.com, 12-26-2011]

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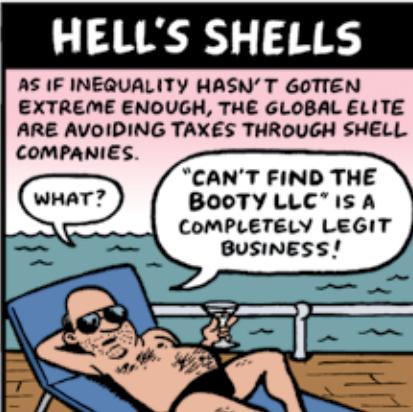
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A Liege Of One's Own

Setting the barre high at Millcreek's Liege Barre and Pole



BRAD TRIANA

By: Matt Swanseger

If you were to ask me how I've been lately, I'd tell you "up and down." I'm keeping my chin up (and my back straight). But also I'm concentrating on keeping my butt *down ... up, down, up, down, up, down* while loosely grasping a stationary handrail, or barre.

Before its adaptation as stand-alone fitness routine in 1959 (via Londoner Lotte Berk), barre work had been a mainstay of ballerina/ballerino training regimens for centuries. Traditionally, a barre session begins with slower movements to stretch the muscles and reinforce form. It then graduates to faster, subtler movements to simulate the techniques of a ballet performance in real time. In 1971, Lydia Bach imported the "Lotte Berk Method" to her Manhattan studio. Barre programs have kept Americans Berkulatin' ever since.

"Sit into it!" my instructor commands. *I could do this all day.*

"Thirty-two left!" she updates.

Okay, maybe not.

Jen Esper, sole proprietor of Liege Barre and Pole, is giving me the lowdown on dropping it low. How low can I go? Let's just say the invisible chair I'm sitting into is more of a barstool than a footstool. It is a theoretical office chair with the seat depth set to "peering-over-coworker's-cubicle-tacitly." In short, it is completely and utterly 100 percent me.

And here, that's all right. "I always tell my students 'be your own frame of reference, not anyone else's,'" Esper explains. "You're on your own journey. Honor your own journey and where you're at in your journey."

Somewhere between my 18th and 22nd barre squat, my thighs begin quivering like a pair of over-agitated tuning forks. This journey is on the verge of falling "A-flat" on its ass, but ultimately succeeds. Victory's afterglow is fleeting, however. The quest resumes shortly thereafter, this time with an exercise ball be-

tween my knees.

I am forced to pull over once or twice during my campaign's second phase, which involves squeezing the ball betwixt my knees several times at the bottom of each drop. Stability betrays me more readily here, to the point that I begin to question my legs' loyalty. "Treasonous meatstalks! I am your *liege!*"

A (Perfectedly) Feudal Enterprise

The word "liege" dates back to the feudal age, when a vassal pledged his services to a lord, who in turn swore to protect him. It is derived from the Anglo-French word *lige*, meaning "free, giving or receiving fidelity" and/or the Old German word *leidig*, also meaning "free." Ideally, the oath between liege lord and vassals would create a stress-free zone, wherein the servants could focus on happily living and their sovereign could focus on prudently ruling. "Don't worry, I got this," Lord Bullshitscuits assured his subjects. In many cases, he didn't

– which would contribute to the feudal system's obsolescence.

Although feudalism failed as a mode of governance, its ideals have endured – the qualities of being faithful, honest, constant, ardent, and true. These adjectives are synonymous with Liege and decorate the studio's eastern wall. To enroll in a class here is to swear fealty to the self, to take ownership of your physical domain. There are 639 muscles and 206 bones in the human body under your conscious control; the mind is their liege lord. It is your responsibility, then, to get acquainted with your constituency.

Esper plays both the role of trusted advisor and court jester along the way, attuning herself to the nuances of each individual while adding a generous dose of levity to the proceedings. In my case, she offered to build a workout playlist exclusively from Wham songs – i.e., "Wake Me Up" on repeat. I get the impression she didn't only because she figured I'd do the jitterbug regardless (which I did, albeit involuntarily).

Feeling it is a given, but feeling it *where you're supposed to* takes practice. The maneuvers with the exercise ball were meant to "dial into" the smaller adductors of my inner thigh, not the quadriceps. I had the wrong number, but I kept calling them back. No wonder they hung up on me.

Magnetic Pole

There tends to be an even greater disconnect between the reality of Liege's other specialty – pole classes – and its perception. Pole dancing is oft associated with misdirected life's callings, but that (like many things) is just a prerecorded bias of our male-dominated Western society. As I speak to Liege's live operator, a much deeper reality reveals itself – and as I study the pole book afterward, a much broader one. Keying in one-900 during a modern pole class = executing 2½ spins. (Un)dressing for a modern pole class = shedding your

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BUSINESS



Opposite: Photographer Brad Triana tries his hand at the classic "flag." He wasn't sore the next day, at all. Left: Liege students learn the art of pole dancing, a sport with supporters hoping to eventually earn it Olympic status.

[scrubs/fatigues/pantsuit/jumpsuit/spacesuit/bone-dress-of-vanquished-foes] for a tank top and short shorts. If you're seeking something tackier, either purchase a pair of Mighty Grips (a sort of anklet that helps affix oneself to the pole) or dial 1-900-Mix-A-Lot and kick them nasty thoughts.

The International Pole Dance Fitness Association (IPDFA) was established in 2007 with the aim of kicking them nasty thoughts – to the curb. The organization's primary goal is to legitimize pole as an international sport, thereby clearing it for Olympic competition. Furthermore, the IPDFA strives to convert skeptics (sexists) and embrace a more multifaceted paradigm of femininity. Sensuality is an aspect of womanhood, but is not the defining aspect. Likewise, exotic dance is a tradition within the history of pole, but the modern sport covers far more than G-strings and pasties.

The sensual element traces its roots to the burlesques of France (e.g., Moulin Rouge) and Denmark, but is predominantly a byproduct of the traveling fairs of the 1920s and '30s in which so-called "Hoochi Coochi" dancers performed suggestive maneuvers inside a tent (the pole they utilized was the one supporting the canopy). Meanwhile, the sleazy ringleaders went wee, wee, wee all the way home with the proceeds of said exploitation. If you're wondering why male chauvinist pigs are absent from your box of Barnum's Circus Animals, it's because we men have spent much of history trying to hide our misdeeds.

We are all about touting our merits, though. And let me tell you – we fellas can absolutely rock a pole. I'm not talking about sliding down a pole to descend into the Batcave or climb-

ing a utility pole to rescue a stranded kitten – I'm talking about bona fide performance art. In 12th Century China, fully-costumed men (we're hairy and gross – no one wants to see that) supported themselves from poles between 3 and 9 meters tall, holding their bodies in extreme positions (including the classic "flag") until burn marks appeared on their shoulders. They wore these as a badge of honor amongst their peers, who revered their strength. "Pole Mallakhamb," still practiced in India to this day, involves charging at

The International Pole Dance Fitness Association strives to convert skeptics (sexists) and embrace a more multifaceted paradigm of femininity. Sensuality is an aspect of womanhood, but is not the defining aspect. Likewise, exotic dance is a tradition within the history of pole, but the modern sport covers far more than G-strings and pasties.

and flipping directly onto a tapered, wooden pole to hone the speed, reflexes, concentration, and coordination of the scantily clad "pole wrestler." (On second thought, body-length silken robes are rather restrictive – how you gonna nail sick Mallakhambos without promoting optimum tactile feedback?)

Armed with this historical perspective, women like Fawna Dietrich (who instituted the first school of pole dancing in 1994) and Ana Przepłasko (found-

er of the IPDFA) set to wondering – why are we not entitled to the same rich heritage as men? Why must we wallow in shame while we are equally capable of pride? If poles have fostered agility, strength, and confidence in our hirsute counterparts, can they not do the same for us?

The answer is a resounding yes, if Liege is any indication. The tiny studio, which stands across from Erie International Airport, has taken off since its opening last fall. Over the past six months, Esper's classes have attracted women of all kinds – doctors, nurses, lawyers, professors, and even grandmas (her oldest student is in her 70s).

"Everyone's intrigued," says Esper. "But it's not for everyone."

She is referring to any physical limitations that may otherwise inhibit one from completing the exercises, which emphasize the back and core. "It's not trig, but you need to be mindful of what muscles you're dialing into. It's important to learn the spins and inversions the proper way – then you can add your own little frazzle-snazzle to it."

Social inhibitions, on the other hand, are deemphasized. "This is a safe space for 60 minutes." While it may not be for everyone, anyone "with a pulse" is welcome to try. "It's ecumenical and non-discriminatory."

Newcomers have stepped into Esper's classes tentative and self-conscious and emerged with a remolded self-image. "There is a whole lot of encouragement both inside the studio and out. It is super-duper uplifting [to witness the transformation]."

