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From the Editors: May 2026

You can't hack a book

If you're used to regularly checking our extremely comprehensive website at eriereader.com for our cool local arts and culture coverage, our weekly local government meeting summaries, our 15 years worth of archives, or our jam-packed, locally-curated public events calendar you may have noticed that it's recently been... unavailable.

Over the past week, we've been experiencing what millions of other websites nationwide have recently been experiencing, a ransomware takedown – hackers literally trying to hold our content hostage while they simultaneously attempted to delete all of our backups. This could have been catastrophic and the INCREDIBLE folks at Epic Web Studios, the local website development company that built, runs, and maintains our massive website, has had a team working around the clock to restore it and we are eternally grateful for their work. Otherwise, what? We start over? We somehow work to rebuild the thousands of arti-

cles, photographs, and entries we've compiled over the past 15 years? To quote our publisher Adam Welsh, "It's all compromised, the whole world. There's nothing you can do if someone zeros in on you."

I've said it before, I'll say it again: long live physical media!

In an age when so much of our daily lives depends upon the fragile network of theory that is the internet – it is invaluable to be able to hold something in your hands. Can't access an online events calendar? Grab a paper! Want to know what happened at a recent council meeting but your phone is dead? Grab a paper! Itching to discover some cool new music but don't want the algorithm selling your soul? Grab a paper!

This May issue gives you a physical copy of a lot of what I mentioned in the paragraph above as it is our annual Summer Events Preview issue – if you're anything like my everything-analog-forever father-in-law (or would like to be) you can take this copy of the Reader and mark an

actual calendar hanging on your actual wall with the events you don't want to miss this summer. We've got everything from live music shows, physical challenges, cultural celebrations, educational opportunities, food and drink events, farmers markets, county fairs, and more.

And as a theme running through many of our summertime events – the City of Erie hopes that you'll be sure to bring a book with you. Officially dubbed Erie's first Summer of Reading, local partners have joined forces with the mayor and the City of Erie's summer recreation programs to make literacy a priority. Going to a beach concert? Bring a book! Having lunch at a spot downtown? Bring a book! Be like Edwina this month and join a new book club! Let your children see you reading a book instead of endlessly scrolling your phone and they might just think to do the same.

If this past week has taught me anything, it is that you can't hack a book – holding a cheap (often free, if you've got that magical piece of plas-

tic, a library card) gateway to knowledge in your hand is a powerful thing. It opens your imagination (as pictured on our cover by our very own exceptional comic artist John Bavaro), it provides different perspectives and points of view, it hones critical thinking skills, and it saves your eyeballs and brain from the flashing blue lights we've all been hunched over for way too long.

While we'll be so grateful to have our website back and running (we can't thank you enough, Epic, seriously), it's good to occasionally have this reminder, that you can never truly own the internet. Everything virtual is at the whim of any person or AI smart enough to outsmart it. But when you hold a book in your hands, when you give money directly to a musician for an actual record, when you pick up a free copy of your favorite alt paper – you're making these things permanent. You're saying something that can't be said by clicking a link – that this work is important enough to have it in its real form and to truly own it.

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Flock Continues to Fly Over Millcreek Township

Calls for transparency, contract amendments concern citizens throughout Erie County

By: Alana Sabol

Tensions ran high at the Millcreek Supervisors Meeting on April 28, as many constituents came to speak on the Flock cameras installed at the Millcreek Mall. Questions remained as attendees called into question Millcreek Township's transparency about the process.

During the meeting, two Flock spokesmen held a presentation about their License Plate Readers (LPRs). In some segments, it read as a sales pitch, with phrases such as: "shaping a safer future, together" and "built with privacy in mind" included on the presentation slides. Afterwards constituents asked the Flock representatives questions. "Who has access to the data collected by the LPRs?" was a repeated concern during the session.

The representatives explained that although the Millcreek Mall is considered the customer, the Millcreek Police Department (MPD) is the only entity that has access to the data, and that the data can only be shared with other law enforcement agencies if MPD chooses to do so.

Constituents also asked about the possibility of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or ICE being able to access the data. "You have to have an account to even attempt to engage in a sharing relationship. The Department of Homeland Security and all of its subsidiaries, including ICE, do not have contracts or accounts with us," Kerry McCormack, Flock's public relations manager for the East Coast, said.

Supervisor Kim Clear discussed this concern with me the next day, saying that if DHS or ICE were to ever gain access to the mall's camera data, she would "personally call for" the MPD to no longer use the data and set forth limitations to prevent those federal agencies from accessing it.

Later on in the meeting, constituents expressed frustration when the supervisors locked down comments to Millcreek residents and taxpayers only. Since residents of the City of Erie and other townships use the mall, some attendees saw this move as silencing people who would be affected. "I understand that taxpayers take precedence, but the Millcreek Mall ... has a huge impact on Erie County and

I feel like they should have a voice in this," Millcreek resident Julie Hirt said.

"Millcreek Township follows the state statute when it comes to the Sunshine Act," Clear said on a phone call. The section of the Sunshine Act that refers to public participation states that municipalities must provide an opportunity for residents and/or taxpayers to comment.

The lack of clarity in the process of approving and installing the cameras was another cause for concern. "The Flock cameras at the mall do not belong to the township. The costs associated with the Flock cameras at the mall were paid by the mall directly to Flock Safety. No township funds were used to pay for the costs associated with the cameras," Supervisor Jim Bock announced.

Millcreek resident Candy Horm, asked about a recorded Supervisors Meeting on Nov. 11, 2025, which conflicts with Bock's statement. During the meeting, the supervisors discussed the township paying for the cameras with a reimbursement from Cafaro (the property management company that owns the mall) for cost of operations and an additional \$3,250 for installation. "Do we be-

Tensions ran high at the Millcreek Supervisors Meeting on April 28, as many constituents came to speak on the Flock cameras installed at the Millcreek Mall. The company has faced scrutiny for their data sharing practices, as their cameras scan license plates that can be used to reference personal information. Meanwhile, Millcreek Township has been criticized for their lack of transparency around the cameras' acquisition – specifically whether they were paid for with private (Cafaro, who owns the Millcreek Mall) or public dollars (Millcreek Police Department).

lieve the video or do we believe what you say now?"

On Dec. 8, 2025 Clear signed off on an invoice from Flock for five cameras with a total cost of \$18,250 in which MPD was listed as the customer. Email exchanges between Flock representatives and MPD obtained by Right to Know requests show the process leading up to the signed invoice. In an email thread from Nov. 25, Capt.

ERIN PHILLIPS



These Flock License Plate Reading cameras, installed by private corporate businesses in Summit Township, join those in use by Cafaro at the Millcreek Mall. There have been ongoing concerns raised by citizens about the contract between Cafaro and Millcreek Township, with citizens showing up en masse to question local leaders at Millcreek Township Supervisors meetings.

Donald Kucenski expressed concern about Millcreek paying upfront "due to end-of-year budget limits." An account executive from Flock Safety

who said that the mall reimbursed the township and that the township would be responsible for any repair costs. This information reflects the contract discussed in the Nov. 11 meeting and the invoice signed on Dec. 8 but conflicts with public statements, including Supervisor Bock's during the most recent meeting.

"That was the original agreement," Supervisor Kim Clear told me during a phone call the evening of April 29. She explained that after the contract was signed in November, the mall eventually decided to pay Flock Safety directly instead of reimbursing the township.

Clear said the township will most likely be amending the contact during the May 12 Supervisor Meeting to reflect the actual method of payment. I confirmed with Clear that the township wouldn't pay for potential repairs to the cameras either.

"I am willing to speak with anyone from Millcreek Township or anywhere else if they have concerns about anything," Clear said.

Alana Sabol can be reached at alana@eriereader.com

A Burning Issue

Where poverty and fire overlap in Erie

By: Chloe Forbes

Flames burst through a second-story window and licked up the sides of a house on East 26th Street as first responders entered and attempted to save the three children inside – a 5-month-old baby, a 2-year-old girl, and a 5-year-old boy. Although officers performed CPR and the children were transported for medical care, they did not survive.

This comes as the Erie-Times News reported 12 fatalities in 10 fires across Erie County since Jan. 2025, reigniting a conversation about fire safety. They aren't the only ones looking into it, though, as two Gannon seniors, who also serve as volunteer firefighters, made it their mission to take a deeper look into the fire incidents in the city of Erie.

Students Alexander Purchase, whose father is the city's assistant fire chief, and Rebekah Young gathered data on working structure fires – active fires that require fire department extinguishment – from 2021 to 2025, which is just over 400 house fires or about one every 4.5 days. The students used geographic information system (GIS) mapping to determine fire hot spots, then they mapped out the Erie's census poverty rates, focusing on the overlapping areas.

Fires are fairly evenly distributed across the city, but where poverty is highest, especially on the east side and in central neighborhoods near the Bayfront Connector, the two variables seem to reinforce each other.

In a unique circumstance, Purchase and Young not only had data to inform their project but on-the-ground experience. Houses in poorer areas, Young said, are more likely to be run-down structures, and their occupants may turn to desperate but unsafe measures, especially in the winter.

"We all know how horrible the winters are in the area, especially with how cold it got this winter," she said. "People resort to things such as leaving their stove turned on, putting their oven on at 400 degrees and opening the door, using space heaters that are just a huge fire risk – especially if they're not plugged into an outlet which can provide enough wattage to safely operate it."

Chief Fire Marshal Donald Sauer

said that from 2023 through 2025, there were 134 accidental fires, of which careless smoking and electrical causes ranked the highest. Using electrical devices according to the manufacturer's guidelines and properly disposing of smoking materials would "greatly lower accidental fires," he said.

With the age of Erie's housing stock averaging about 70 years, buildings are not necessarily as fire-safe as houses today. And although a smoke detector can activate less than 20 seconds after a fire starts, it may only take five minutes for a fire to spread up the beams of an older house and engulf the structure, making prevention a key resource.

Erie is not alone though – Pennsylvania has the most civilian home fire deaths out of any state, with 131 in 2025, according to the United States Fire Administration, followed by New York with 114 and Texas with 104.

On average, there are about 2,600 fire deaths and another 10,770 fire-related injuries per year in the U.S., according to the National Fire Protection Association, meaning that Pennsylvania accounts for about 5 percent of fire deaths even though Pennsylvania's population represents about 3 percent of the country.

Pa. State Fire Commissioner Thomas Cook said that the Community Risk Reduction effort is about getting ahead of emergencies before they happen.

"By identifying local risks and aligning efforts between municipal leaders, fire departments, and community partners, we can implement targeted strategies that prevent injuries, save lives, and protect property," Cook said.

The Office of the State Fire Commissioner even offers a Community Risk Reduction Best Practices Guide, which it strongly encourages municipalities and fire services across the state to utilize.

In the city, Mayor Daria Devlin is already taking a hard look at improving fire safety in impoverished areas using a holistic approach. As the former director of social impact at Hamot Health Foundation, she is no stranger to the social drivers of health through



A recent house fire in the City of Erie resulting in the tragic deaths of three young children calls into question the link between fire risk and poverty. A study conducted by two Gannon University Seniors connect these two factors as the city takes steps to improve living conditions through, among other efforts, better rental inspections and enforcement of code violations.

housing and neighborhood revitalization.

The city has poverty rates above 50 percent in some areas, with an overall childhood poverty rate of about 35 percent.

"That level of concentrated poverty is directly tied to a range of public safety challenges, including increased fire risk in certain neighborhoods," Devlin said. "We can't look at structural fires in isolation from the broader conditions people are living in."

She noted that in some of the situations, they are also seeing families and single parents struggling to receive necessary resources like safe housing, basic home repairs, and mental health and support services. She believes that breaking down silos and better coordinating with partners could prevent fires, or at the very least significantly reduce their impact. That's something the city has prioritized during Devlin's first 100 days.

One of the first things she did was meet with each department, including fire and code enforcement, to better understand how they operate.

"What became clear is that fire prevention requires stronger cross-department communication," she said. "In many cases, fires are tied to underlying code violations or unsafe conditions in homes that create serious risks for both residents and the property maintenance inspectors and firefighters who respond."

That not only includes better co-

ordination, but also overhauling the rental inspection program. Currently, landlords are required to register with the city, but a third-party vendor performs the inspections. By doing it in-house, there could be better awareness of what violations or issues exist within the city.

Devlin has also begun conversations with Dr. Natalyn Gibbs at Erie Public Schools and Captain Tom Lenox, who heads the Police Athletic League mentoring program for youth, to discuss ways to increase fire safety education with children and families.

The steps that the city is taking align with the recommendations of the Gannon students, who called for a code review in "high-risk" areas, which often include rentals, as well as demolition of problem structures that cannot be brought up to code. The city said that it sees eliminating some gaps in the rental registration process as a way to specifically address older homes.

Through prevention, response, and coordination, they're hoping to spark change.

"We believe these efforts will help reduce the risk of preventable fires," Devlin said, referencing the fire in which the three children died. "In the case of the most recent fire, we mourn the terrible loss of young life and are committed to doing whatever possible to prevent future tragedies."

Chloe Forbes is a local journalist. Reach her at chloeforbes14@gmail.com

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Stream of Consciousness: Hidden Creeks Links Art, Environmental Awareness

Exhibit explores how 1915 Mill Creek Flood transformed Erie

By: Liz Allen

You could describe the Hidden Creeks Project as a watershed moment.

Indeed, Hidden Creeks underscores why we must all serve as good stewards of Erie County's watersheds and sub-basins.

But the project offers more than a one-time flash of clarity about the environment. Already under way and continuing into next year, Hidden Creeks uses public art installations, an interactive exhibit, and a short documentary, among other resources, to explain how the 1915 Mill Creek Flood changed the face of Erie. In the process, the project offers lessons we can glean from that deadly disaster.

The Erie County Conservation District collaborated with 17 partners, including artists, historians, preservationists, businesses, schools, universities, state, county, and local officials and members of the public, to create and launch Hidden Creeks.

For an introduction to the project, you can start at Gannon University's Center for Lake Erie Education and Research (CLEER), inside Blasco Library. At CLEER, the Hidden Creeks exhibit displays the flood's timeline, traces its path from Glenwood Park to Presque Isle Bay, and shows photos of smashed-up homes and businesses.

At the end of May, the exhibit will move to the Tom Ridge Environmental Center.

Wherever you explore the history of the Mill Creek Flood, you will be taken aback by the historic photos of the damage, including one starkly labeled "Where Ross met death."

He was one of 37 victims.

You might be appalled when you learn that many decades before such tragedies went viral on social media, tourists flocked to Erie by train to gape at the destruction.

You will be startled by the "Flood Sale" newspaper ad for G.L. Pratt at 17th and State streets that blares: "Furniture, Stoves and Rugs must go quick at some price. Cash or credit. We need the cash."

You will be awed by *Watersheds*, a short film by John C. Lyons, which documents the flood's destruction but also shows how the City of Erie devised the idea to enclose the creek in a massive concrete tube to protect against future

flooding.

The Tube is an engineering marvel because of its size – 18-feet high, 22-feet wide, with 2-foot-wide walls – and because of the step-by-step process and manual labor used to construct it underground.

The Tube, though, is also why the 2-mile stretch of water that flows through it has been a "hidden creek" for the last century. When something is buried underground, you could easily forget everything you are supposed to know about how the natural water cycle works, said Kristen Currier, environmental educator for the Erie County Conservation District.

"You can't invent water," she said. "It only makes sense to pay attention to how we treat water, because it's coming back to us. There's an old saying in our industry, kind of tongue-in-cheek, that we all live downstream."

Hidden Creeks is supported by a variety of grants and donations and one purpose is to show that "what goes into our storm drains goes right back into a creek, which flows into a lake or a bigger river or an ocean," Currier said.

The Hidden Creeks Project has been developed over the last 2.5 years, Currier said, from an idea that watershed conservation and restoration expert Amber Stilwell (40 Under 40 Class of 2025) came across at a conference. That idea was a public art project in Baltimore done by Bruce Willen, *Ghost Rivers*: public art installation and neighborhood history walk, according to Currier.

Stilwell, Currier, and others realized that Erie residents are not familiar with the story of the Mill Creek Flood, other than what Erie Zoo visitors learn on the train ride that goes over the creek's culvert at Glenwood Park.

The Aug. 3, 1915, flood was a "traumatic event" that changed how the City of Erie looked, Currier said. On that day, a farmer at the creek's headwaters collected 12 inches of rain in a bucket in about three hours, she said. Chickens, cows, wagons, buckets, timber and trees were all swept along. By 7 p.m., in the area where Erie Veterans Memorial Stadium would later be built, "It was no longer a creek," she explained. "It was a lake. It took out State Street."

Tom Ferraro, Ed Grout, and Steve Mik



These historic photos show the aftermath of the Millcreek flood, which was a devastating event that took place in Erie 1915 which led to the deaths of 37 people and millions of dollars in property damage. It is the subject of the Hidden Creeks project, an initiative between the Erie County Conservation District and 17 community partners.

(40 Under 40 Class of 2024), partners in the Looking Glass Art Project, are helping to tell this dramatic story.

Ferraro and Grout created Looking Glass, which makes public art by engaging with community members, in 2014. Mik joined them in 2020.

The three artists have their own studios in spacious classrooms at the former St. Stanislaus School at East 12th and Wallace streets, but they brainstorm together on art concepts, design and fabrication.

Grout is delighted to be part of Hidden Creeks because of its scope – eight public art pieces, with three confirmed for installation this year and five more planned for 2027 (depending on funding). "It lets the people know what happened in history and what we can do now about not polluting the lake," Grout said.

"Our first installation will be the anchor piece for the project. It is a sculpture made of steel, concrete, granite, and glass and will be installed on the property of Erie Events on the lawn in front of Erie Insurance Arena," Ferraro said. "Conceptually, it will tell the whole story, and we encourage viewers to walk through and interact with the piece."

The Erie Insurance Arena art is likely to be unveiled and dedicated about the same time, probably in mid-June, as the mural on the outside of FEED Media Art Center.

Later this year, art students from Collegiate Academy will prepare a mural

for part of the wall at Veterans Stadium. Additional art is proposed for next year along the flood's path, concluding with two art pieces in the Bayfront East Side Task Force neighborhood. It will be a "walkable" route, Currier said, although many might prefer driving it.

"Beyond the historical aspect, a central goal of the Hidden Creeks Project is to raise awareness about our environmental impact. We aim to first make people aware of the hidden waterway beneath them and help them understand how their daily choices affect the natural world," said Mik, from Looking Glass. "For example, a study conducted at Behrend found that disposable plastic water bottles were among the most common forms of debris collected from both Mill Creek and Cascade Creek, highlighting how everyday habits can have lasting consequences," Mik added.

Ferraro expanded on Mik's observations. "It is difficult to protect what we cannot see. The city stormwater sewer system connects to the Tube, providing a direct route to Presque Isle Bay, the source of our water supply. Fertilizer, forever chemicals, plastics, and other pollutants wash directly into the system from our city streets. Raising the awareness of how our daily habits impact our water supply is the real story of the Hidden Creeks art project," he said.

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Erie's Summer of Reading: Writing Our Next Chapter Together

City-wide literacy initiatives building a community of readers

By: Erin Phillips

In Daria Devlin's inauguration speech as the 49th Mayor of the City of Erie, her passion for and connection to literacy and reading took center stage. She made the metaphor of the community "writing Erie's next chapter" together under her leadership, as she spoke about formative childhood experiences at the old Erie County Public Library building on Perry Square. "Visiting the library was formative for me because it helped me learn about different parts of the world, other experiences, it opened my mind to new ideas, but also grew creativity," Mayor Devlin shares.

Knowing early on in her administration that literacy was going to be a priority for the City's kids, Devlin found herself nodding enthusiastically when approached by Werner Books and Coffee co-owner Kyle Churman (40 Under 40 Class of 2023), as he proposed an idea he'd been working on centered around the city's endorsement of a number of public literacy events and initiatives. "Each year, the Friends of the Erie County Library does their Great American Book Sale, the Erie School District has their summer reading program, Werner Books does events like Lit Fest – I thought, if we can get the City of Erie involved, we could just throw everything at the wall and see what sticks," Churman shares.

One of the city's first opportunities to promote literacy this summer was through funding. "We put out about \$350,000 in funding for the summer between our Community Development Block Grant funding and our Parks and Rec dollars for summer programming, mostly for kids. We have required this year that anyone who gets funds from this has to include a literacy component in their program; it's written into the contract," Devlin shares. "For example, Spoon's Basketball League gets funding from the City so they have to include a literacy component ... get the bookmobile there or help the kids to get library cards."

It's important to note that this initiative is about encouraging *everyone* to read, including but not limited to kids. "Reading outcomes and literacy is a concern and a priority in the Erie School District and we say all the time

that if our kids can't read, what does that mean for the future in Erie?" Devlin states. Churman adds, "But, the other big piece of it for me is not just getting the kids to read – it's trying to encourage grown-ups to read either with kids, parallel to kids, or just independent of each other." Devlin concurs, "Modeling good behavior is so important, having our young people see that adults read, that it's important to them, is so huge."

Devlin also announced that she will be creating "Mayor Devlin's Book Club" this summer in correspondence with the city's America 250 celebration. "We've chosen this book called *The Small and the Mighty* by Sharon McMahon as it ties into American history – it's about people you don't necessarily know who did things to change the course of American history. There's also a youth companion book that goes with it," Devlin says. "As a community, we can all read the book and have discussion events throughout the summer, creating awareness around the importance of literacy, both for adults and kids, as a cornerstone of our community." She continues, "In this time that we live in, it feels harder and harder to talk to each other, so I liked the idea of a book that was not pushing an agenda – it is about how people can engage, and how people before us have engaged, to help make our country better. That just feels like the right conversation to have right now."

While the budding administration begins to get their sea legs, this summer is all about figuring out what works and what doesn't – and about organizing events and agencies in a way that makes sense. For the Summer of Reading, any event related to literacy can be included in the city's Summer Recreation Guide, which will be digital this year to accommodate as much content as possible. They're also making logical connections where they didn't exist before. Mayor Devlin inquired with the library about the schedule for the bookmobile and they were able to coordinate that schedule with the city's summer rec programs. Additionally, Churman plans to tail the bookmobile this year to give away gently used kids books at those locations that he has gathered from

ERIN PHILLIPS



Mayor Devlin has declared this summer to be Erie's inaugural Summer of Reading – working literacy into every city-funded summer program and partnering with local businesses and nonprofits to coordinate book-centric events. She will be hosting "Mayor Devlin's Book Club," which will feature the book *The Small and the Mighty* by Sharon McMahon.

places like the former Edison and Mt. Carmel school buildings. Erie's Public Schools has committed to releasing their summer reading lists early this year – to coordinate with the city's independent book sellers as well as the library, to make sure those books are available and easily accessible. Any of the literacy-related events happening throughout the summer will be available through a QR code printed onto bookmarks which you should see all over the place (including within this feature). "All of this being coordinated in one place shows a community effort behind it that says: we think this is important and we want to work on it together," Devlin said.

In terms of community partners, Devlin noted that it's "really whoever wants to be involved. But we do have a core planning team: Werner Books and Pressed, since they are the independent booksellers that are located within the city limits, the Erie County Library and the Friends of the

Library, Erie Arts and Culture, Hooked on Books, the Rotary Club, the United Way, the county executive, and the superintendent have all been involved." Churman shares, "My whole deal is community building; it's so nice and refreshing to have the support for this, not just from other businesses and nonprofits, but from City Hall." He continues, "Getting people out and about and together is so important."

Both Devlin and Churman are encouraging citizens, business owners, and nonprofit leaders to think creatively about ways in which to incorporate reading and literacy into projects and events they may already have planned. Churman says he's been in contact with local businesses like Ember + Forge, which already regularly host sunrise beach meet-ups, to include a reading component. He's spoken with his old neighbor Darrell Roberts of Triple D's who now runs the former Red Hot Restaurant on Parade Street about coming by to do kids book give-

always this summer. And anything like this can be added to the city's fluid digital Summer Recreation Guide if it's both open to the public and involved with literacy. It's all about figuring out as many ways as possible to get people to read more.

All of this is just the beginning, but the idea has created a foundation. Devlin concludes, "It's just a start. We definitely want to build from here. We would encourage people to come forward as the summer goes on – and if you have an idea, send it to us. This is the time for everyone to start thinking big about this."

Some literacy-related events to mark on your calendar this summer (for a complete listing, scan the QR code provided):

Erie County Public Library: Summer Library Program // June 20 - Aug. 22 // Summer Reading Kickoff happens Saturday, June 20 at Blasco Library from noon to 3 p.m.

Hooked on Books // Mondays and Tuesdays, June 15 - July 14 // Erie's Public Schools Elementary Locations // During each visit, students will receive brand-new, thematically selected books, with opportunities for read-alouds and related activities

Rotary Club of Erie: Reading with Rotary // Monday, July 8 from noon to 3 p.m. // McKinley Park, 1000 E. 23rd St. // Ages: 5 to 18 // erierotary.club

If you can't find Erin Phillips reading, you can find her here: erin@eriereader.com



This QR code will take you to the city's Summer Rec guide which includes a special section dedicated to any event taking place in the City of Erie that has a literacy component.

The Improbable and Tragically Short Presidency of James Garfield

Nation's 20th president pushed back against Gilded Age corruption

By: Jonathan Burdick

Just a short drive away from Erie, in Mentor, Ohio is the James A. Garfield National Historic Site, an estate known in its times as Lawnfield. If you don't know much or even *anything* about James Abram Garfield or his family, you're not alone. While a 2014 study by the journal *Science* found that Chester A. Arthur (Garfield's successor), Franklin Pierce, and Millard Fillmore are the "worst-remembered" presidents, it is fair to say that many people don't know much more about Garfield beyond his sharing of a name with a lasagna-loving orange tabby and, perhaps, his eventual fate.

James Garfield was always an unlikely presidential candidate. To this day, he remains the *only* sitting U.S. Representative to win the presidential election and ascend directly to the White House. As Garfield wrote in his diary in 1879, a mere year before accepting his party's improbable nomination: "Few men in our history have ever obtained the Presidency by planning to obtain it." By the following summer, Garfield was running for President of the United States and operating a fascinating campaign from the front porch of his Ohio home.