As long as they're physically up to it, anyone could get down with that.

To begin your journey towards frazzle-snazzle actualization, call 431.9631 or register online at liegebarreandpole.com. Liege is located at 4642 West 12th St, Suite 1 – pump the brakes before you hit the pumps at Country Fair.

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

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Spotlight on Erie

April 13 — 26, 2016

Wednesday, April 13

In Jackson Heights Takes an Intimate Look at One of Our Most Diverse Communities



Few places in the United States better exemplify our nation's status as a "melting pot" than Jackson Heights in New York City. It is estimated that 167 languages are spoken in this little neighborhood on the northwest end of Queens. Frederick Wiseman's appropriately-titled 2015 documentary *In Jackson Heights* takes an intimate look at the diverse group of people who live there.

Clocking in at over three hours, *In Jackson Heights* finds its way into an impressive array of local niches. Expect anything and everything – a visit to a halal supermarket, a lesson at a school for cab drivers, a city council meeting, a gathering for the LGBTQ community, and so forth.

The threat of gentrification looms over his film. Rents are expensive throughout New York, and inequality continues to threaten the vibrancy of its many communities.

Don't expect a lot of editorializing along the way. Wiseman is known for his minimalist approach to documentary filmmaking – no voice-over narration or talking-head style interviews. Instead, he offers a deliberately arranged collage of everyday life. The real world as filtered through the lens of a world-renowned director.

If Wiseman's legacy eludes you, you're probably not alone. Although *In Jackson Heights* is the 86-year-old director's 42nd film, his work rarely finds the

wide audiences that people like Errol Morris or Ken Burns often enjoy. For example, Wiseman's most applauded (and infamous) film, 1967's *Titicut Follies*, went more or less unseen for 40 years. The documentary, which takes an unflinching look at everyday life among inmates at the Bridgewater State Hospital for the criminally insane in Massachusetts, was censored following claims that it violated the rights of the inmates. Many believe that the film was actually banned due to its exposé of harsh living conditions, and it wasn't legally screened in public until 1992.

In Jackson Heights most likely won't cause that level of controversy, but don't expect a stroll through town with a kindly old man, either. As Wiseman explores the neighborhood's eccentric character, the threat of gentrification looms over his film. Rents are expensive throughout New York, and inequality continues to threaten the vibrancy of its many communities. *In Jackson Heights* acknowledges the good and the bad, observing both with focus and wonder. – Dan Schank

Doors at 6 p.m., Film at 7 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. // erieartmuseum.org/events/film.html

Friday, April 15

The Riverside Music Festival is Bigger than Ever



Spring's in the air once again. That means Cambridge Spring's history-rich Riverside Inn – on its main stage, in its pubs, and at other spaces on and around the inn's grounds – will soon serve as a beautiful backdrop to a sonic celebration of the start of the season.

And according to organizers, this year's installment of the annual Riverside Music Festival – a free event kicking off Friday, April 15 and running day and night through Sunday, April 17 – is set to be the biggest and best one yet.

"I'm really excited this year because

we have 87 acts. That's the largest amount of acts we've ever had," chief festival organizer Justin Moyar said in a recent chat with the *Reader*.

Local and regional favorites including Lower Eastside Connection, Charity Nuse and the Drive, Tiger Maple String Band, Abadon Faluz, Jim Donovan and the Sun King Warriors, Tyler Smilo, and Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle are just a small sampling of this year's lengthy slate of performers.

Beyond that, and for the first time ever, the festival's new Eerie Records stage (to be found at the nearby Villa Inn, just a couple of blocks from the Riverside) will feature tons of live performances for the more metal-minded:

As always at this festival, there'll likely be plenty of pick-up jam sessions happening anywhere and everywhere throughout the grand, old locale (and beyond) all weekend.

Heavy-hitters like The Bees Trees, Joe Nameless, My Secret Weapon, Wave Trails, Anthems of Apathy, and Agri-hippie are just a few off the top of that list.

Festival-goers can also check out workshops galore throughout the weekend, as well as visit the event's all-local sponsors including the Bearded Woodsman's Beard Oil & Balms (they're even hosting an all-for-fun beard and 'stache competition), Beezlebub's Salsa, and many more. There'll be plenty of other cool stuff, too, like area craft-brewers' brews and wares from local artisans on sale and display.

As always at this festival, there'll likely be plenty of pick-up jam sessions happening anywhere and everywhere throughout the grand, old locale (and beyond) all weekend.

While the Riverside Music Festival – produced and hosted by some of the area's best homegrown artists – is always free for everyone, you could do the festival a favor and buy one of its sponsorship buttons for a few bucks.

One way or another (and one day, or another) do it and yourself a favor and make sure to go – because it's always a really sweet kickoff to the season blooming upon us. – Ryan Smith

Friday, April 15 to Sunday, April 17 // Riverside Inn, 1 Fountain St., Cambridge Springs // facebook.com/RiversideMusicFestival

Saturday, April 16

Mercyhurst Dancers Join the National Water Dance with The Ripple Effect



Erie is known for its water. It's a part of the city's history, and a key component of daily life. Now, to help ensure our water's health for the future, dancers from Mercyhurst University are planning an event the coordinator describes as a "big, wild, delicious ride." Or, more appropriately, a dance.

"This is going to be such a powerful experience for those involved," says Solveig Santillano, an associate professor of dance at Mercyhurst and coordinator for the *National Water Dance: The Ripple Effect*, set to move along Erie's waterfront soon. "It's an amazing way to engage in your art form in a very productive and conscious way."

"This is going to be such a powerful experience for those involved," says Solveig Santillano. "It's an amazing way to engage in your art form in a very productive and conscious way."

National Water Dance is now in its third iteration (the event began in 2011 in Florida and went national in 2014, when Mercyhurst dancers performed on Presque Isle). The project is a collaboration between dancers, artists, and educators working to draw attention to

CALENDAR

pressing water issues throughout the country.

The Erie event, titled *The Ripple Effect*, begins at 4 p.m. with dancers performing at Dobbins Landing at the foot of State Street. But they won't be alone – across the country, dozens of groups will begin performing (all similarly near waterways) at the exact same time, with the exact same opening phrase. The dances will be live-streamed; the common gesture phrase will be repeated at the event's close, but everything in between is choreographed to be site-specific.

In Erie, that means the dancers and their audience will process along the waterfront to the Erie Maritime Museum and Blasco Library where *The Ripple Effect* will culminate with poetry, film, live music, family-friendly arts and crafts, and educational presentations, including one on environmental preservation by Amy Parente, Mercyhurst associate professor of chemistry.

"The whole day has been inspired by the science of what's happening in our waterways," Santillano says. "I would love our audience to consider the gift that we have here living in Erie, the rich supply of water we're blessed with. I'd love the performers and audience to come away with some perspective, and knowing they can make a difference [in being] mindful of the choices we're

making as a community."

There are "a lot of moving parts" to the day of dance, Santillano says. Dancers, musicians, students, filmmakers, performance artists, visual artists, educators, and environmental advocates all play roles large and small in *The Ripple Effect*, coming together for an event she says is collaboration at its best. Furthermore, she says, events like this are what happen when "science meets up with art."

"These things can drive us as a community to act in a mindful way, out of love, using our creative thinking and artistic expressions," she says. "It's a way to be motivated and be moved." – Sara Toth

4 p.m. // Dobbins Landing, State St. // Free and open to the public // miac.mercyhurst.edu // 824.3386

Sunday, April 17

John Mellencamp's 'Triumphant' Plain Spoken Tour Arrives at the Warner Theatre

"Triumphant." "Superb."

"Full of fiery defiance."

Those are just some of the words being used to describe Rock and Roll Hall of Famer John Mellencamp's current



nationwide tour, which makes a stop on Sunday, April 17 at the historic and beautiful Warner Theatre.

The tour has seen Mellencamp and company hitting 13 cities and performing fan favorites as well as songs from 2015's *Plain Spoken*, his 22nd studio album and one of the most critically-applauded of his four-decade-long career.

Praised by major critics around the country – even drawing comparisons to Bob Dylan's Grammy Award-winning *Blood on the Tracks* – Mellencamp's latest work draws on pertinent themes like political and social injustice, securing Mellencamp's status, as *Billboard*

puts it, as one of the most important roots rockers of his generation.

Bonus: Carlene Carter, daughter of June Carter Cash, is Mellencamp's special-guest opener. – Ryan Smith

7:30 p.m. // 811 State St. // erieevents.com

Wednesday, April 20

FILM at the Erie Art Museum Screens *The Lobster* in Erie Before it Plays New York City or Los Angeles



I guess cockroach was taken ... As viewers behold *The Lobster*, a movie that's part of the weekly FILM series at the Erie Art Museum, they can't but help discern the Kafkaesque qualities of this latter-generation dystopian disciple.