Garfield, if an unlikely presidential candidate, was still a well-known politician. In his long congressional career, he'd made a name for himself in his association with the Half Breeds, one of the Republican Party's competing factions. This faction, led by Speaker of the House and then-Senator James G. Blaine, pushed back against the party bosses and machines that ruled the political system. This was an era of significant Gilded Age corruption, cronyism, and fraud, realities not lost on Garfield, who deeply understood the machine politics of his time. The opposing faction was the Stalwarts, led by New York's powerful Roscoe Conkling, the crooked "king of the spoils system."

Rewind to a few years earlier on July 4, 1876. Congressman Garfield, or *General* Garfield as the press often described him due to his Civil War heroics, gave a speech to commemorate the Declaration of Independence's centennial anniversary. In it, he directly addressed this

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Lawnfield, the home that was once the residence of James Garfield, is now a house museum, just a little over an hour's drive from Erie. There is no fee to visit the site and parking is free. From June through October, the ground and Visitor Center are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with daily guided house tours offered throughout the day.

growing government malfeasance.

"Now more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress," he proclaimed. "If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature."

His constituents, perhaps sensing these were not merely empty words, rewarded him with another term that fall – and, only a few years later, the nation would do the same by sending him to the White House.

Garfield was, as explained by the White House Historical Association, "the last of the log cabin presidents," born on a farm in Ohio's Cuyahoga County on Nov. 19, 1831. His family struggled financially, worsened by his father Abram's death in 1833 following a fire. This left his mother Eliza to raise the five Garfield chil-

dren on her own. Young James loved his mother deeply, but longed for the father he never really knew. He was often solitary and spent much of his time reading, citing Charles Dickens and specifically *David Copperfield* as among his favorites. He also loved being outdoors and dreamed of someday being a sailor.

At 17, having survived the "chaos of childhood," as he described it (which included a year of working on canal boats between Cleveland and Pittsburgh), Garfield was unsure what to do with his future. He soon enrolled at the Geauga Seminary. He was an excellent student. He had a knack for languages and was captivated by the power of public speaking. "I love agitation and investigation and glory in defending unpopular truth against popular error," he wrote.

It was there he met Lucretia Rudolph. In 1858, they married at the Rudolph estate in Hiram, where the two were employed as teachers at the Western Reserve Eclectic



In 1862, Garfield led forces in the Battle of Middle Creek during the Civil War, after which he was promoted from colonel to brigadier general at age 31.

Institute (later renamed Hiram College). In 1861, he was admitted to the Ohio bar. This was around the time he began dabbling in state politics. Then, the Civil War erupted.

Garfield, already an outspoken abolitionist, spent the early months of the war focusing on recruitment before earning a commission as a colonel in the 42nd Ohio Infantry regiment. In 1862, he led forces in the Battle of Middle Creek, which led to his promotion to brigadier general at age 31. Following his survival at the Battle of Shiloh later that year, he returned to Ohio to recuperate from an illness. He was convinced during this time to run for a seat in the House of Representatives. He won and received President Abraham Lincoln's blessing to resign from his military commission to serve in Congress. Garfield was soon associated with the Radical Republicans faction of the party alongside Senator Charles Sumner and Representative Thaddeus Stevens.

Following the war and Lincoln's assassination, Garfield addressed the president's death on the House floor. "It was no one man who killed Abraham Lincoln," he said. "It was the embodied spirit of treason and slavery, inspired with fearful and despairing hate, that struck him down in the moment of the Nation's supremest joy."

As part of the Reconstruction era Congress, Garfield desired to make a lasting difference. "I am trying to do two things," he wrote in an 1867

letter. "[D]are to be a radical and not be a fool, which, if I may judge by the exhibitions around me, is a matter of no small difficulty." During "piping times of peace," normal political maneuvering was needed, but, he argued, only the radicals "ever ac-

"Now more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in national legislature." – James Garfield in address to Congress on July 4, 1876

complished anything in a great crisis." This included full citizenship for those freed from slavery, including the right to vote for the men.

"The chief duty of government is to keep the peace and stand out of the sunshine of the people," he alleged. Over the next decade, he would prove himself a skilled, intellectual, and respected congressman. In June 1880, he gave a speech in support of Ohio politician John Sherman's presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago. This speech was so well-received that it inspired a campaign to nominate a reluctant Garfield as a "dark horse"

candidate instead.

It's a long and fascinating tale itself, but the CliffsNotes: after plenty of deadlock and drama (and 36 ballots), Garfield, to the shock of many, emerged as the compromise candidate. Chester A. Arthur, a close ally of Stalwart rival Roscoe Conkling, was selected as his running mate.

Following his nomination, Garfield traveled back home to Mentor. Over the following months, his Lawnfield homestead transformed into a hub of excitement and activity with *thousands* of visitors leading up to the November election – as many as 15 to 17 thousand, according to the National Park Service.

While actively campaigning for oneself was generally frowned upon during this political era, candidates still maneuvered behind the scenes. Garfield traveled to New York City to assure Stalwarts that they wouldn't be iced out of his administration if he gained their support. While there, he addressed thousands in Madison Square Park in what became known as his "Boys in Blue" speech.

"Gentlemen, ideas outlive men,

declared. "[A]nd amid the very thunders of battle, we made a covenant with him, sealed both with his blood and with ours. ... [T]o grant suffrage to the black man in this country is not innovation, but restoration." These views and his impressive oratory earned Garfield the support of famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

"James A. Garfield must be our president," said Douglass in a meeting at the Cooper Institute in New York. "He has shown us how man in the humblest circumstances can grapple with man, rise, and win. He has come from obscurity to fame and we'll make him more famous."

Back in Mentor that October, a group of 400 young men traveled by rail from Cleveland to Lawnfield to meet Garfield. "I know of nothing quite like this in our history," remarked Garfield to the excitable crowd, their visit which he described as "a compliment of the highest sort." Before seeing them all, he quipped, he had still considered himself a young man. The crowd erupted in laughter and applause. "[T]hey tell me that you are to cast our first national vote," he noted. "If that is so, young man as I am, I was a voter before any of you were born."

Garfield veered away from politics and emphasized the importance of one's home. He stood only 15 miles from where he spent his childhood, he said, and to him, there was nothing "half equal in glory" to being "here at home" with his family.

"[There] is a delusion that affects ... particularly the young men – the delusion that good things and great things are some way off, yonder, away, abroad," he observed. He said that among his own generation, they wrongly believed that glory and greatness were something achieved far away from home. Experiencing the world to "enlarge our minds" had value, but, Garfield stressed, accomplishing great things can be done where one comes from as well. He then added that "nothing to me in this world is so inspiring as the possibilities that lie locked up in the head and breast" of the youth before him. "Such guardians, such defenders will keep the Republic pure and keep it free," he concluded.

The election against opponent Winfield Scott Hancock was on Nov. 2, 1880. While the popular vote separating the two was a razor-thin

2,000 votes and *both* won 19 states, Garfield carried the electoral college: 214 to Hancock's 155.

"The Town is all excitement. It is indeed an occasion of rejoicing such as Mentor never experienced before," a report read the following day. Garfield's neighbors were "like schoolboys out for a holiday." Cheers were "hearty and frequent." Lawnfield was swarmed by supporters. "Amid all this scene of excitement," the report continued, "the coolness and self-possession of the President-elect was something remarkable." Lucretia stood by his side with "a look of happiness and deep affection."

Garfield was inaugurated as the 20th President of the United States on March 4, 1881. As many hoped, he challenged Conkling and his Stalwarts from the beginning. He tackled civil service reforms. He began pushing for civil rights legislation. Sadly, President Garfield would never get the chance to see many of his ideas through.

On July 2, 1881, while walking through a D.C. railroad station with

his two sons, Secretary of State James G. Blaine, and Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln, an unstable Charles Guiteau, obsessed with Garfield and his presidency, stalked and then shot him. Guiteau was quickly detained while Garfield was taken to a room inside the station to be examined.

"Tell [Lucretia] I am seriously hurt," he insisted. "How seriously I cannot yet say."

As the weeks passed and his body fought infection, it became more and more serious. While battling weakness and waves of delirium, he would speak of Mentor and Lawnfield, of "meeting and greeting old friends" along the familiar Ohio roads. "He talks of little else," it was reported on Aug. 26, 1881. He desired little more than to go home, but as the report grimly stated: "He will die if he is moved. He will die if he remains." After a few more weeks of agony, James A. Garfield died on Sept. 19, 1881.

A few years later, at the unveiling of a statue honoring Garfield, future President William McKinley, another

Ohioan who himself would be assassinated shortly into his second term, eulogized his friend Garfield as a "leader and master."

"[N]ot by combination of scheming, not by chicanery or caucus, but by the force of his cultivated mind, his keen and farseeing judgment, his unanswerable logic, his strength and power of speech, his thorough comprehension of the subjects of legislation," said McKinley.

Today, Garfield's legacy continues to be honored at Lawnfield, just a little over an hour's drive from Erie. There is no fee to visit the site and parking is free. From June through October, the ground and Visitor Center are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with daily guided house tours offered throughout the day. They also offer two cell phone tours (accessible at jaga.oncell.com): one as a general overview of the Garfield estate, the second covering the 1880 presidential campaign. The National Park Service describes the home-*stead*, where Garfield "greet[ed] thousands of well-wishers during his presidential campaign" as "a

gateway to the story of the Garfield family."

In 2013, The Washington Post editorial board published that Garfield, who was as human as anyone, "may have been the best president we never had, or hardly had." It's possible that President Garfield is finally having a moment. In 2025, Netflix dramatized his ascent to the presidency in the extremely well-received limited series *Death by Lightning* in which Michael Shannon portrayed him. This was adapted from 2011's *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President* by Candice Millard. A more recent biography that delves further into his life is 2023's *James Garfield: From Radical to Unifier* by C.W. Goodyear.

"The lesson of history is rarely learned by the actors themselves," Garfield once wrote. Perhaps some of those lessons from Garfield's life can be learned by us today.

Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com

Your Time is Valuable

Wait for Minutes, Not Hours

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MEDICAL CENTER

Emergency Department

Average ER Wait Time: April 2026
17 Minutes



Average wait time from check-in to exam room based on data from April 1-26 2026.

Bird of the Month: Black-throated Blue Warbler

Spring jewels of the forest

By: Mary Birdsong

This is the month area birders live for. May, when beautiful songbirds travel through Erie heading to their nesting grounds to the north. All of them have on their “party clothes,” which are their colorful breeding plumage.

One of the May jewels that visits Erie is the Black-throated Blue Warbler. This species is sexually dimorphic with the male and female strikingly different from one another. The male is truly distinctive: he is a bright blue on the head and back, with a clean white stomach and a black face and throat. The female has an olive-blue back and crown, white around the eyes and a yellow or dirty white chest and stomach. They both share a distinctive field mark – a small white patch mid-wing that’s often called a handkerchief. This field mark helps to identify the more non-descript female.

Another delight of spring migration is birds singing their sweet songs regularly. In Black-throated Blues, it’s the

male that does most of the singing, although scientists have recorded the female singing on occasion. They sing a rising buzzy three- or five-note song that stops birders in their tracks for a look.

Black-throated Blue Warblers don’t nest in Erie County often – the first documented nest in the county was in 2022. But they do nest nearby, especially in the higher elevations of Warren County. Their nesting range reaches from southern Ontario and Quebec, the New England states, and south through New York into Georgia along the Appalachian range. They winter on islands of the Caribbean Sea and in Central America, which means they fly approximately 2,000 miles or more to get here. If they’re headed to the northern-most reaches of their range, add another 900 miles to that flight.

For a bird that weighs less than half an ounce, this is a remarkable feat, one appreciated by local birders

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Look for the distinctive “handkerchief,” or white patch mid-wing on both the male (left) and female (right) Black-throated Blue Warblers, who otherwise differ greatly in appearance. Listen for the sweet springtime songs of these long-distance travelers as they spend some time in our area.

who get to briefly experience these long-distance travelers as they stop to feed and rest at Presque Isle.

If you want your chance to see one up close, the Erie Bird Observatory bird banding station is open weekends (Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.) until the end of May, weather permitting. There, trained and permitted banders safely catch birds in very light nets and put numbered metal bands on their legs. It doesn’t take long and the birds are handled

very carefully. Educators are standing by to explain the banding procedure and why banding is important to conservation. Visitors can watch the banding take place and if they are lucky just might see a beautiful Black-throated Blue or another spring jewel that sets our hearts aflutter during their brief stopover here in Erie.

Mary Birdsong is the lead shorebird monitor for Erie Bird Observatory. Learn more at eriebirdobservatory.org. Mary can be reached at mbirdsong@eriereader.com

Celebrate 170 years of the Benedictine Sisters in Erie!



Anniversary Liturgy
Sunday, June 14
9:30 AM



Saturday, June 20
6:00-9:00 PM



Mount Saint Benedict
Open House

Saturday, July 11
2:00 - 5:00 PM



St. Benedict Academy
Open House

Sunday, July 26
1:00 - 4:00 PM

 **Benedictine Sisters** of Erie
Event details at eriebenedictines.org



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Register for the all ages Summer Library Program at Erie County Public Library!