As ordained by "The City," single peo-

MUSIC

The Barefoot Movement

Apr. 13 — noon to 1 p.m.
Bruno's Cafe, 4701 Behrend College Dr. psbehrend.psu.edu.

Dave VanAmburg & Friends

Apr. 14, 21 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Maxi's Restaurant, 2800 W. 8th St. jazzerie.com.

Colony House Band

Apr. 14, 21 — 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Colony Pub & Grille, 2670 W. 8th St. jazzerie.com.

2016 Riverside Music Festival

Apr. 15, 16, 17 — 6 p.m.
Riverside: The Inn at Cambridge Springs, 1 Fountain Ave. facebook.com/events/894577450661520.

The Highlife

Apr. 15 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Friday Night Jazz

Apr. 15, 22 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Jon Sedelmyer

Apr. 15 — 7 p.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main St. cork1794.com.

The Stiletto

Apr. 15 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Warp Drive

Apr. 15 — 9:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Jim Tobin

Apr. 16 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Saturday Night Latin, Blues & More

Apr. 16, 23 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West

Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Black Bear Prodigy

Apr. 16 — 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

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

Wyldwood

Apr. 16 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

The I-90's

Apr. 16 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Spring Fling '16

Apr. 16 — 9 p.m.
Bobby's Place, 1202 W. 18th St. facebook.com/events/230538680622001.

Bruce Johnstone with Strings

Apr. 17 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Hirt Auditorium at Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. jazzerie.com.

John Mellencamp

Apr. 17 — 7:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Chamber Music

Apr. 18 — 7:30 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, 7180 Perry Hw. gannon.edu/eriechamberorchestra.

Chase Rice

Apr. 19 — 7:30 to 11:30 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Rankin & Schell

Apr. 21 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Rick & The Roadhouse Rockers Unplugged

Apr. 22 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Juvenile Characteristics

Apr. 22 — 6 to 9 p.m.

Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Charity Nuse

Apr. 22 — 7 p.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main St. cork1794.com.

Panic! At the Disco Concert

Apr. 22 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Junker Center, 4701 College Dr. psbehrend.psu.edu.

Subterranean

Apr. 22 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Immoral, Red Line and Grumpy Old Men

Apr. 22 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Rodger Montgomery

Apr. 23 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Eco on Display

Apr. 23 — 7:30 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, 250 W. 7th St. gannon.edu/eriechamberorchestra.

Hollywood Nights

Apr. 23 — 8 p.m.
Struther's Library Theatre, 302 W. 3rd Ave. strutherslibrarytheatre.com.

Spiritual Rez

Apr. 23 — 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Radio Age

Apr. 23 — 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.
South Erie Turners, 2663 Peach St. southerieturners.com.

Old School Erie

Apr. 23 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Barry Manilow

Apr. 25 — 7:30 p.m.

CALENDAR

ple must attend "The Hotel," wherein if they don't find a mate within 45 days, they're transmogrified into the animal of their choice and sent off into "The Woods." Attendees can, however, extend their partner search per diem if they participate in hunting the program's escapees with tranquilizer guns.

Filmed two years ago, *The Lobster* is finally being released in the U.S. after financial issues occurred with its original distribution company. Kudos to FILM at Erie Art Museum for obtaining *The Lobster* for this Erie preview; its actual American release date is May 16.

Newly single, not by his own choice, David (Colin Farrell well nerded up), arrives with his brother-now-dog at The Hotel. At his arrival interview, David proclaims his decision to become the eponymous crustacean.

"I think to characterize *The Lobster* as 'dark' is missing the bigger point," explains John C. Lyons, Executive Director of the Film Society of Northwestern Pennsylvania, who was instrumental in obtaining *The Lobster* for the film series. "This film very truly

and uniquely paints a picture of the modern relationship and societal and individual expectations and pressures we place on one another to belong to another."

He added that "Being single isn't a 'crime' in real-life society, but it's certainly looked down upon to a certain extent."

Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos and also starring Rachel Weisz, Léa Seydoux, and John C. Reilly, *The Lobster* has netted a boat load of awards including the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, the European Film Award for Best Screenwriter, and the Online Film Critics Society Award for Best Non-U.S. Film – as well as having been nominated for 10 other cinematic awards.

Filmed two years ago, *The Lobster* is finally being released in the U.S. after financial issues occurred with its original distribution company. Kudos to FSNWPA for obtaining *The Lobster* for this Erie preview; its actual American release date is May 16.

"If you're looking for a cleanse from men in tights knocking over city blocks like dominoes, I highly recommend giving FILM at the Erie Art Museum a look," said Lyons. – Gregory Greenleaf-Knepp

Doors at 6 p.m., Film at 7 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. // erieartmuseum.org/events/film.html

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

DANCE

National Water Dance: The Ripple Effect

Apr. 16 — 4 p.m.
Dobbins Landing,
160 E. Front St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Kentucky Derby Dance

Apr. 16 — 7 to 11 p.m.
Realife, 3902 W. 38th St.
facebook.com/Stardust-Ballroom-Dance-Club-of-Erie-597514403606573.

Adult Prom

Apr. 23 — 7 p.m. to midnight
Riverside: The Inn at Cambridge Springs,
1 Fountain Ave.
theriversideinn.com.

FOOD & DRINK

Alley Goats Happy Hour Party

Apr. 15 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Erie Food Tour

Apr. 16 — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Like My Thai, 827 State St. eriefoodtours.com.

Wine & Cheese Weekend

Apr. 22 — noon to 5 p.m. & Apr. 23, 24 — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Various Locations,
lakeeriewinecountry.org.

Erie's Sip 'n Shop Ladies Spring WineFest

Apr. 24 — 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center,
7794 Peach St. facebook.com/Wine-Fest-PA-818353431545875.

Taste of Italy & Italian Marketplace

Apr. 24 — noon to 3 p.m.
Boston Store Lobby,
716 State St. facebook.com/eriewolvesclub.

FILM

It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World

Apr. 13 — 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Cinemark Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

In Jackson Heights

Apr. 13 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Anatomy of a Psycho (1961)

Apr. 14 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Amadeus

Apr. 14 — 8:30 p.m.
Edinboro University, 405 Scotland Rd. facebook.com/edinborofilmseries.

The Future of Energy

Apr. 20 — 7 p.m.
Zurn Science Building
Room 104, 143 W. 7th St. gannon.edu.

The Lobster

Apr. 20 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

The Alligator

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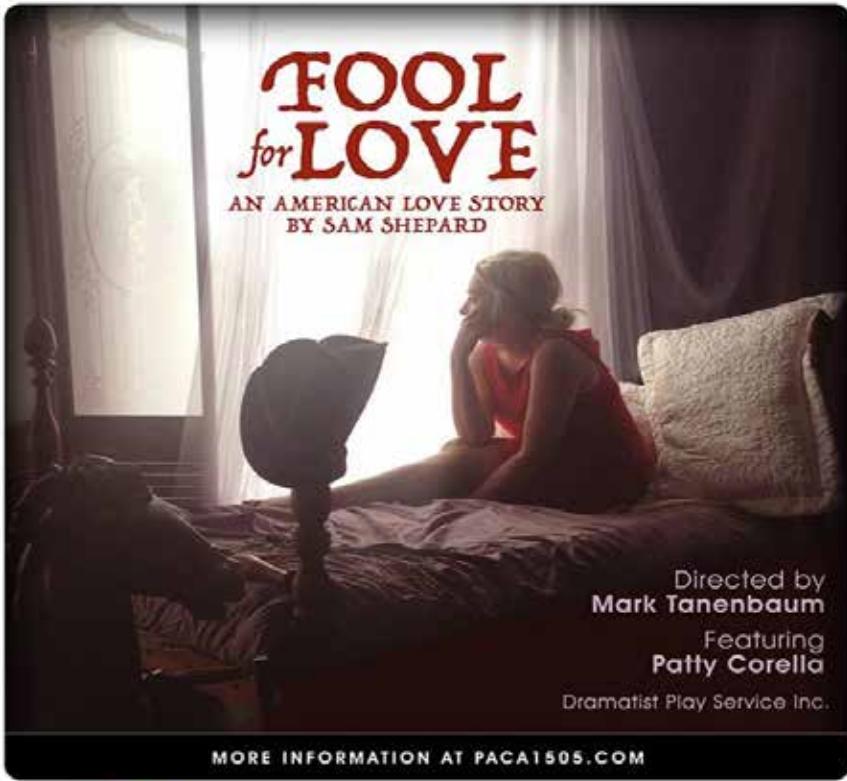
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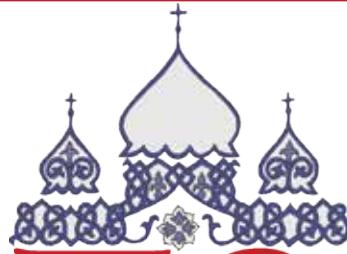


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Saturday, May 28, 2016 - Noon to 6 p.m.
Sunday, May 29, 2016 - Noon to 9 p.m.



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Friday, Apr. 22

Panic! At the Disco Sells Out Behrend's Junker Center



Pop rock band Panic! At the Disco are headed to Erie. But if you don't already have your tickets, you might just be out of luck. Panic! is led by singer Brendon Urie, who formed the band in Las Vegas in 2004. Their first album, *A Fever You Can't Sweat Out*, fetched them widespread success, becoming certified double platinum. They arrived during the boom of mainstream emo and pop punk bands, quickly catching the attention of Fall Out Boy. They became the first band to sign to Pete Wentz' Decaydance Record label (now known as DCD2). For an entire generation of fans, Panic! provided an unforgettable soundtrack to their early years. Their second album *Pretty. Odd.* found the group in a different tonal direction. The band embraced the 1960s instrumentation of the Beatles and the Beach Boys. They even dropped the ex-

clamation point from their name for a year! The album further polarized fans and critics alike, but remains well-loved to this day. 2009 saw the departure of guitarist Ryan Ross and Bassist Jon Walker from the band. Ross, being the band's primary songwriter, left a space that Urie stepped up to fill. In 2011, they released *Vices & Virtues*, a sonic synthesis of their prior two albums. *Too Weird to Live, Too Rare to Die!* followed, returning to a more techno-influenced

Panic! arrived during the boom of mainstream emo and pop punk bands, quickly catching the attention of Fall Out Boy. For an entire generation of fans, they provided an unforgettable soundtrack to their early years.

sound. In January, *Death of a Bachelor* was released, debuting at number one on the Billboard charts.

The enunciated delivery of Urie's tenor vibrato, combined with angular, rhythmic syncopation, build a unique formula that has tied the band together since the beginning. So, strike up the band as they head over to Penn State Behrend. The conductor is beckoning. If you don't already have tickets, you'll have to just sit back, just sit back, just sit back and relax. – Nick Warren

8 p.m. // Penn State Behrend Junker

Center, 14701 Behrend College Dr. // behrend.psu.edu/concert // \$35 for the public, \$25 for Penn State Behrend Students

Saturday, April 23

Spiritual Rez's 'Rage-fest' Returns to the Kings Rook Club



At a first-few-seconds kind of listen, it may be easy to pass Boston's Spiritual Rez off as just another upbeat, bouncy reggae band (not that there's too much wrong with that).

Dig in and get down a little deeper with them, though, and you'll hear some really singular, interesting stuff happening. One critic, *Hippo Press'* Michael Witthaus, summed it up pretty well: "Start with a dose of old-school, Marley-Toots-Tosh reggae and infuse it with everything from Sun Ra Arkestra freak jazz to Steve Vai guitar pyrotechnics. Inventive intersections like these define Spiritual Rez."

They were a damn big hit with a packed-house, happy-footed crowd when they last hit the Kings Rook

stage in October of 2015, and the Rez will be coming back around on Saturday, April 23 – along with special guests The Remnants and MoChester – for another sure-to-be blowout evening of killer live music.

The Rook has "a more-than-usual unique vibe," and "it's cool coming back," Rez bassist Ian Miller said when we caught up over the phone recently. The band was in Denver and about 35 days into their current across-the-nation tour.

At a first-few-seconds kind of listen, it may be easy to pass Boston's Spiritual Rez off as just another upbeat, bouncy reggae band (not that there's too much wrong with that).

Also spending the better part of the last year working on a new album in sunny California, "we've really been riding the energy from that," Miller said, and "it's kind of honed our live show more than [past studio work] ever has."

Now, don't get him wrong: "It's still the same rage-fest" that Spiritual Rez has long been known for, but it "feels new and unique."

That, for any band, and any fan of live music, is a very good thing. – Ryan Smith

9 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub

People (1959)

Apr. 22 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

MET Opera - Roberto Devereux (Donizetti)

Apr. 23 — 12:55 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Singin' in the Rain (1952)

Apr. 23 — 4 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret Documentary

Apr. 23 — 4 p.m.
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. theerievegsociety.org.

Avatar

Apr. 24 — 1:30 to 4 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

City of Gold

Apr. 27 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

VISUAL ARTS

Annual Student Show

Ongoing through Apr. 17
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St. sites.allegheny.edu.

Senior Art Thesis Exhibition

Ongoing through Apr. 20 — 9 a.m.
Cummings Art Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

New Voices, New Visions

Ongoing through Apr. 22
Bruce Gallery, 219 Meadville St. brucegallery.info.

Henry Katzwinkel

Ongoing through May 1
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Plenty

Ongoing through May 7
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Into Alignment

Ongoing through May 17
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Art of the Comic Book

Ongoing through May. 22
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Dark Garden

Ongoing through Jan 8, 2017
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

93rd Annual Spring Show

Apr. 16 through July 17 (Private Reception Apr. 16 — 7 to 9:30 p.m. & Public Opening Apr. 17 — 1 to 3 p.m.)
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Senior Projects

Apr. 26 through May 8 (Opening Reception Apr. 26 — 7 to 8 p.m.)
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St. sites.allegheny.edu.

The Creatives are Getting Restless

Apr. 27 through May 6 (Reception Apr. — 5 to 7 p.m.)
Bruce Gallery, 219 Meadville St. brucegallery.info.

Interior Design

Apr. 27 through May 22 — 9 a.m. (Reception Apr. 28 — 7 to 9 p.m.)
Cummings Art Gallery,

501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

THEATRE

Fool for Love

Apr. 14, 15, 16 — 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacai505.com.

Jump I'll Catch You

Apr. 15, 16 — 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. & Apr. 17 — 3 to 5 p.m.
All an Act Theatre, 652 W. 17th St. allanact.net.

Mozart's The Magic Flute

Apr. 15 — 8 p.m. & Apr. 17 — 2 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Women

Apr. 15, 16, 22, 23 — 8 p.m.
2nd Fl. Renaissance Centre, 1001 State St. dramashop.org.

Calamari Sisters

Apr. 16 — 8 p.m.
Struther's Library Theatre, 302 W. 3rd Ave. strutherslibrarytheatre.com.

Chicago Speakeasy

Apr. 19, 20 & May 3, 4 — noon & Apr. 23, 30 & May 7 — 5:30 & Apr. 24 & May 1, 8 — 2:30
Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

The King and I

Apr. 21, 22 — 7 p.m. & Apr. 23 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 24 — 2 p.m.
Mercyhurst Preparatory School, 538 E. Grandview Blvd. moplastakers.com.

Peter Pan and Wendy

Apr. 21, 22 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 23, 24 — 2:30 p.m.
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St. allegheny.edu.

CALENDAR

Evita

Apr. 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30 — 8 p.m. & May 1 — 2 p.m.
Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

4th Annual New Works Festival

Apr. 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 24 & May 1 — 2:30 p.m.
Laugh/Riot Performing Arts Company, 219 Meadville St. facebook.com/LaughRiotErie.

Salute to America

Apr. 22, 23, 29, 30 — 7 p.m.
North East Culture Center, 25 Vine St. business.nechamber.org.

My Lucky Day

Apr. 23 — 10 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. & Apr. 24 — 2 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

COMMUNITY/VARIETY

Great Lakes Shipwreck Exhibition Featuring Lake Erie's

Maritime Heritage

Ongoing through Apr. 25 — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Qi Gong: Wellness Wednesdays

Apr. 13, 20, 27 — 2 to 3 p.m.
Lincoln Community Center Library, 1255 Manchester Rd. erielibrary.org.

Remarkable Women: Barbara Jordan

Apr. 13 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Adopt-A-Beach

Apr. 13 — 6 to 7 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Backyard Beekeeping Workshop

Apr. 13, 20, 27 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd.

asburywoods.org.

39th Annual English Awards Night

Apr. 13 — 7:30 p.m.
Waldron Campus Center, 109 University Square gannon.edu.

Halfway to Halloween Haunted History Tours of Union Station

Apr. 13, 20, 27 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 15, 22, 29 — 7 & 9:30 p.m.
The Brewerier at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerier.com.

Reborn: Journeys from the Abyss

Apr. 14 — 1 to 2:30 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

American Short Stories

Apr. 14, 21 — 4 to 6 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Construction of

Perry's Fleet

Apr. 14 — 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Binghamton Mets

Apr. 14, 15 — 6:30 p.m. & Apr. 16, 17 — 1:30 p.m.
Jerry Uht Park, 110 E. 10th St. erieevents.com.

Creativity Matters

Apr. 14, 21 — 6:30 to 8 p.m. & Apr. 19, 28 — 1:30 to 3 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

History of Presque Isle Lighthouse

Apr. 14 — 7 p.m.
Erie Maennerchor Club, 1607 State St. gcsoe.org.