- Complete challenges for a chance to win prizes
- Join exciting and enriching programs
- Celebrate the stories that shape our America

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

SUMMER READING CELEBRATION

12pm to 3pm
Blasco Memorial Library
160 E. Front Street | Erie, PA
erielibrary.org

 **ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Making a Small City Smaller: Park Bench Power Rankings

What makes a good (and bad) park bench

By: Dave Tamulonis

If we want to discuss what makes a good park bench, we first must discuss what makes a bad park bench. And to answer that, we need to talk about the most important aspect of public space: access. That is, its public-ness. A good piece of public infrastructure should be judged by how accessible, easy to use, well-maintained, obvious, and universally necessary it is. This could apply to benches, as well as picnic tables, trash cans, curb bump outs, street-lights, and so forth. A good trash can is easy to see, emptied often, easy to use, and placed in an area where it is needed. A bad trash can is hidden behind bushes, never emptied out, too tall for children to utilize it, and in an area that rarely sees foot traffic or garbage. In summary, not all public infrastructure is created equal. There are many reasons a park bench may be bad, and unlike trash cans, many are designed that way on purpose.

Enter: **hostile architecture**. Hostile architecture is a piece of the built environment that is specifically designed to discourage “undesired” use. When it comes to park benches, this design could take the form of bars down the middle to discourage sleeping, a bench too narrow to comfortably sit on for too long, inconvenient length or width, angled seats, or even seats with spikes in them. It should be clear by now that the term “undesired use” mainly targets the use of these assets by the unhoused. We use the term “loitering” as a broad, negative, catch-all term to describe the exact behavior planners and designers of public spaces wish to encourage, but loitering is often more about the person engaging in the behavior than the behavior itself.

It should go without saying that every park should be designed to encourage people to spend time there. The rise of hostile architecture doesn't just restrict undesired use, it creates an environment that is hostile to the types of activities that make public spaces healthy and vibrant. When we discourage use by some populations, all populations feel that hostility and the trust placed in the public by planners and designers has been broken. This creates spaces that feel unwell-

coming and cities that feel unhealthy and lack vibrancy. If we don't accept all the uses *and* users of a park bench, suddenly you've created a park bench that doesn't encourage any use at all – whose existence is meaningless.

Conversely, trusting people to responsibly use a park bench has compounding effects on the quality of life in a city. Well-designed and inclusive spaces encourage gatherings and foot traffic which lead to increased economic activity. We should strive to address the root causes of the issues we find in public life, not slap a band-aid on the symptoms of a broken system. I addressed this briefly in my article about bike lanes and electric bicycles, but the regulatory “necessities” tend to fall away if public spaces are designed correctly to be inclusive of all needs.

Now on to my Top Three Park Benches in City of Erie parks, our local shining examples of how to generously provide respite and hospitality for pedestrians. At number three, I have the park bench in Frontier Park that sits overlooking the wetland area

The rise of hostile architecture doesn't just restrict undesired use, it creates an environment that is hostile to the types of activities that make public spaces healthy and vibrant. When we discourage use by some populations, all populations feel that hostility and the trust placed in the public by planners and designers has been broken.

right off the footpath. Frontier has many amazing park benches, including that one Rolls Royce-type curved park bench overlooking the sledding hill, but the bench overlooking the wetland is unique in two ways that sets it apart from the others: its convenient location right off the walking path and its orientation away from the path and toward the scenery. You'll notice a pattern in these choices: location matters. The first step in providing hospitality to pedestrians (or providing any public good) is to take into consideration what your audience needs and wants. Don't give me a park bench facing the walkway I just took a break from – give me a view! This one is particularly beautiful in the morning when mist and sun combine



DAVE TAMULONIS

This month, Dave Tamulonis points out something most folks don't often think about: park benches. He takes a tour of three different benches, moving between each end of the city, to enjoy our local landscape while considering the implications of the choices made by park designers and planners.

to create a truly unique landscape in the wetland area that you wouldn't believe is within the city limits.

At number two: the swinging blue benches in Bayview Park that overlook the bluff and the Bayfront. These relatively new additions to Bayview Park are already some of the best elements of any park in the city. They

are wide, strong porch swing-style benches that glide smoothly back and forth with a panoramic view of the marinas and boats of the bay. Their installation at Bayview Park leveled up what was already one of the best parks in the city and their design communicates an enormous amount of trust in its intended audience. Their location right off the Bayfront promenade provides an easy exit for walkers to take a break, and the fact that they swing adds an extremely rare element of whimsy (imagine that!) to what could have otherwise been just a plain, static bench.

And at number one, I have a bench from what I believe to be one of the most underrated parks in the city: the bench overlooking the East Bayfront

and Lake Erie at Andrews Park at the foot of Park Way on the East Side. While the bench is not near a path, it makes up for this by having possibly the most majestic view of any bench in the city. The entirety of Andrews Park (a relatively small single parcel of land) seems to exist just for this one bench! The park could even be described as a “parklet,” a small park that's usually the product of vacant lot reuse. The view encompasses the east end of Presque Isle and Gull Point as well as the vastness of Lake Erie to the East and North. In an area where most of the lakeshore is privately owned, Andrews Park is an oasis of public access. This is a great spot to watch ships come into the channel like during the Parade of Sails at Tall Ships Festival. A small waterfall and a rock shelf to the left of the bench provide a soft ambience and the peaceful residential area provides an opportunity to see plenty of wildlife that wouldn't be seen in the busier parts of the West Bayfront and Downtown. Overall, one of the most hidden gems in the Gem City.

Happy spring and happy sitting! Go use your public assets before they design them all away (or sell them to the highest bidder).

Dave Tamulonis is an educator and musician living in Erie. He is the director of grants at the City of Erie and lives in the West Bayfront with his wife Marissa, dog Esthera Minerva, and cat Cherry Blossom.

Edwina Tries... A Book Club

Erie Reader Book Club is relaxed, inviting, and fun

By: Edwina Capozziello

I love books and have for as long as I can remember. I love libraries, bookstores, and looking at other people's bookshelves. I cannot resist buying more books, even though my to-be-read list is longer than I could ever finish in a lifetime. So, it's surprising that while I am part of a virtual group that shares what we're reading and I have been to a script-reading group, I have never been a part of a proper book club. That all recently changed when I joined the Erie Reader Book Club at Werner Books for their April meeting.

If you've never made your way to Werner Books and Coffee, what in the world are you waiting for? The place is great. Owned by the super-duo husband-and-wife team Lauren Shoemaker and Kyle Churman (both 40 Under 40 Class of 2023), it is welcoming and cozy, and literally has a book club for everyone. Seriously, check out their website and join one. I chose to get my feet wet with the Reader's April selection: *Ready Player*

One by Ernest Cline.

I recently made peace with listening to more audiobooks, a decision I'd previously shamed myself for, and since doing so, I have majorly increased the number of books I consume. In preparation for the book club, I listened to *RP1* read by Wil Wheaton and enjoyed it. Once I finished the book, I watched the Spielberg film. Take it from me... read the book, skip the movie. Although club regular Victoria would disagree.

The book club was really fun; everyone was into it, participating while politely disagreeing and making room for others' opinions. I joined the circle in a choice, comfy seat on the brown leather couch near the front window. There was a coffee table and a rug, giving everything a very homey, living-room feel. The group was led by the Reader's own Erin Phillips and Ally Kutz, as well as Churman. Book club was well attended but not overcrowded, and I was excited to pick up a de-

CONTRIBUTED



If you haven't heard yet, the City of Erie has dubbed the summer of 2026 as the Summer of Reading. What better way to get back into the habit than by joining a book club? This month Edwina tries out the Erie Reader Book Club, hosted on the last Sunday of each month at Werner Books and Coffee.

licious iced coffee from the on-site cafe.

The Reader's book club, made up of staff, contributors, and the community, is open to anyone interested in attending. May's pick is *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich. I cannot wait to head back to Werner Books and see what everyone thinks of this one, especially A.J. and Sara, who were not shy about their dislike of April's selection. Give it a read, then come and

grab a coffee, a snack, and a seat next to me. See you there.

The Erie Reader Book Club meets on the last Sunday of the month, 1 p.m., Werner Books and Coffee, 3608 Liberty St.

Edwina is Erie's (self-proclaimed) biggest fan who loves being a tourist in our own town. If you have an idea of something new she should try you can email her at edwina.capozziello@gmail.com

2026 Annual Sportsmans Raffle



HUNT OF A LIFETIME

Saturday, August 15, 2026

1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Doors Open at 12:30 p.m.

Edinboro Fire Hall

125 Meadville St., Edinboro, PA 16412

DONATION 1 for \$20.00 or 3 for \$50.00

For Information or Tickets call 814-881-2219 or 814-572-4387

Tickets Available at: Ace Supply/Harborcreek/Iroquois Ave.;

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The Reader Beat Recap: May 2026

A summary of April meetings

By: Alana Sabol

The Reader Beat aims to cover city and county council meetings as well as other important government and community-related meetings. All of the city council meetings had discussions revolving around affordability and development in the city. These discussions reflected constituents' concerns about rising rent prices, apartment maintenance, and increasing development along the bayfront. The following is a summary of each meeting for the month of April:

City Council Apr. 1: The meeting began with a presentation on the proposed Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) fund allocation. An initiative on improving literacy in the city was proposed. "Literacy, as we've talked about, is a social justice issue in the City of Erie. We have way too many kids who are reading under grade level," Mayor Devlin said, explaining that someone would be hired to oversee programs funded by the CDBG or others to ensure there are literacy components. During public comments, constituents addressed increased cost of living in Erie. Constituent Marty Nwachukwu (40 Under 40 Class of 2019) mentioned the continuing war with Iran and the fuel crisis happening worldwide. "Rent is expensive, utilities have been expensive, healthcare costs are hitting people," Nwachukwu said, referencing that wages in Pennsylvania have not increased in nearly 10 years. "We need to declare a cost of living crisis not only here in the City of Erie, but here in the county, so that we can go to the state delegation and the governor and ask for funds to be released from the Rainy Day Fund." During committee reports, Councilman Horton commented on the contrast between public comments talking about severe pest problems in their apartments and the public hearing for the new Bayfront hotel. "I think there are some continuing conversations to be had with the health department and our building codes people to see to their synergy and intersectionality, because some of these places should be condemned," Horton said. "We know that people live in those conditions for fear of being on the street."

Following the public hearing on March 18, the resolution to transfer a liquor license from The Sandbar Drafthouse & Grille, previously located at 2835 West Lake Road to be used at the restaurant facility on 2104 Hampton Road passed unanimously. However, City Council members expressed their concerns about another bar in the area and emphasized the responsibility of keeping a bar safe in a residential area. "You need security and you need patrons that are being held responsible for their actions," Councilwoman Schaaf said. "We need to hold restaurants, bars, and anyone who has a liquor license accountable. We don't want bad situations for your neighborhood."

County Council Apr. 7: There were few public comments during this meeting. However, Constituent Cyndi Treiber shared that in February she attempted to reach out and discuss with district police chiefs about policies and protocols but received little to no response after multiple follow-ups in March. "I know that you can help. I know that this is important. I'm a 52-year-old white woman from a law enforcement family asking for help, and if you don't help me, no one ... is going to believe that you will," Treiber said. The 2026 General Fund Budget revised expenditures of \$18,849 for salary increases to the Prison Fund Budget passed 5-2 with Copeland and Drexel voting no.

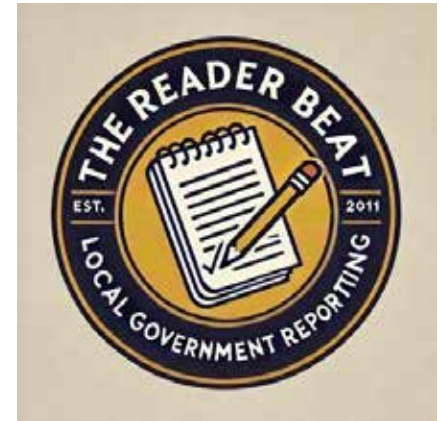
City Council Apr. 15: Many constituents attended to speak on the proposed market house project on the bayfront as well as affordability issues in the city like higher rent and utilities. The market house plans include a two story mixed-use building east of the previous GAF site adjacent to the Bayfront Convention Center that will carry Erie-made products from a variety of small vendors. Megan Loney of POH Architects discussed the proposed layout, including sidewalks and ornamental landscaping. "We hope to inform future development of the waterfront commercial campus, promoting growth and posterity in the community," Loney said.

Constituents had mixed feelings

about the project. Freda Tepfer encouraged the team to use native plants in the landscaping as opposed to nonnative ornamentals. Other constituents had hope for the project yet also expressed concerns around vague statements of what the market would include. "I do wish that there was more intention behind what is actually going to be in this building and I hope that comes out sooner rather than later," Cole Schenley said. Constituent Sydney Zimmerman added that she's unable to make an informed decision on whether she is for or against the project. "We've got to get a little more creative to ensure that we don't have another repeat of what happened in Perry Square," Zimmerman said, explaining that the previous business combining Gordon's Meat Market and Erie Food Co-op in the space ultimately became a Country Fair. "It wasn't successful; it wasn't meeting the needs of the community. I really think we need to be thoughtful in meeting the needs of the community."

During committee reports following public comments discussing affordability and maintenance of rental properties, councilwoman Flores said: "When I hear all of this development going on and that we're trying to attract more people to these areas – we're forgetting the people who are in the poorest zip code who can't afford these amenities." An ordinance appropriating \$350,000 for the construction phase of the Erie Loop Bikeway French Street Project passed unanimously.