Open House for Minority College Experience and Women in Science and Engineering

Apr. 14 — 7 p.m.
Penn State Behrend,

4701 College Dr. psbehrend.psu.edu.

Jamie Lissow

Apr. 14 — 7 p.m. & Apr. 15, 16 — 6:40 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Beads of Destruction: A Great Lakes Plastic Pollution Survey

Apr. 14 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Mercyhurst Literary Festival: Novelist Julie Schumacher

Apr. 14 — 8 p.m.
Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

2016 Crime Victims' Rights Conference

Apr. 15 — 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bayfront Sheraton, 55 W. Bay Rd. cvcerie.org.

Pets on the Bay Pet Expo

Apr. 15 — noon to 8 p.m. & Apr. 16 — 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. & Apr. 17 — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

First Day of Trout

Apr. 16 — 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
East Waterworks Pond, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Teen Crafternoons at the Library

Apr. 16, 30 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

The First Spiritualist Church of Erie's Annual Spring Expo

Apr. 16 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Zem Zem Shrine Club, 2525 W. 38th St. facebook.com/events/1533610646933534.

Community Holocaust Remembrance Program

Apr. 17 — 2 p.m.
McDowell Intermediate



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Erie playhouse



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April 23 @ 12:30pm

April 24 @ 2:00pm

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www.erieplayhouse.org

CALENDAR

High School Little Theatre, 3320 Caughey Rd. jccoferie@aol.com.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Bowie Baysox

Apr. 18, 19, 20 — 6:30 p.m. & Apr. 20 — noon
Jerry Uht Park, 110 E. 10th St. erieevents.com.

Sister Maura Smith Earth Day Lecture: Tim DeChristopher

Apr. 18 — 7 p.m.
Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

The Silent Majority of 2016 and The Civil Rights Movement

Apr. 18 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Home Buying Seminar

Apr. 19 — 6 to 8 p.m.
Bel Aire Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, 2800 W. 8th St. eriefcu.org.

Adult Beginner Dulcimer

Apr. 19, 26 & May 3 — 6:45 to 8:30 p.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Psychology Lecture Series: Dr. Bill DeCoteau

Apr. 19 — 7 p.m.
Mercy Heritage Room, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

LifeWorks Erie Trip to Horseshoe Casino in Cleveland, Ohio

Apr. 20 — 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Ask an Expert

Apr. 20 — 6 p.m.
Millcreek Municipal Building, 3608 W. 26th St. lifeworkserie.org.

The State of Erie's Economy and Updates on "Erie's Advanced Industries"

Apr. 20 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Best Practices for Parent Engagement

Apr. 21 — 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Scottish Rite, 4701 Old Zuck Rd. erietogether.org.

The Vibrant Life Series

Apr. 21 — 12:30 to 2 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Comic Relief for Caregivers

Apr. 21 — 4 to 8 p.m.
Erie Shrine Club, 2525 W. 38th St. icaerie.org.

Drew Lynch

Apr. 21 — 7 p.m. & Apr. 22, 23 — 6:40 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

The Politics of Climate Change

Apr. 21 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Theresa Caputo Live: The Experience

Apr. 21 — 7:30 to 10 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Monster Jam

Apr. 22, 23 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 23 — 2 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

15th Annual Walk for Autism

Apr. 23 — 9:30 to 10:45 a.m.
Rotary Pavilion, 301 Peninsula Dr. nwpa-asa.org.

Asbury Woods Day of Caring

Apr. 23 — 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Build Your Own Rain Barrel

Apr. 23 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Brown's Farm Barn, 5774 Sterrettania Rd. asburywoods.org.

Casino Night

Apr. 23 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Sacred Heart Church, 803 W. 25th St. sacredhearterie.org.

Cocktails & Color

Apr. 24 — 12:45 to 4 p.m.
Riverside: The Inn at Cambridge Springs,

1 Fountain Ave. theriversideinn.com.

Dig in to Erie's Past

Apr. 24 — 2 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center Lobby, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Troublesome Ticks

Apr. 24 — 2 to 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Basement Transmissions Sewing Circle: Stitch n Bitch

Apr. 24 — 3 to 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.

Erie Color Dash 5K

Apr. 24 — 4 p.m.
Iroquois High School, 4301 Main St. bit.ly/eriecolordash.

County Council Meeting

Apr. 25 — 7 p.m.
Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. 6th St. eriecountypa.gov.

Presidents or Superheroes

Apr. 25 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Examining the Erie City Comprehensive Plan: A Foundation for Stability and Prosperity

Apr. 26 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Mind, Body, Beer

Apr. 26 — 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. facebook.com/ErieAleWorks.

Hunks

Apr. 27 — 7 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Uncharted Territory: The Road to National Marine Sanctuary Designation

Apr. 27 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Erie County Human Relations Commission 10th Annual Fair Housing Seminar

Wednesday, April 27th, 2016 - 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- Updates on PHARE & Other PA Housing Finance Agency Programs
- Difficulties in Finding Housing
- Landlord/Tenant Law - An Attorney Perspective
- Advantages of Being a Section 8 Landlord
- Benefits of a Land Banking System
- Grading the Livability of a Neighborhood
- Online Housing Advertising
- Age Friendly Cities

Open to the Public

Sign-In begins at 8:15 a.m. at the Blasco Library, Hirt Auditorium
\$10 Cost includes Continental Breakfast & Lunch
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Please include a brief description and contact information.

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ERIE READER

Erie Bayfront Convention Center
April 15-16-17, 2016



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'Plenty' to See

And even more to think about at the Erie Art Museum

By: Mary Birdsong

Many of Dan Schank's mixed media paintings in *Plenty* show us who we are. We may not like what we see.

Built of cut paper, gouache, pencil, and India ink, the works offer shifting spatial planes and layered implications about the worlds we create, both real and virtual. The message is most strong and undeniable in Schank's most recent, multi-colored works in which the viewer experiences an overload of contemporary, consumptive iconography all placed in the artificial setting of a standard suburban mall. He shows how, in all of the places we visit – whether they are actual commercial settings or online storefronts – we are being urged to go, do, and – most importantly – buy.

The majority of these works are dominated by pink, with green, yellow, and grey undertones. Here, like in real malls, the plants are artificial, the standard mall fountain makes an appearance, and the seating areas are welcoming, yet impersonal. In other words, the common features of public spaces chosen to make us feel comfortable. But Schank's shifting angles and highly active patterns in the floors, ceilings, and walls are dizzying to the eye, and reveal how marketing salvos have wormed their way into every inch of our public and online lives.

In "Common Ground," arrows push us into the visually deeper retail spaces, emoji wallpaper distracts the eye, while cotton candy colors mollify. We're clearly in an artificial world, one designed to "sate as many human desires as possible," as Schank says in his artist statement. Here, he is illuminating our appetites and suggesting the commonality between marketing a product (such as sneakers) and a way of belief (such as religion). Both purport to offer us salvation of some kind.

Schank's earlier pieces in the show, from 2012 and 2013, share a more muted palette of black, grey, taupe, and blues and a more subtle **[Cont. on page 32]**

Schank's works offer shifting spatial planes and layered implications about the worlds we create, both real and virtual. He is illuminating our appetites and suggesting the commonality between marketing a product (such as sneakers) and a way of belief (such as religion). Both purport to offer us salvation of some kind.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Weezer
Weezer
Crush Music

★★★★

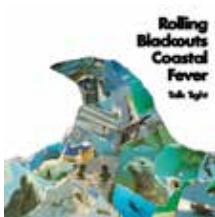
When people say they like Weezer, they're generally talking exclusively about the band's first two records. It can't be overstated how formative their self-titled "Blue Album" was. To a narrower audience, their follow-up *Pinkerton* left the same (if not a deeper) impression. Having said that, the next eight of their studio albums are largely forgettable. This one is, too. Rivers Cuomo is still a gifted songwriter. His audio idiosyncrasies shine through in regrettably titled songs like "Do You Wanna Get High?" The reason that song resonates might be that it's essentially "No Other One." The majority of this album is as satisfying as their last release, *Everything Will Be Alright In The End*. If you were a fan of that one, you'll like the "White Album" (as it's commonly called). The real tragedy here is that the low points overshadow the highs so much. They're all that you end up walking away with. "Thank God for Girls" is garbage. Any semblance of satire is lost in the rap rock mess. When Weezer starts to sound more like Crazy Town's "Butterfly" than *Pinkerton*'s, you know something is wrong. — Nick Warren



Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever
Talk Tight
Ivy League Records