County Council Apr. 21: During public comments, some constituents discussed transparency in county government and brought up concerns about Erie County Re-entry Services and Support Alliance (ECRSSA) being disbanded and reinstated under the Adult Probation Department, including the appropriation of \$175,484 and five new positions. The ordinance for this action passed unanimously without a first reading on Feb. 26. The personnel meeting on Feb. 19 that discussed this ordinance was not recorded, even though personnel meetings have been recorded and posted



online since 2024. Constituents like Michelle Dovishaw called into question the reason for dissolving a program that ran successfully since 2016, explaining that having it run under the jurisdiction of the county's probation department would be counterproductive. "Probation decides if you're acting accordingly or not, and then sends you back to prison or jail. This is a problem and a conflict of interest," Michelle Dovishaw said. "You also have the fear in this city from parolees and probationers resulting from July 2 when Marchello Woodard was killed by his state parole officer."

"You all voted to make a \$371,219 budget for a brand new program that has not been created yet, that is still not manned," Cyndi Treiber said. "This was presented to you as an alliance, a project that was not receiving funding." However, Treiber went on to explain that ECRSSA was receiving funding, in part from the District Attorney's office, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the Erie Community Foundation, and the YMCA. Councilman Copeland explained his vote on the ordinance back in February, saying, "That program had been funded by a hodgepodge of several different grants. One thing that it never had was a local contribution. The DA's money, the PCCD's money, is passed through the state and I think it's really important that the county actually contribute and make a meaningful effort to assist in re-entry efforts."

Coming up this month:

County Council: May 5 at 6 p.m.

City Council: May 6 at 9 a.m.

City Council: May 20 at 6:30 p.m.

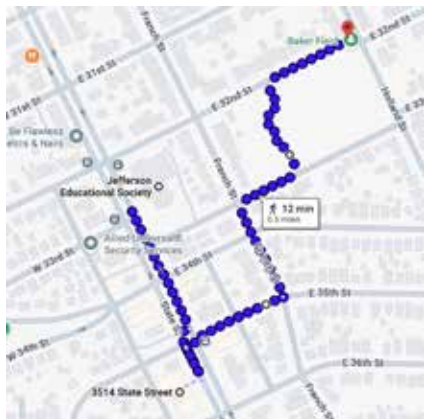
Take Your Beer For a Walk: May 2026

The Academy Neighborhood

By: Jeff McCullor

Welcome, local beer fan, to another edition of city exploration with a beer in-hand. We're going to take a zip through a part of town that's quiet, personable, with trees lining practically every street – the Academy Neighborhood in South Central Erie. Grab your favorite local beer, lace up your sneakers, and let's roll!

Erie's Academy Neighborhood is situated toward the southern point of Erie's city axis, running from State Street to Old French Road and East 27th Street to East 37th Street. Give them a Google search and you'll find periodic neighborhood meet-ups, access to improvement grants, a National Night Out celebration, and a tool lending library for residents in need of that one tool they'll use a single time without having to buy it.



Sounds pretty neighborly to me!

We'll begin our monthly trip by starting at the corner of West 32nd and State streets, a corner occupied by the Jefferson Educational Society. The Jefferson has played a prominent role in Erie since 2008, providing lectures, courses, and seminars to keep your brain in tip-top shape. Their annual Global Summit brings speakers like former president Barack Obama, astrophysicist Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson, journalist Judy Woodruff, and so many more. Back in 2013, this writer helped with the Perry 200, a broad celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie. Does anyone remember the 100,000 people watching the parade down West 12th Street? I sure do. Cheers to you, Jefferson Educational Society!

From here we'll head south along State Street to 3514 State, home to Erie News Now. You honestly can't miss the building, it's the only one in the area with a giant antenna in their backyard. Most likely you're familiar with the content this building churns out on a daily basis offering television affiliate broadcasts for WICU and WSEE and housing a radio station, HAPPI 92.7. Local news coverage is important and helps us stay zeroed in on our community's issues and happenings – cheers to you, Erie News Now!



JEFF MCCULLOR

Take a walk (with or without beer) with Jeff McCullor as he explores the Academy neighborhood of south central Erie – taking a leisurely jaunt around the Jefferson Educational Society's building, the Erie News Now building, and Baker Field.

Fun fact before we move along with our beer, the neighborhood layout behind Erie News Now actually features *curved* streets, an unusual feature in Erie's usual grid-oriented street layout. Crazy, right?

Next, let's carry our pint east along East 35th Street. A two-block journey will land you at French Street, turn left here, heading north. Remember when I said the neighborhood was tree-lined? Holy maple leaves Batman! They're everywhere and it's wonderful! Three blocks later along French, turn right onto East 32nd Street. A hundred more paces will reward you with a clearing on your right side,

home to Baker's Field. Honoring Isaac Baker, a prominent men's clothing maker and business owner, the area's general-purpose park and recreation spot offers a soccer field, gentle walking path, and some picnic tables to enjoy, well, a local beer? Cheers to you, you beautiful bit of green space!

May is a great month to take a stroll with (or without, I guess) your pint. Thanks for coming along with me exploring Erie's Academy Neighborhood. Keep drinking, and walking, local!

Jeff McCullor is the co-owner of Erie Ale Works. He can be reached at jeff@eriealeworks.com

CALL. EMAIL. WRITE. 



Gem City Style: May 2026

An interview with Kelly Dundul  of Bell's Blooms Flower Company

By: Jessica Hunter

It was a warm spring afternoon when I pulled up to the farmhouse in Millcreek where Kelly Dundul  grows her flowers and operates her flower studio. The tulips were almost finished for the season – their last days, she'd tell me later – and the ground was being turned over in preparation for something new. Kelly showed me around then we sat on the front porch, easy and unhurried, the kind of person who seems entirely at home in the place they've made for themselves. There was a breeze and the air had that particular warmth Erie makes you wait all winter for.

Bella's Blooms Flower Company is a locally owned flower farm and studio tucked into Millcreek where Kelly grew up. She left Erie at 18, convinced, unfortunately like a lot of us, that there wasn't much here for her. She spent years away, built a career as a CPA, and moved around the country. Then she came back. "When I lived in LA, you couldn't get anywhere in 10 minutes," she said, laughing. Her commute now is less than that.

The farm started the way a lot of unexpected things do – slowly, almost accidentally, during COVID. Kelly and her husband Matt lived on land that had never been actively farmed. She'd grown vegetables successfully. She'd thrown out some sunflowers and cosmos, and they took off. So she got curious. "I got on YouTube trying to figure out how to grow ranunculus," she told me. What she found were flower farmer videos – people sharing their process, their fields, their lives – and something clicked. "I had never met a flower farmer. It had never dawned on me that was actually a business you could start."

By January 2022, Bella's Blooms was becoming real. The name belongs to her late cat – a gray tabby who followed Kelly across the country and back.

I asked Kelly what she wants people to understand about locally grown flowers, the thing she wishes more Erie residents knew before reaching for the grocery store bunch. Her answer was direct. "They're a totally different product," she said. "They serve the same need, but locally grown flowers are seasonal. What's avail-

able in April is different from August and different from October." Grocery store flowers, she explained, are bred specifically for the global supply chain – engineered to survive weeks of transportation and storage, which means the traits we actually love about flowers, the scent, the variation, the organic softness, get bred out. And then there's the sourcing. Many flowers in the mass market come from countries where wages are low, working conditions can be unsafe, and pesticides are used without adequate protection. Every stem has to be fumigated before crossing the border. "All of that processing before it ever gets to you," she said.

The alternative she's building is hyperlocal, seasonal, and alive in a way that commercial flowers simply aren't.

When I visited, Kelly was deep in the rhythm of early spring – one of the busiest stretches of the year. Mother's Day weekend is ahead, one of the farm's biggest events, when families can come out to the studio and pick up bouquets of her flowers. Warm-season planting was underway. Between 1,500 and 2,000 dahlia tubers were going in the ground. "We're always thinking of a whole year cycle down the road," she said. "Everything I learned from doing it this year, I don't get a chance to put that into practice for a whole other year."

The farm has grown steadily since that first season. A small CSA (community supported agriculture) launched early and was sold out within the first weeks of the year. This year the number of slots was expanded and they were still all taken by Valentine's Day. There are now weddings and events alongside the weekly flower drops at places like the Erie Food Co-op. And then there's the studio: a temperature-controlled, self-serve space on the property where patrons can walk in Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 9 to 3, choose a selection, and go. "Flowers don't love the elements," Kelly said of why she enclosed it rather than going full roadside stand. The studio keeps everything fresh, beautiful, accessible – stocked and ready when you are.

Kelly calls herself both a flower farmer and a florist, though she ad-



This month, Jessica Hunter visited Kelly Dundul  at her Millcreek flower farm Bella's Blooms – discussing the difference that locally grown flowers make environmentally and socially, as well as the business and art of flower farming.

mitted the second title still comes with a small edge of impostor syndrome. "Farming felt like I could say I'm a farmer," she said. "But florist – it feels like an art and a craft." She's claimed it anyway, practicing through friends' weddings, learning the design side the same way she learned the farming side: by doing it, season after season. This year she's trying calla lilies for the first time, following the trend back into wedding florals.

Erie's climate, she told me, is actually well-suited to certain flowers that struggle in warmer regions. Tulips need cold. So do peonies. "There's certain things that do well because our climate is what it is," she said. Roses, on the other hand, she's made peace with. "For the effort, I'm never going to grow roses of the same quality they grow in Ecuador." It's the kind of honest reckoning that good farmers make – knowing what the land gives you and working with it.

I asked her what farming has taught her about herself that she didn't expect. She paused, then laughed a little. "I really like control," she said. Accountants tend to, she acknowledged – there's a comfort in problems that have a single right answer. Farming offers no such thing. "Your business partner is mother nature." The flexibility it's forced on her, the willingness to let things be good enough, to trust that the crop is go-

ing to come – that's been the education. "Just letting that stuff go," she said, "and being able to embrace what's here."

The farm is a family operation. Matt manages the farm full-time and Kelly's parents pitch in too. The whole thing runs alongside her day job as director of finance and accounting at Accudyn Products, Inc.. She is, by any measure, doing a lot. But standing on that porch, watching the fields turn toward summer, it didn't feel like too much. It felt like exactly the right amount.

If you ask Kelly what flower she'd be, she answers without hesitation: a dahlia. "Dahlias have a ton of personality," she said. "So much variety – shapes, sizes, colors. They're really unique." She lit up sharing the fact that every seed saved from a dahlia flower head will grow into something completely different. Entirely new colors, entirely new forms. Dahlia season at Bella's Blooms runs from early August through late October. I'm already planning my visit.

To learn more about Bella's Blooms, visit bellasblooms.com

Gem City Style is a monthly column featuring an intimate profile of someone making a creative impact in Erie. If you or someone you know would make a good fit for a future Gem City Style, email jessica@eriereader.com

2026 Summer Events Preview

Celebrate summer in Erie with live music, food, and athletic, educational, and cultural experiences

By: Erin Phillips

While Erie might be known nationally for our higher-than-average snowfalls, those of us who live here know all the freezing temps, shoveling, bundling, and defrosting is worth it for our singularly stunning summers. Summer is the time when our Gem City truly glimmers.

With events encapsulating everything from live music (which literally happens every single night of the week), American and cultural food celebrations, beer and wine events, educational opportunities for adults and kids alike, regular farmers markets and vendor fairs, heritage celebrations, and county fairs – there is never not something going on in Erie in the summertime and we've done our best to list as many events as possible below.

While this list is quite long, it can never be exhaustive. But never fear, the Reader always has your back! Make sure you regularly check our online public events calendar for a daily listing of all the events happening throughout Erie County. This calendar is curated and updated by an actual human being (me!) and I do my best to catch as many goings-on as I can. If I missed your event, you can always enter your own and never be left off the schedule.

Summertime is swiftly upon us – and I say with certainty that we're all more than ready to welcome it! Let's go!

Let the Music Play: Local and Regional Live Music Events

Edinboro Art and Music Festival

May 14 - 17 // Various locations in downtown Edinboro // Free // edinboroartandmusic.com

Get the summer started in Edinboro – always the first to kick off the live music season is the Edinboro Art and Music Festival. This miniature SXSW takes place in multiple venues throughout the borough with live music, art vendors, food, drinks, and more.

Monday Music in the Woods

Mondays, June 1 - July 27, 6 to 8 p.m. // Celebration Garden, 4105 Asbury Rd. // Free // asburywoods.org

Enjoying Asbury Woods is easy – the well-preserved, beautifully maintained woodland oasis in our backyards – and every Monday through July it is enhanced with the sounds of live, local music.

14th Fest with EMTA

June 11, 5:30 to 10 p.m. // 14th Street between French and Holland // Free // ride-the-e.com

The fifth annual 14th Fest celebrates the block comprising the EMTA operations facility and will feature live music, local food trucks, breweries, children's activities, and more. This also marks the EMTA's 60th Anniversary of public service. Get on board!

Chautauqua Institution Summer Music Series

Select dates throughout the summer with concerts beginning Sunday, June 14 // Chautauqua Amphitheater, 31 Roberts Ave., Chautauqua, N.Y. // chq.org

Kicking off their 2026 summer music season strong as they host An Evening with Wilco on June 14, the folks from the Chautauqua Institution have a stacked summer schedule including shows from Harry Connick Jr., Indigo Girls, Trombone Shorty, Melissa Etheridge, Samara Joy, and more.

UPMC Sunset Music Series

Wednesdays, June 17 - July 22, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. // Free // Beach 11, Presque Isle State Park // discoverpi.com

What's better than live music on the beach? How's about live music on the beach with the world's third-best sunset as the backdrop? Support the Presque Isle Partnership while enjoying Erie's best natural resource.

Gazebo Concerts in the Park

June 18, July 16, and Aug. 13, 7 to 9 p.m. // Beute Park,

Iroquois Ave. // Free // lawrenceparktwp.org

Enjoy a trio of evenings with local live music in the square at Lawrence Park. The schedule includes Midnight Frolic, Denny and Heather Nemenz, and The Bully Pulpits. Bring your blankets or lawn chairs!

WQLN Sounds Around Town

June 19 - July 17 at 7:30 p.m. // In the wooded copse beside WQLN studios, 8425 Peach St. // Free // wqln.org/sat

Sounds Around Town is a free community concert running for four weeks and featuring local musicians. The sets are professionally recorded by the crew and aired on WQLN at a later date. It's a beautiful evening in a wooded setting – make sure you bring a donation for our beloved public media!

Goodell Gardens and Homestead Music of Origins Series

Friday, June 26, Friday, July 17, and Friday, Aug. 21 from 6 to 8 p.m. // Goodell Gardens and Homestead, 221 Waterford St., Edinboro // Free // goodellgardens.org

This year, the music at Goodell will have a cultural twist with their new Music of Origins series. Combining live music with short documentary-style segments which will explore how geography, migration, and community have shaped Erie's musical identity – these themes will vary from maritime,

JESSICA HUNTER, SYLVIA PHILLIPS, ERIN PHILLIPS



Enjoy loads of live music throughout the summer in Erie, including (clockwise from top left): 8 Great Tuesdays, Celebrate Erie, Frontier Fridays, and Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival.



Are you a small farmer or food entrepreneur ready to make products for retail sale?

The Kitchen at Edinboro Market is Erie County's first licensed Shared-Use Kitchen — a certified commercial space available to rent by the hour or day.

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MAY 23 NOON – 6:00PM

MAY 24 NOON – 6:00PM

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JULY 14 - 16

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JULY 21 - 23

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MAY 11

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OF A TRAITOR**

WITH BAD BLOOM AND
HALFPACE

MAY 13

**WOLVES AT
THE GATE**

WITH BLOODLINES +
HEAL THE HART

MAY 21

**THE BUNNY
THE BEAR**

WITH DIVIDE THE FALL +
UNHEALTHY WHILE
UNHINGED

MAY 22

BURY MIA



MAY 23

NOOB NITE

MAY 24

**BLOOD
VULTURE**

WITH FINAL GASP

MAY 27

GOZU

WITH RESTLESS SPIRIT

MAY 29

SADNESS

WITH SNOOZE, PAINS,
MOUNDS OF ORCHIDS

145 WEST 11TH STREET ERIE PA 16501



EAST

810 East 38th Street

459-1145

WEST

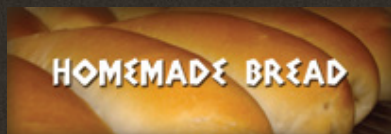
3201 Greengarden Blvd.

864-5322

Mondays & Tuesdays 9AM-6PM

Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays 9AM-8PM

Sundays 9AM-6PM



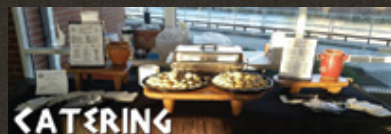
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Working with us will make a difference in your life, too. HYS Staff Members have access to an incredible benefits package including medical, dental, vision, life, and long-term disability insurance with low premiums and deductibles. Take advantage of our retirement savings plan, paid time off, and paid training in the latest evidence-based, trauma-focused treatment modalities that you won't find anywhere else.

We are currently hiring for the following positions:

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folk, Appalachian, blues, and global sounds. Bring some sandwiches, a blanket, and the whole family for a picnic style atmosphere, including a children's activity tent.

The Hootenanny 2026

June 26 - 27 // *Wattsburg Fairgrounds, 13998 Rt. 8* // \$20 presale, \$25 at the venue (for the whole weekend) // facebook.com/thehootenanyfestival

Metalheads love some summertime fun too, hence the annual Hootenanny! With a packed schedule, free camping, and vendors, this fest is super affordable and proceeds benefit the Veterans Miracle network.

Great Blue Heron

July 2 - 5 // *The Heron Farm and Event Center, 2361 Waits Corners Rd., Sherman, N.Y.* // greatblueheron.com

With music all day Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, featuring Donna the Buffalo on both weekend days and onsite camping, the Great Blue Heron has been the jam-lovers' summertime tradition for over 30 years.

Street Dances

July 3 and Aug. 4 from 7 to 9 p.m. // *Iroquois Elementary Parking Lot, 4231 Morse St.* // Free // lawrenceparktwp.org/parks-and-recreation

Friends and neighbors gather for the seventh annual fun, free night of dancing, featuring tunes from DJ Ray. August's event will also be a "color dance" in conjunction with the United Way's National Night Out.

8 Great Tuesdays

Tuesdays July 7 through Aug. 25, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. // *Highmark Amphitheater at Liberty Park, 828 W. Bayfront Pkwy.* // Free // porter.org/8greattuesdays

Tuesdays are great when you're in Erie on the bay! The annual, crowd-pleasing, free, summer music event (that just happens to have Erie's glistening bay as a backdrop) brings Pittsburgh's The Clarks, along with tribute acts and local favorites for eight straight great Tuesdays.

The 45th Annual Gathering at Chaffee's

July 24 - 25 // *8296 Mill St., Girard* // thegatheringatchaffees.com

For 45 years, the Chaffee family property has transformed into a music festival grounds for a weekend during the annual Gathering at Chaffee's – for lovers of jam, trance, hip-hop, folk, and rock genres, and camping out – the Gathering is a can't-miss yearly event.

Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival

Aug. 1 - 2 // *Frontier Park, Bayfront Parkway & W. 8th Streets* // Free // eriebluesandjazz.com

Winner of Best of Erie's Best Music Festival in 2025, everyone loves blues and jazz! Frontier Park is taken over for two days with non-stop blues, funk, jazz, and rock, with food, drinks, kids activities, art, and community vendors – Blues and Jazz is always a great time.

Frontier Fridays

Fridays, Aug. 7 - Oct. 2 // *Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St., Patricia McCain Outdoor Amphitheater* // Free // leaferie.org/pages/events

Bring a chair or a blanket, some snacks, and a willingness to enjoy yourself as folks gather around the amphitheater at Frontier to hear some local tunes. Frontier Fridays wind down the summer season with a gradual ease.

Celebrate Erie

Aug. 14 - 16 // *Downtown Erie* // Free // celebrateerie.com

In times of yore (aka the 1900s) this annual downtown festival was known as We Love Erie Days, and while the title has changed, the sentiment remains. Celebrate Erie is the much-anticipated opportunity to truly celebrate all things Erie – with local bands playing on multiple stages spread throughout the State Street corridor, local food and beverages, crafts, kids activities, and vendors while the main-stage highlights a local act alongside a nationally touring one for three nights. Stay tuned for upcoming announcements from Mayor Devlin and company as they announce who we can expect to get us dancing in the streets!

Homegrown Harvest Festival

Sunday, Sept. 20 // *Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford St., Edinboro* // Free // goodellgardens.org

One of the most beautiful ways to close out the harvest season and usher in autumn is out at Goodell Gardens for their annual Homegrown Harvest Festival, now in its 20th year. This free, fami-

ly-friendly celebration of all things local features farm vendors with homegrown produce, arts and crafts, musicians, performing artists and an opportunity for plenty of hands-on learning activities.

Our West Bayfront Porchfest

Saturday, Sept. 26 // *Various locations throughout the West Bayfront neighborhood* // Free // ourwestbayfront.org

Closing out the summer music events is always Our West Bayfront's annual Porch Fest, where local musical acts of all genres perform on the porches of residences and businesses throughout the West Bayfront neighborhood. A beautiful opportunity to walk around, enjoy the historic feel of the area, and casually enjoy some great tunes in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

Many watering holes throughout the city and county have regular outdoor summer music series, allowing you to enjoy and support some local musicians while you enjoy a cold drink, some snacks, and a laid back summer atmosphere. Be sure to check the Erie Reader Public Events Calendar regularly for more venues and dates. Some regulars are:

- *Altered State Distillery, Fridays and Saturdays, 7 to 10 p.m.*
- *Arundel Cellars and Brewing Company, Friday nights in July and August from 6 to 9 p.m.*
- *Cellar '54, select Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 6 to 9 p.m.*
- *Colony Pub and Grille, five days a week from 6 to 9 p.m.*
- *Oasis Tiki Bar, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 6 p.m.*



Expand your horizons, both mentally and physically this summer by attending (clockwise from top left): The Great American Book Sale, the Pride Parade, America 250 City of Erie Fourth of July Celebrations, and the Gem City Renaissance Festival.

EVENTS

- *Oliver's Beer Garden*, Friday nights starting in May from 7 to 11 p.m.
- *Penn Shore Winery*, Music in the Vineyard Saturdays from 4 to 8 p.m.
- *Poverty Knob Farmhouse Ales*, Thursdays, 5 to 9 p.m. and Saturdays, 6 to 9 p.m.
- *Riverside Brewing*, Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 9 p.m.
- *Rum Runners*, Fridays and Saturdays from 8 p.m. to midnight
- *Sloppy Duck Tiki Bar*, Fridays and Saturdays from 8 p.m. to midnight, Sundays from 3 to 6 p.m.
- *Sunset Grill in Edinboro*, Thursdays through Sundays at 6:30 p.m.

Let's Eat – Local Food and Drink Events

Erie's Wild Rib Cook Off and Music Festival

May 27 - 30, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. // Perry Square, 601 State St. // Free // erieribfest.com

Get your summer off to a messy start with some of the tastiest, sloppiest, award-winning barbecue from throughout the country. With live music and vendors throughout the weekend, Rib Fest (as it's affectionately known) is the official start of summer.

Beer on the Bay

Saturday, July 25, noon to 7 p.m. // Liberty Park and Highmark Amphitheater, 828 W. Bayfront Pkwy. // eriebrewingco.com

What's better than a beautiful day on the bay, sailboats floating, gulls soaring over sun-glistened waters? All of that with a bunch of local and regional beers to try!

America's Grape Country Craft Beverage Festival

Aug. 7 - 9 // Chautauqua County Fairgrounds, Dunkirk, N.Y. // agcfestival.com

Take a short drive east for a whole new world of fermented goodness. America's Grape Country celebrates what they do best with tastings, demonstrations, and entertainment at this three-day festival in Dunkirk.

2026 Chautauqua Institution Food Festival

Aug. 16-29 // Chautauqua Institution, 1 Ames Ave., Chautauqua // chq.org

For two weeks, the grounds of the Chautauqua Institution will present a celebration of food, culture, and community. Expect talks and demonstrations from nationally and regionally recognized chefs (including celeb Chef Darian Bryan of Next Level Chef), immersive tastings, learning opportunities, cooking competitions, and more.

North East Wine Fest

Sept. 25 - 27 // Gibson Park, Lake and Main Streets, North East // nechamber.org

One of the best ways to close out the summer season is by spending a day in North East celebrating, tasting, and sharing the fruits of our county's bounty – with live music, food, crafts, and more.

Let's Get Physical (and Intellectual)!: Events for the Body and Mind

Fry's Landing Bird Banding with the Erie Bird Observatory

Fridays, Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. through May 31 // Fry's Landing at Presque Isle State Park // eriebirdobservatory.org

Get up close and personal with the migratory and native songbird residents of Presque Isle State Park as the employees and volunteers from Erie Bird Observatory band birds and offer education, activities, and an up-close look at our avian friends.

Nerd Out at the Library!

May 1 to 31 // Various times and library locations // events.erialibrary.org

Didn't you know? The nerds are the cool kids now! Everything from robots, cosplay, steampunk, tabletop games, science fiction, graphic novels, fantasy, comics, and more is on full display with programming extending throughout May.

HistErie Week at the Erie County Public Library: Founding Stories: An America 250 Celebration

May 16 - 23 // Various locations throughout Erie // Visit: events.erialibrary.org for a full schedule and to register

Celebrate local history and Erie's contribution to the 250 years of America as we know it with a week of curated programming for the library's annual HistErie Week. Take an architectural bike ride (with yours truly), take a guided tour of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, or learn about some Erie folklore and get to know the place we call home a little better.

Rod and Reel: Fishing & Tackle Loaner Program

pa.gov/agencies/fishandboat

The PA Fish and Boat commission want to get as many people as possible out and enjoying our best natural resources with fewer barriers – so they're loaning out gear for anyone who needs it. "The public can go to the various locations and borrow rods, reels, and a tackle box full of hooks and other terminal tackle. This equipment is borrowed in much the same way books are borrowed from a library." With locations at the Blasco Library, the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, and Walnut Creek Access. Check the website for individual site hours.