★★★★★

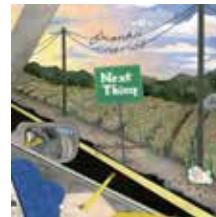
It might be a little early to call, but *Talk Tight* needs to be your album of the summer. Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever is a five-piece band from Melbourne, Australia. While Oceania's summer may be already in the books, ours is just gearing up. This record exists in a strange grey area between EP and LP, finishing slightly shy of half an hour but in just seven tracks. Designation notwithstanding, it's a wonderful debut. This is an endlessly fun record. The guitars take center stage, with a surfy twang. There's a tinge of punk rock mixed into the garage sound to kick things up a notch. It's paced quickly, but not frantically. The rhythm section bangs out an always danceable, head-bobbing backdrop. The songs give you welcome earworms, too. I must have had "Wide Eyes" in my head for an entire week, and it put me in the best mood. "Write Back" is another highlight, and every track is worth multiple listens. So whether you're looking for that perfect beach cookout soundtrack, or just want a half-hour headphone-getaway, look no further. — Nick Warren



Frankie Cosmos
Next Thing
Bayonet Records

★★★★★

When you first hear *Next Thing*, you'll be struck by how gentle it is. It's immediately personal. Imagine going on a walk with someone who abandons small talk and forges an honest connection, despite failing to maintain eye contact. You'll be pleased to get to know Frankie Cosmos. Her real name is Greta Kline (you might know her father, Kevin, or her mother, Pheobe Cates). You can call the band Frankie Cosmos, too. The New York City three-piece includes Kline's boyfriend Aaron Maine on drums, known for his project, Porches. Gabrielle Smith is also on the roster. She has a band called Eskimeaux, who put out one of the best albums of 2015, and who provide a perfect tonal counterpart to Frankie Cosmos. Still, to call them a "super group" would be antithetical to their understated sound. The tone is soft, sung with loud, wobbly whispers. Guitars are unadorned by effects or overdrive. *Next Thing* feels like the perfect bedroom album, an honest and intimate offering. It's a well-thought-out record, and one of the finest examples of a new, emerging generation of songwriters. — Nick Warren



Bob Mould
Patch The Sky
Merge Records

★★★★★

Bob Mould's been pretty consistent in his later years. *Patch the Sky* sees the former Hüsker Dü frontman in peak form, articulating punk and power pop with stellar precision. This is the 12th studio album that Mould has emerged with since 1989. He's seen some shifts, beginning with the folk-inspired alternative of *Workbook*, and venturing into electronica with 2002's *Modulate* to mixed results. The 1990s also saw him successfully mastermind the band Sugar. There's a certain sound that he's always gravitated toward, and it's clearly defined on this record. It's that saturated overdriven rock that the Hold Steady loved. It's what makes you remember why the Foo Fighters were good in the first place. So much of American rock music can be traced back to Mould. It was a good couple of weeks for other releases as well. Tacocat's *Lost Time* was a fierce, bubblegum masterpiece. *Atomic* saw Mogwai craft one their best albums to date. *It's the Big Joyous Celebration, Let's Stir the Honeypot* by Teen Suicide was a 26-track, multifaceted lo-fi magnum opus. — Nick Warren



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

[Cont. from page 31] vocabulary. The settings are outdoor this time and filled with stylized clouds and plants, utopian architecture, and brooding sensibilities. Like the later works, he utilizes vertiginous angles and repeating patterns to create visually busy surfaces.

These works are more fantastical, and remote iconographically; they are dreamscapes of an imagined splendor cut short. Walls crumble, vegetation overtakes buildings, tattered flags fly over shaky-looking structures. Everything seems vacant, unoccupied, abandoned.

"The Pier" offers cantilevered slabs of concrete, jumbles of boxy, run-down structures and several towers racing back to

the horizon. At their feet is a hodgepodge of taupe and tan vegetation, overhead is a black sky studded with sharp-edged unnaturally shaped clouds. The decay reflects the built and then abandoned places humans have

Everything seems vacant, unoccupied, abandoned.

wrought. It's not a typically welcoming space, but it does invite a certain archeological curiosity. Interestingly (or not), there are no humans inhabiting Schank's paintings. No one walks the mall concourses in "Operating

System" or lounges on the deck chairs in "Ride Lonesome." Every work is hauntingly empty. All are about the spaces we make, the mark we put on this earth. Our habits and desires. Those things are in there, but we are not. Except, of course, for us, the viewers. We are left to ponder our yearnings and the works of our own hands.

Through May 7 // Holstein Gallery of the Erie Art Museum // 411 State St. // erieartmuseum.org

Mary Birdsong can be contacted at mBirdsong@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Twitter @Mary_Birdsong.



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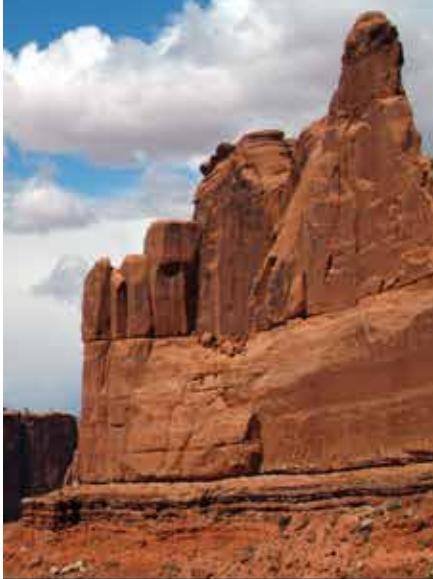
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DOCUMENTARY

(2015) Jackson Heights, a community where 167 languages are spoken and the 40th film from 86-year old filmmaker Frederick Wiseman. Experience the conflict between maintaining ties to old traditions and adapting to American values.



4/20 THE LOBSTER

COMEDY/ROMANCE

(2015) In a dystopian near future, single people, according to the laws of The City, are taken to The Hotel, where they are obliged to find a romantic partner in forty-five days or are transformed into beasts and sent off into The Woods. Starring Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz, Léa Seydoux and John C. Reilly.



4/27 CITY OF GOLD

CULTURE DOCUMENTARY

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NEWS & VIEWS

[Cont. from page 7] meeting, beginning to end, gave no hint of the personal struggles she was facing. The only side of her she showed was her commitment to the City of Erie.

Melanie Johnson took our team on tours of Erie. She took us to St. Stanislaus and explained what it meant for her to attend mass there, and, as a young child, to be picked up after school by her father. She walked us across the McBride Viaduct so we could see for ourselves the aging infrastructure of her city, and did so when she was weakened from therapy. Melanie explained the history of Pulakos Chocolates and who bought their Easter

a roomful of people displeased with the prospect of facing some unpleasant facts about the city's condition, and told me personally to "keep doing what you're doing. We need to hear it."

This in mind, this is our transmittal of the final draft of the comprehensive plan. As it is being reviewed, consider the following:

The Erie community is in trouble owing to problems shared by many older industrial cities. These are de-industrialization, loss of population, and suburbanization. But while these are extremely hard problems to solve, at root, they are technical, garden variety, clearable hurdles. Far

When the community is part of an adult conversation where facts are on the table and the community is sorting through the costs and benefits of competing scenarios, Erie is a city more than capable of innovation and growth. But this rarely happens. Our team observed a fractured community, as disaggregated as it was aggravated. Racial and class fault lines, for example, are easy to see, yet it was observed that ignoring them in public discourse has become commonplace. And there has been a narrative in Erie that the city's problems will be fixed by the arrival of another large employer, or a state grant, or some other form of wishful thinking.

candy there, and who instead went to Stefanellis. She drove our team to see the house she and her husband bought in the West Bay when they were a young family and pioneering and hoping they might help reclaim her city.

What she taught our team was that there was no time like the present to get on with the work, no matter how hard. That we could play it safe as consultants ... or not ... but that, regardless, the challenges would be there all the same. So it was up to us whether or not we really wanted to help. And when we put it squarely to her, asking what genuine help might look like, she didn't hesitate. "Give it to us straight. We can handle it. There's no sense waiting when there's work to be done. We could have hired someone else if we wanted it sugarcoated. Instead we hired you."

That's a tall order coming from anyone. It's especially substantial coming from Ms. Johnson to whom our effort on behalf of her city is dedicated.

Our effort is also a reflection of something similar we heard from Ms. JoAn Thompson, spouse of the late James Thompson, former city council member. It was Ms. Thompson who, in the middle of a somewhat disagreeable east side community presentation we led about the comprehensive plan, walked across

more noteworthy, is that Erie is in trouble less because of loss of jobs and less because of suburbanization and less because of population loss, and less because of petty bickering with the County, than because of the community's tendency towards self-inflicted wounds.

In other words, self-defeating habits and attitudes in Erie are what's really in the way of prosperity. Specifically, our team observed three notable traits that explain aspects of the city's current state and require attention as Erie moves forward.

1. SELLING ASSETS SHORT

Whether from comfort in the familiar or an unwillingness to expect more, the team observed several opportunity areas that the community has long neglected to invest in and optimize.