Lagoon by Pontoon

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, May 22 through Sept. 6 // Pontoon Boat Station, Presque Isle State Park // Free // events.dcnr.pa.gov

Take a free, educational pontoon boat ride through Misery Bay and the lagoons of Presque Isle with the staff of the PA-DCNR this summer. See and learn about the plants and animals that live in our local wetland habitats, and discover more about the local history and natural resources of Presque Isle.

Free Sunrise Yoga

Wednesdays beginning May 27 at 6 a.m. // Dobbins Landing, 1 State St. // Free // eriedowntown.com

The beloved summer series of sunrise yoga is back. Let the promise of a glorious sunrise over the bay get you out of bed early for an ever-appropriate sun salutation on the platform of Dobbins Landing, led by ASCEND Erie instructor Chelsea.

ERIN PHILLIPS, EDP, PIP, AND DAVE TAMULONIS



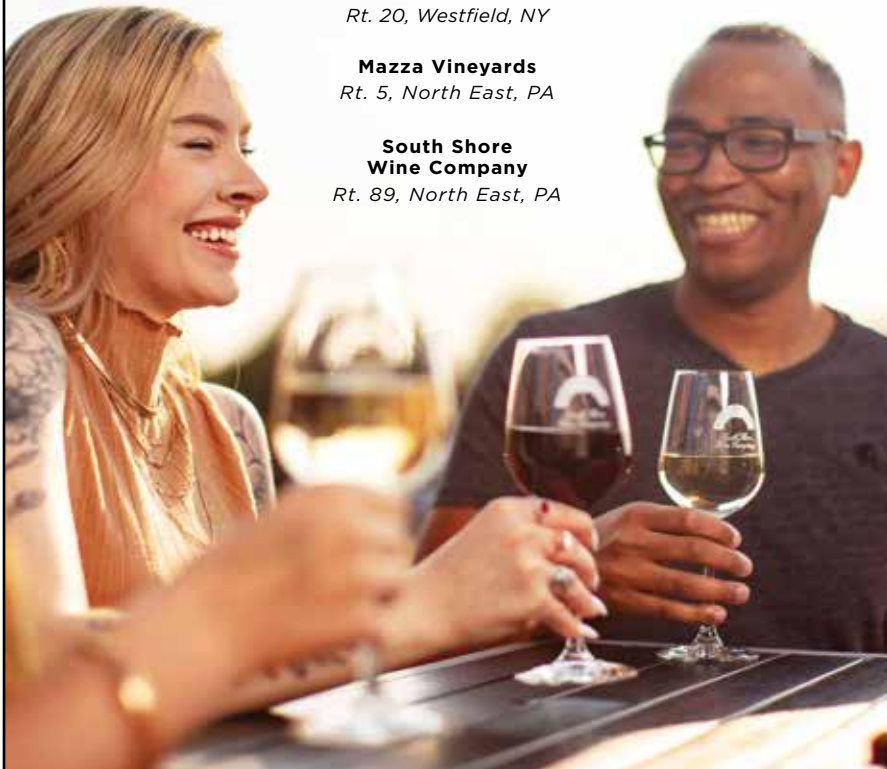
There's always something to do in Erie in the summertime like (clockwise from top left): enjoying the classic cars at any number of Gas N Gears II events, sharing in Erie's local harvest at one of our many farmers markets, discovering more about our park at Discover Presque Isle, and taking a spin during Lake Erie Cyclefest.

Happy hours, specialty drink features, live music, and food trucks are here. All three locations. All summer long.

Mazza Chautauqua Cellars / Five & 20 Spirits and Brewing
Rt. 20, Westfield, NY

Mazza Vineyards
Rt. 5, North East, PA

South Shore Wine Company
Rt. 89, North East, PA



Weekly Events

SOUTH SHORE WINE COMPANY

SPARKLING HOURS

Enjoy \$1 off sparkling wines by the glass

THURS & FRI
2:30-5:30 PM

MAZZA CHAUTAUQUA CELLARS / FIVE & 20 SPIRITS AND BREWING

WESTFIELD HAPPY HOUR

\$2 off draft beers & select wines by the glass, specially priced cocktails, live music

FRIDAYS
5-8 PM

MAZZA VINEYARDS and SOUTH SHORE WINE COMPANY

MAZZMOSA WEEKENDS

Enjoy mimosas (traditional and fizzy) by the glass or flight

SATURDAYS
& SUNDAYS

SOUTH SHORE WINE COMPANY

SLUSHIE SUNDAYS

Wine Slushies available Fri-Sun, specially priced all day Sunday

SUNDAYS

MAZZA CHAUTAUQUA CELLARS / FIVE & 20 SPIRITS AND BREWING

SUNDAY SESH MUSIC SERIES

Relaxed afternoon with live music and food truck

SUNDAYS
1-4 PM



Event details and complete calendar

EnjoyMazza.com/Events



Live music and food truck lineup



Nyesha Arrington



Darian Bryan



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EVENTS

Flagship City Kickball League

Registration open now, games begin Monday, June 1 through July // 6 to 9 p.m. // Perry Square West, 601 State St. // flagshipcitydistrict.com

Kickball need not have ended in your middle school gym. Now you can relive (or redeem) your glory days while enjoying the downtown area and getting active with friends.

Gas N Gears II

Every Monday night from May 18 through Sept 28 from 5 to 9 p.m. // Sloppy Duck parking area, 726 W. Bayfront Pkwy. // Free

Stroll through this pet- and kid-friendly car show, gawking at row after row of classic cars intermingled with souped-up newer models as you enjoy DJ'd tunes from Bill Page, food trucks, and the presentation of each week's featured Car of the Week Trophy.

Erie Ale Works 10th Annual 0.01K

Friday May, 22 at 5 p.m. // Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. // eriealeworks.com

If your idea of fitness is the “fitness taco in my mouth” variety, then the 0.01K at Erie Ale Works is exactly for you. Run, jog, dance, or silly-walk your way across the brewery's parking lot, whilst raising some cash for local companion animals in need.

Presque Isle Poker Paddle

Saturday, June 6 // Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. // discoverpi.com

Take the poker game out of the casino and onto Presque Isle, as participants maneuver any sort of floating craft to different locations throughout the park, collecting their best possible poker hand along the way. Proceeds benefit the Presque Isle Partnership.

Growing Minds, Growing Gardens Series at Goodell Gardens & Homestead

Select Wednesdays and Sundays throughout the season // Goodell Gardens and Homestead, 221 Waterford St., Edinboro // goodellgardens.org

Intended for learners of all ages, these hands-on educational workshops will cover topics ranging from bird watching, tree identification, sustainable gardening techniques, and more.

West Bayfit

Wednesdays from June 10 - July 29, with Farmers Markets continuing through Aug. 19 // Bayview Park, 598 W. 2nd St. // Free // ourwestbayfront.org

Get out, get active, and get some fresh, healthy, locally grown produce. The folks at Our West Bayfront bring back their popular West Bayfit evenings at the incomparable Bayview Park with a focus on fun family fitness.

The Great American Book Sale

Sunday, June 14 to Thursday, June 18 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday, June 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. // Flo Fabrizio Ice Center at the Erie Zoo, 527 W. 38th St. // erielibrary-friends.org

If you've never been to the Great American Book Sale, it's time to catch up with the story! The entire floor of the Flo Fabrizio Ice Center is transformed into a giant book store with every genre available, including a special section for books of local interest.

Erie Pridefest: Pride on the Bay and Pride Parade

Parade: Sunday, June 14 from noon to 2 p.m. // Starting at 11th and State, culminating in Perry Square // Free

Pride on the Bay: Saturday, June 27 from noon to 5 p.m. // Liberty Park, 828 W. Bayfront Pkwy. // nwpapride.org

Keep the party going for two consecutive week-ends of pride in Erie. With a parade culminating in Perry Square followed by the Pride on the Bay celebration in Liberty Park, Erie will be a colorful rainbow in June – while Erie's LGBTQIA+ community is seen, heard, and celebrated.

Erie's Juneteenth Celebration

Saturday, June 20, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. // Perry Square, 601 State St. // Free

With events going on the whole week // eriejuneteenth.com

Celebrate the official day of abolition in America with a colorful, musical, celebration of local Black culture and history. Including a march down State Street, a Black art exhibition, a block party concert, and more.

World Refugee Day

Thursday, June 26, 6 to 9 p.m. // Perry Square, 601 State St. // Free

Erie honors our rich refugee population – folks who have found safety in Erie and have made it their home – with the now annual World Refugee Day which recognizes the panoply of heritages that make up our city's cultural landscape. With performances, dances, art, vendors, and food.

Erie Art Museum Gallery Night

June 26 and Sept. 18 // Multiple galleries throughout region // Free // erieartmuseum.org

The quarterly celebration of all things art comes to the Erie summertime scene twice as galleries throughout the city open their doors for receptions, live music, food and drink, and, of course, local art.

Erie Roller Derby Bouts

Saturdays, June 20 and July 11 // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier // erierollerderby.com

You'll have two chances to catch the Erie Roller Derby on their home turf this summer. The action-packed, super physical, always entertaining sport is fun for the whole family.

America 250 City of Erie Fourth of July Celebrations

The city has a number of cool, family friendly events happening during Independence Day week-end to celebrate the country's semiquincentennial. Mark your calendars for celebrating those parts of



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FREE- 5PM- THURSDAY, JUNE 11- 127 E. 14TH ST.



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- FACE DROOPING
- ARM WEAKNESS
- SPEECH DIFFICULTY
- TIME TO CALL

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Ryan Lynch, D.O.
Neurologist

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Thursday, July 2 – The Brig Niagara returns from her restoration in Maine to a 250 Boat Parade

Friday, July 3 – Erie 250: Light and Liberty on the Lake, fireworks featuring live music

Saturday, July 4 – Our own Erie Philharmonic performs a live, free concert at Bayview Park

Discover Presque Isle

July 20 - 26 // Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. // Free // [discoverpi.com](#)

Even if you've lived in Erie your whole life, I can guarantee there is still something to discover on the wonderland that is Presque Isle. The Presque Isle Partnership gives you the perfect excuse to get out, see or try something new, and truly appreciate our gem of a state park.

Lake Erie Cyclefest

July 23 - 26 // Various locations throughout Erie County // [eriesportscommission.com](#)

Three days in late July each year are dedicated to all things cycling in Erie. Whether you're a novice cyclist who enjoys a leisurely glide or a hardcore racer, Lake Erie Cyclefest has a ride for you.

Presque Isle Triathlon

Aug. 1 // 7:30 a.m. // Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. // [discoverpi.com](#)

This annual athletic gauntlet at Presque Isle demonstrates the myriad of ways folks can recreate on Presque Isle, just in a much more intense way by cycling (13 miles), running (3.1 miles), and swimming (0.35 miles).

National Night Out

Tuesday, Aug. 4 // Various public parks throughout Erie // Free // [unitedwayerie.org](#)

The United Way takes the parties to the parks for National Night Out, coming to a public park near you! Spread throughout the city and county, enjoy a family friendly fun-filled evening getting to know your neighbors and enjoying some free food, giveaways, kids activities, and live music.

Lucille Ball Comedy Festival

Aug. 6 - 9 // National Comedy Center, 203 W. 2nd St., Jamestown, N.Y. // [comedycenter.org](#)

Couldn't we all use a laugh? How about three days of laughs? Lucille Ball's comedy legacy lives on at the annual comedy festival bearing her name. This year's headliners include Jerry Seinfeld, Bert Kreischer, and Seth Meyers.

Gem City Renaissance Festival

Sept. 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. // Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. // [gemcityrenaissancefestival.com](#)

In days of olde, when knights were bold... or this September at Frontier Park! Enjoy a step back in time as folks gather from across the realm for demonstrations, period-themed music and shows, turkey legs, and more.

Arts and Drafts Festival

Thursday, Sept. 10 to Saturday, Sept. 12 // The Brewerrie, 123 W. 14th St. // [facebook.com/artsanddraftsfestival](#)

Enjoy one of the most anticipated weekends of the summer at the annual Arts and Drafts festival at the historic Brewerrie at Union Station. Local artists have their work on display (and usually for sale) all weekend with live local music throughout the event.

COMICON Erie

Sept. 18 - 20 // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier // [eriepromotions.com](#)

Nerd culture is in full effect for a weekend in late September in Erie at the annual Comicon and Lego BrickErie events. Enjoy cosplay, seminars, and panels from comic artists and authors, photo ops, trading, and more.

Lake Erie Lit Fest

Sept. 12, noon to 5 p.m. // Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. // Free // [wernerbooks.com](#)

Celebrate the written word in all its forms at the annual Lake Erie Lit Fest. With readings, poetry, workshops, author signings, vendors, book giveaways, and more – it's the culmination of a summer of reading!

Presque Isle Poker PEDAL

Sunday, Oct. 4 at 9 a.m. // Beach 1, Presque Isle State Park // \$40 // [discoverpi.com](#)

Like the idea of the Presque Isle Poker Paddle but consider yourself more of a land animal? Enter the Presque Isle Poker Pedal. Cycle your way to different iconic checkpoints throughout the park to collect your best possible poker hand, whilst raising much needed funding for the Presque Isle Partnership.

What is Trivia Night, Alex?