• **Architecture and Design.** Erie's history, architecture, and location are among the most enviable in the United States, arguably on par with Savannah, the District of Columbia, and St. Augustine. Sadly, significant assets have been squandered, undermined by bad transportation planning, thoughtless housing development, and other decisions made largely between 1960 and 2000. If the City of Erie is to find its way forward, it will almost certainly be by virtue of actions taken to strengthen the city's historic architectur-

al and environmental fabric, which will be costly. Choices, in other words, will have to be made, which means that the community will have to prize and prioritize and pay for the preservation and redevelopment of historic buildings, parks, and boulevards.

- **Bayfront.** If there is a more squandered asset in America than the City of Erie's shoreline, it is hard to imagine. For more than 100 years now, the community has acknowledged the need to integrate the city's downtown and neighborhoods with the Bayfront – and much has been done in the past 50 years in an effort to realize that goal. But those efforts have been inadequate and have, in many ways, worsened the physical separation of the shoreline from the rest of the city. If the City of Erie is to have a second act, optimizing the Bayfront for its cultural and recreational value, its real estate value, and its iconic value, needs to happen.

- **History of Entrepreneurialism.** Erie has a long and distinguished history as a haven for new enterprises and industrious people. But today, one in every 13 employees works for just four employers – GE, Erie Insurance, UPMC Hamot, or the

Commonwealth – a precarious situation for any city. Cities don't create jobs. But through policies and programs they can incubate the conditions that help gestate private business development. By reducing taxes on businesses, the benefit is job creation and the cost is a shifted

If there is a more squandered asset in America than the City of Erie's shoreline, it is hard to imagine. For more than 100 years now, the community has acknowledged the need to integrate the city's downtown and neighborhoods with the Bayfront – and much has been done in the past 50 years in an effort to realize that goal. But those efforts have been inadequate and have, in many ways, worsened the physical separation of the shoreline from the rest of the city. If the City of Erie is to have a second act, optimizing the Bayfront for its cultural and recreational value, its real estate value, and its iconic value, needs to happen.

tax burden. By investing in infrastructure – roads, fiber optics, parks, and related amenities – businesses can recruit ever stronger job candidates who in turn become contributing residents of the city. By making these investments the benefit is eventual competitiveness and the

cost is increased taxes or changes to the city's spending priorities (or both). The city's long term prospects for true vitality require that Erie lay the groundwork for future business expansion.

- **Community Wisdom.** When the community is part of an adult conversation

Racial and class fault lines, for example, are easy to see, yet it was observed that ignoring them in public discourse has become commonplace. And there has been a narrative in Erie that the city's problems will be fixed by the arrival of another large employer, or a state grant, or some other form of wishful thinking.

In the planning team's engagement with the Erie community, there was a hunger to be told the truth. People energetically asked to be leveled with about the state of the city. Residents and business owners alike asked to understand housing values and excess road miles, tax rates and changing demographics. Denying the necessity of new taxes, or of racial disparity by ignoring the issue hasn't, doesn't, and won't make those and other difficult matters go away.

2. ADHERENCE TO AN INEFFECTIVE STATUS QUO

The team also observed an adherence to certain operating norms – or "business as usual" – despite proven ineffectiveness.

- **Mistaking Cheap for Frugal.** A poignant example of business as usual that works against Erie is the prevalence of



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“cheap.” Whereas frugality once was a virtuous means of husbanding scarce resources so they could be saved or invested, Erie has fallen into the trap of cheapness. Since the 1960s, a once proud and beautiful Erie has permitted too many cheap projects. City Hall, for instance, or the Bayfront Connector – neither of lasting beauty or value. Too many homes became cheaply sided, first with aluminum and later with vinyl, undermining the city’s charm. The planning team noticed this same tendency in maintenance as well. Roads are patched but not properly brought to par. In Erie there are 300 miles of roads to be maintained each year. At \$18,000 per mile per year to maintain properly, the City of Erie should be spending \$5.4 million a year. Each increment below this becomes deferred (and mounting) costs that require attention later. Cheap today at significant expense tomorrow is not serving Erie well.

• **Relying on Outside Funding.** In addition to cheapness, a second counter-productive norm in Erie is the default tendency to look to the state or federal governments, or some other outside source, to solve local problems. When the suburbanization of Erie County became firmly rooted by the early 1980s, the exodus of the city’s middle class was in full swing. In response, Erie increasingly looked to grants to fix gaps, and having predicated municipal spending on presumptions that did not materialize, Erie opted to close funding gaps with increasing reliance on outside sources rather than periodically rightsize. Whenever an outside source funds an Erie project, it must conform to the funder’s expectations and rules. Such rules infrequently benefit the user without exacting a cost, and almost never fit local market realities. While Erie has become adept at getting outside help, it has traded away the indispensable value of self reliance.

• **Not Engaging Citizens.** Our team observed that business as usual in Erie seldom includes real efforts to engage the community. As earlier noted, this is a missed opportunity. But it also constitutes a troubling norm. When a neighborhood’s residents are not part of the conversation, they can easily lose confidence that their voice matters, and our team observed this to very much be the case throughout many city neighborhoods, especially lower income minority areas. It was observed that true dialogue is rare in Erie, and until that ceases to be the norm, the potential for recovery will be severely challenged.

• **Not Working Together.** Many cities suffer from lack of coordination, and Erie is no different. City Hall and the County, for example, operate in silos, rarely communicating with one another with effectiveness, rarely sharing in the development – much less the execution – of strategies. Erie County, nominally better off than the city, is in for a rude awakening when the county’s demographic time bomb goes off about the same time that its 1970s era housing stock approaches obsolescence. Yet city and county – in desperate need of one another – have not found a meaningful way to share data, goals, talent, and resources. The “X” factor in postindustrial cities struggling to transition to economic prosperity is not fiber optics, innovation hubs, or tax credits, but partnership and cooperation in the presence of such tools. Until the

When these risk averse traits are combined – waiting for someone else to carry the load, going small against a big challenge, and an unwillingness to place bets – what becomes truly apparent in Erie is the lack of confidence parties have in one another. The paradox is that Erie has more than enough resources to pull out of its condition, yet no one party alone can do it and no party is confident that the others will be there for them should they venture out front; no one wants to be left stranded on third base. In a form of the prisoner’s dilemma, no single party in Erie has sufficient trust in all the others to follow through, and so no one ventures forth with enough resources to bend the arc of Erie’s universe.

county, city, and other entities routinely work together, the region will suffer.

3. RISK AVERSION

Third, the team observed a troubling aversion to risk. Of the many lessons that Silicon Valley, North Carolina’s Research Triangle, and Boston’s 128 Corridor offer, perhaps the greatest is the value of failing often and quickly in order to succeed.

• **Not Placing Bets and Losing Anyway.** Placing bets is part of leveraging the good cards in the city’s hand. Underneath today’s venture capital approach to seeding winners is a willingness not just to tolerate losses, but to cultivate them, embrace them, and therefore have something to learn from. This is the essential DNA of what is sometimes referred to as diffusion gatekeeping where “life on the innovation end of the continuum is volatile, fractious, and personal.” Failing often to succeed when possible means spending and cultivating loss. It means investing in young entrepreneurs, placing bets, and figuring it out. Erie is rarely venturesome with its public capital.

• **Who Else Has Done This?** Often, what plagues Erie is waiting for someone else to trail blaze. Leave it to Erie Insurance. To Hamot. To Penn State Behrend. Or find an exact and successful version from elsewhere to replicate. One of the most troubling observations our team made in the year it evaluated conditions in Erie was the response from too many city officials who, when presented with possible ways out of the city’s current predicaments, reflexively asked “where else has this been done?” By contrast, in cities that are succeeding in the postindustrial, technology-driven, service-sector economy, the response to the same proposition is “well, let’s invent it.” The approach that’s needed is courageous experimentation and a willingness to incur losses. That of course means the taxpayer has to give permission to its representatives

no one party alone can do it and no party is confident that the others will be there for them should they venture out front; no one wants to be left stranded on third base. In a form of the prisoner’s dilemma, no single party in Erie has sufficient trust in all the others to follow through, and so no one ventures forth with enough resources to bend the arc of Erie’s universe.

• **Tough Choices Neither Posed Nor Made.** Limited trust and overall risk aversion culminates in Erie putting off, or failing to acknowledge, difficult choices. The community isn’t prepared to make hard choices unless pushed to do so and no one in the community – in any sector – has yet shown a willingness to do the necessary pushing.

The draft we’ve conveyed, which is now in your hands, gives the Erie community a way through, and, eventually, a way forward to the other side. It won’t be easy. It can be done. You have the tools. But durable change will only emerge if the community is mobilized and rigorous.

Half measures will not work in the face of what are undeniably existential challenges.

These may be hard-to-swallow observations. Top to bottom our team appreciates the enormity of the tasks ahead for Erie.

But in the course of our work in your community, we found all of the tools needed for recovery. We found in the *Erie Times-News* and in the *Erie Reader* serious coverage of serious issues. In the Growth Partnership we encountered business acumen and staff talent equal to that found in any city anywhere. In Erie’s ecumenical community we found a commitment to social justice and also a pragmatic hunger for what works. In the school superintendent’s office we found expertise, humility, and gravitas. In the police department we found courage and compassion. In the County Executive office we encountered sophisticated, far-seeing, willing partners. In the philanthropic and corporate sector we discovered a deep reservoir of commitments to Erie and the expertise to lead. **Most of all, in the community itself, we found a willingness to do what’s required, if asked, and if mobilized.**

As we heard from Melanie Johnson, “there’s no sense waiting when there’s work to be done.”

Respectfully,

Charles Buki, President



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Erie Faces Erie

Mario Mazza
Mazza Vineyards
Ed Bernik
photographer

The reason I came back to North East and love that area is not because it's thousands of acres of suburbs. It's thousands of acres of beautiful vineyards, overlooking a really phenomenal landscape. And if you lose that, it doesn't come back.

Ed Bernik: Tell me a bit about your background.

Mario Mazza: I grew up in North East, and attended Case Western in Cleveland for chemical engineering. The conversation came up when I was graduating from high school about coming back for the family business. And my dad said, "Hey – do what you want to do. If you want to come back, great. If not? That's okay, too. No pressure." So I pursued engineering because that's what I was really interested in. I got to see big corporate structure, and while the work was interesting, there was something alluring about our family business and having a hand in a little bit of everything. You change hats every day: One day you're business, the next you're on a forklift, the next you're in the vineyard – so I decided to switch gears. I ended up in Australia for winemaking.

EB: Why pick Australia?

MM: Australia had this allure. It pushed me out of my comfort zone, and it was a great opportunity to pursue cycling, since there was a velodrome nearby where I spent a lot of time. Most importantly, I met my wife down there, so we go back every year and visit family and a lot of close friends.

I ended up working in the wine industry in Australia, as well. My dad liked to say, "Go make mistakes with someone else's

money first," which was pretty wise advice. I got some exposure to distillation, and had done it at DuPont as a chemical engineer. Then, my dad told me that New York had changed some laws, making it more conducive for small distilleries to start up. He'd gotten reinvigorated with me coming back.

About a month later, we were on the phone and he said, "So I bought some property in Chautauqua, and ordered a still from Germany." And I said, "Well, I guess we're going to do this." Only a few years in, it really started to grow. We were the fourth distillery in New York. There are 75 now. So the growth in 10 years has been monumental.

After we moved the facility to Westfield, we thought, "What's a few more tanks? We could brew beer. Why not?" And then New York started to allow licensing so you could have a brewery, winery, and distillery in one facility. And we're still the only one in New York.

EB: It's great to see this resurgence in craft beer brewing. In Europe you see many local pubs brewing their own beers.

MM: I love to travel, and exploring a place to me is also exploring the local food and the local drink. You don't go to Champagne, France, and not drink Champagne. It's sad that in the U.S. we think that we can go anywhere and eat at the same Applebee's. That's boring to me. I want to find out what's unique and different about a place.

That's what we're trying to do. Our wines speak of regional character because we use grapes grown in the region, our spirits are using New York-grown grains; 95-plus percent of the ingredients are grown in New York, a number of them on our own farm. And we're a farm brewery, which makes us different from just about every other brewery in our local footprint. Pennsylvania doesn't even have this sort of license, but we are required to use a certain amount of New York-grown grain and hops. It's challenging, but it's supporting the agriculture, and to me that's really important.

The reason I came back to North East and love that area is not because it's thousands of acres of suburbs. It's thousands of acres of beautiful vineyards, overlooking a really phenomenal landscape. And if you lose



that, it doesn't come back. So I want to do anything I can to help provide a viable end product that ensures land stays in agriculture.

Maybe local people take it for granted a little bit. But when people come from out of town, they're amazed at how many vineyards we have. It's an important facet of the region.

EB: The first time I saw you was not at the winery, but riding your bike on Route 20, and I said "This guy really knows what he's doing." How did you get involved in cycling?

MM: In high school, I had an art teacher [Pat Fordyce] who was a phenomenal mountain biker. I bought a bike off of him and got into the mountain biking scene when I was in my mid-teens in the mid-90s, when Gary Fisher was still racing.

When I went away to college, I got into a little local racing, and found out that I was okay regionally. While working at DuPont, I lived in Delaware and was riding with a lot of groups on the road who told me about at a velodrome in Allentown. I loved it. And then I found out there was this velodrome

20 minutes from where I was going to live in Australia. So my move to Australia was in part motivated by cycling.

EB: So a velodrome is the banked wooden circular track that most would equate with the Olympics. There's not one in Erie that I know of.

MM: When I moved back, the closest velodrome was still Allentown. So I would drive down Friday mornings to race the Friday pro night, and then drive back Saturday. I pursued that because I had raced pretty seriously in Australia, went to nationals a couple of times, and got really plugged into it. Now I just ride regionally, and on the road.

EB: Is there a big pro-am biking contingency in Erie?

MM: There are a lot of riders in the area. It ebbs and flows, but there's a good core group, as well as in Buffalo, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh.

EB: Should Erie consider promoting a major cycling event? Maybe a road race on Presque Isle?

MM: [Ken Bestine] and I put on a small regional race in down-

town Erie for a few years back in 2009, 2010, and 2011. We had some great sponsorship and support from the local community. We did it to benefit the Achievement Center, so all of the proceeds went to them.

The team I was affiliated with in Cleveland gave me a lot of insight into the sport and exposure to guys who've ridden the Tour de France and the Tour of California. But putting on events is really tricky. It's a tough circuit. There are guys who do that as full-time promoters. So Ken and I tried it for a few years and it worked out pretty well but it was really hard to make it click into anything bigger.

There are a couple of guys putting on local races right now, and I think they're doing a great job. I try to support them, if we can give them some product for prizes to encourage ridership, we're happy to do that. I'm happy to see someone else take the torch at this point.

Mario Mazza: fiveand20.com and enjoymazza.com

Ed Bernik: bernikphotography.com

LAKERGLOW5K



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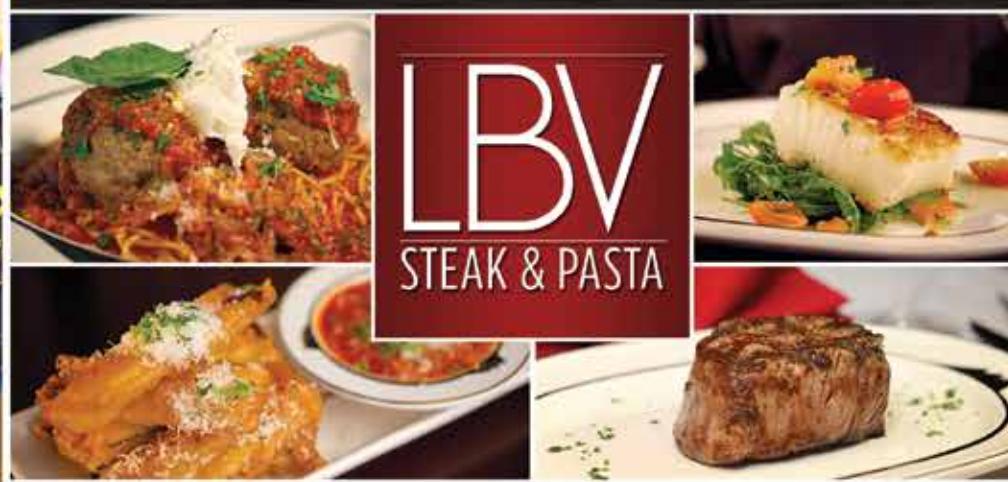


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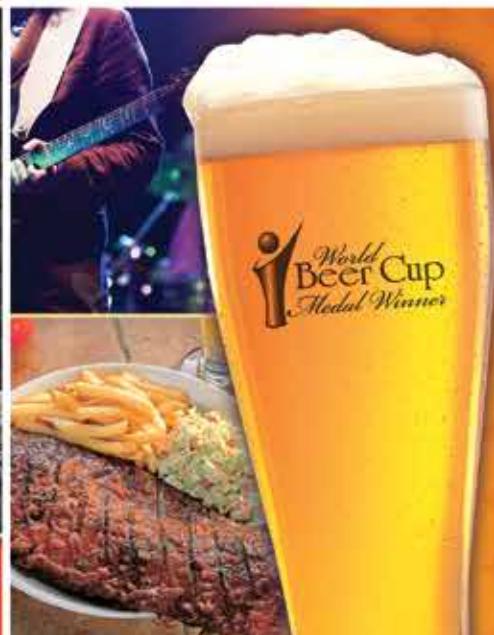
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