If you're more about exercising your mind rather than your body, Erie provides plenty of opportunities to get a team of friends and family together to challenge your trivial knowledge (again, this list is not exhaustive, be sure to regularly check our free online events calendar!)

- Best of Erie Winner for Best Trivia: Plymouth Tavern's Tuesday Trivia, Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.
- Altered State Distillery Trivia with "That Jeopardy! Guy" Adam Holquist, select Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m.
- Voodoo Brewing Company DJ Bill Page's Trivia Nights, Thursdays weekly at 7 p.m.
- Trivia Night at Luminary Distilling, Second and fourth Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m.
- Lavery Brewing Company's Brain Brunch Pub Quiz with Adam Holquist, Last Sunday of each month from 2 to 4 p.m.
- Edinboro Hotel Bar Buzz Worthy Pub Trivia, Wednesdays weekly from 7 to 9 p.m.
- The Zone Dance Club Trivia with Josh, Patrick, and Brittany, Wednesdays weekly at 9 p.m.
- King's Rook Club Crafted Trivia with Adam Holquist, every third Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Local Produce, Local Sustainability: Regular Farmers Markets

Bayview Park Farmer's Market

Wednesdays, June 10 - Aug. 19 // 6 to 8 p.m. // Bayview Park, 598 W. 2nd St. // [ourwestbayfront.org](#)

LEAF Open Market

Biweekly on Saturdays, June 13 - Sept. 19 // 8th Street side of Frontier Park // [leaferie.org/openmarket](#)

North East Gibson Park Open Market

Saturdays from June 13 - Sept. 5 // 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. // Gibson Park, Lake and Main streets, North East // [nechamber.org](#)

Sisters of St. Joseph Little Italy Farmer's Market

Mondays, June through September, from 3 to 6 p.m. at 430 W. 19th St. It is the only local market that offers a dollar-to-dollar match for SNAP benefits, WIC, and Senior FNMP (Farmers Market Nutrition Program) vouchers.

Pay What You Can Farm Stands

Weekly from July 6 through early October // [builderie.org/hope/pwyc](#)

The idea behind these farmers market stands is to provide fresh produce to those most in need. The farmers involved ask that patrons take only what is needed and any funds raised through the sale of their wares helps to ensure produce is available throughout the season.

- Mondays from 4 to 6 p.m. // Unity in Edinboro, 130 Meadville St., Edinboro
- Tuesdays from noon to 2 p.m. // 15th and Parade streets
- Wednesdays from 4 to 6 p.m. // ECAT, 650 East Ave and Strong Vincent, 1330 W. 8th St.
- Thursdays from noon to 2 p.m. // Fourth Street Farm, 310 E. 4th St.
- Fridays from 4 to 6 p.m. // Perry Square, 601 State St. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m // Strong Vincent Middle School, 1330 W. 8th St.

Shop Til You Drop: Recurring Summer Vendor Markets

Boutique Nights

June 5, July 10, and Sept. 4, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. // Throughout the downtown Flagship City District // Free // [flagshipcitydistrict.com](#)

When all of the downtown area businesses become one big outdoor bazaar, you've stumbled upon the now-annual Boutique Nights. Featuring pop-up shopping and vendors, live art, community activities, and music as a walkable experience – it's what downtown was made for.

Arts and Casks

June 7 and July 19 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. // Altered State Distillery, 1535 W. 8th St. // [alteredstatedistillery.com](#)
The folks at Altered State are known for their stellar, Best of Erie award winning spirits, fabulous food, and jam-tastic live music schedule. But ev-

EDP, JESSICA HUNTER



Our summers are full of celebrations of cultural heritage and county fairs alike including (clockwise from top left) The Amerimasala multicultural celebration, the 141st Erie County fair, and Best of Erie winner Zabawa Polish Festival.

ery summer, they expand their minds and space for art and craft vendors for their Arts and Casks market. Stop by for a sip and some locally made art!

**Grounded Print Shop
Maker's Market**

June 26 from 5 to 9 p.m., July 25 from noon to 5 p.m., Aug. 15 from noon to 5 p.m., and Sept. 18 from 5 to 9 p.m. // [Grounded Print Shop, 1902 Cherry St. // Free // groundedprintshop.com](#)

The folks at Grounded Print Shop are bringing back their Maker's Markets in 2026 with varying times to correspond with the Erie Art Museum's Gallery Night. Each event will feature live local music, art shows, food trucks, live artist demos, and vendors.

Copper Carriage Market

Fall market TBD // 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. // [Copper Carriage and surrounding block,](#)

406 State St. // [coppercarriage.com](#)

The ever lovable folks from the Copper Carriage have been building on their outdoor markets since they moved in and made downtown their home. Opening up their own bespoke antique shop (and surrounding areas) to vendors of all varieties (think vintage goods interspersed with hand-made products).

**Celebrate Culture: Annual
Heritage Festivals**

Erie loves our annual Heritage Festivals. We have been and continue to be a city built on immigrants – our various heritage celebrations throughout the season pay tribute to the rich tapestry of culture that truly makes Erie unique.

**16th Annual Troika
(Russian) Festival**

Friday, May 22 from 4 to 9 p.m., Saturday, May 23 from noon to 6 p.m., Sunday, May 24 from noon to 6 p.m. // [Church of the Nativity Community Center, 109 German St. // churchofthenativity.net](#)

**38th Annual Panegyri
Greek Festival**

July 10 and 11 // 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. // [Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, 4376 W. Lake Rd. // eriegreekorthodox.org](#)

**78th Annual North East
Firemen's Cherry Festival**

July 15 - 18 // [necherryfestival.org](#)

**53rd Annual Waterford
Heritage Days**

July 17 - 19 // [Gazebo Park, Waterford // facebook.com/waterforddays](#)

The AmeriMasala (Multi-cultural)

Saturday, July 18 // noon // [Perry Square, 601 State St. // facebook.com/TheAmeriMasala](#)

61st Annual Dan Rice Days

July 30 - Aug. 1 // [Downtown Girard, 34 Main St. W. // danricedays.com](#)

St. Paul's Italian Festival

Aug. 7 - 9 // [St. Paul Parish, 1617 Walnut St. // stpaulrcerie.org](#)

Zabawa Polish Festival

Aug. 21 - 23 // [Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 2220 Reed St. // holytrinityrc.org](#)

**30th Annual German
Heritage Festival**

Sept. 5 and 6 // Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. // [St. Nick's Grove, 5131 Old French Rd. // dank-erie.org](#)

Erie Irish Festival

Sept. 2026 (exact dates and times TBA) // [St. Patrick's Church, 130 E. 4th St. // erie-irishfestival.com](#)

County Fairs

Take part in the (often) centuries-old tradition of the county fair. In celebration of America 250, nothing quite says Americana like a county fair – expect farm and craft competitions, blue ribbons, pageants, funnel cakes and lemonade, thrill rides, games of skill, live music, livestock demonstrations, and dances.

**98th Annual Cochranon
Community Fair**

Aug. 3 - 8 // [cochranonfair.org](#)

95th Annual Warren County Fair

Aug. 4 - 9 // [warrencountyfair.net](#)

79th Annual Crawford County Fair

Aug. 22 - 29 // [crawfordcountyfairpa.com](#)

141st Annual Erie County Fair

Aug. 30 - Sept. 5 // [wattsburgfair.com](#)

**89th Annual Waterford
Community Fair**

Aug. 31 - Sept. 5 // [waterfordfair.org](#)

**104th Annual Spartansburg
Community Fair**

Sept. 7 - 12 // [spartansburgcommunity-fair.com](#)

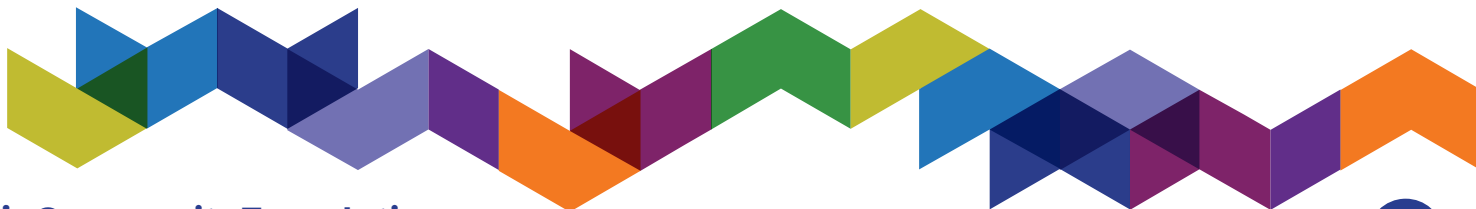
81st Annual Albion Area Fair

Sept. 15 - 19 // [albionfair.com](#)

If you see Erin Phillips out and about enjoying these summer events, be sure to say hello! She can be reached at erin@eriereader.com



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EVENTS

Divas by the Decade

Seth Rudetsky closes out this MIAC Live season

FRIDAY, MAY 8

Seth Rudetsky and “showtime” are two words that are virtually synonymous. Widely celebrated across the musical theatre scene, Rudetsky returns to Erie and will close the curtain on the 2025-2026 MIAC Live season with his concert *Divas by the Decade*.

Divas by the Decade is a fast-paced, historical journey about the leading ladies of Broadway. The concert is accomplished through a carefully curated collection of audio and video recordings, behind-the-scenes stories, and various anecdotes that highlight the range of talent throughout generations, connecting the audience through a mutual love of performance and spectacle.

“As we looked to close the season with something dynamic and celebratory, Seth felt like a natural fit,” Artistic Director Dr. Brett Johnson said. “He brings a unique combination of deep

industry knowledge, musical brilliance, and humor. He has worked with many of Broadway’s most iconic performers, and he has a gift for sharing those experiences in a way that feels immediate and engaging.”

Aside from *Divas*, Rudetsky’s list of credentials is extensive. He is an author, a pianist, a conductor, and the creator of *Disaster!* – a Broadway musical performed across the country. He has also received three Emmy nominations for his work as a comedy co-writer for *The Rosie O’Donnell Show*.” Now, he can be found on SiriusXM’s Broadway channel as the host and creator of *Seth Speaks*.

Prior to the concert, Rudetsky will appear earlier in the day for a free, hour-long masterclass on musical theater repertoire that will be open to the public. “It’s a meaningful opportunity for students to receive personalized coaching from a seasoned Broadway professional, and it reflects our com-



CONTRIBUTED

Broadway superstar Seth Rudetsky closes out MIAC’s 2025-2026 season with his concert *Divas by the Decade*, which showcases the historical journey of the leading ladies of Broadway.

mitment to pairing performance with education,” Johnson noted.

As the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture closes out another successful season, we look forward to seeing what the lineup for next year has in store for us. – Cassandra Gripp

7:30 p.m. // Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$40-50 // For tickets and info: miac.mercyhurst.edu

Comics Santiago Angel and Rebecca Kaplan Headline at The Set Closet

NYC-based alt up-and-comers ascend to comedy genius

FRIDAY, MAY 8

With rapid-fire quips and cutting observations, Santiago Angel will be in Erie for one night only, with back-to-back headlining shows at the Set Closet. Hailing from New York City, Angel released his hour-long comedy special, *These Jokes Ruined My Life* in March of 2025.

Within, he touches on topics like growing up in Texas with Columbian parents, doing psychedelics, navigating gender identity, and secretly watching carpet cleaning videos.

A regular performer at clubs like the New York Comedy Club, St. Marks Comedy Club, and the Eastville Comedy Club, Angel has been a guest at the New York Comedy Festival, Edinburgh Fringe Fest, and Boston Comedy Fest. He’s opened for alt comic heroes like Reggie Watts, Kyle Kinane, Carmen Lynch, and more. He can be followed on Instagram @santiagoisdead.

7 and 9 p.m. // *The Set Closet*, 426 State St. (second floor of Ascend Erie) // \$15 advance, \$20 day-of-show // For tickets and more information, visit tickets.eriereader.com

CONTRIBUTED



Erie’s newest comedy venue the Set Closet, nestled into the second floor of the Ascend Building on 5th and State, is hosting two headliners in May: Santiago Angel and Rebecca Kaplan.


SATURDAY, MAY 30

With her deadpan delivery, Rebecca Kaplan’s smart sarcasm has been getting her noticed. With 24 shows listed in May 2026 alone, Kaplan is touring all around New York and the eastern U.S., with a Saturday stop right here in Erie at the Set Closet. She’s been featured on NPR, SiriusXM, with appearances on the New York Comedy Festival, Rubber City Comedy Festival, and the Boston Comedy Festival – and even appeared on *Late Night with David Letterman* when she was 5 years old.

Co-host of the *Bad Fan Fic* pod-

cast, Kaplan is a prolific freelance writer in addition to her comedy career. Kaplan’s unique insights skewer modern sex and dating, addressing how things like autism, feminism, and veganism get awkwardly misinterpreted. With an acerbic style all her own, Kaplan brings an understated yet hilarious energy to every set. She can be followed on Instagram @RebeccaTKaplan. – Nick Warren

7:30 p.m. // *The Set Closet*, 426 State St. (second floor of Ascend Erie) // \$20 // For tickets and more information, visit tickets.eriereader.com



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Erie Philharmonic Performs Britten's *War Requiem*

Junior Philharmonic and Youth Chorale join for poignant reflections

SATURDAY, MAY 9

The Erie Philharmonic will be finishing the 2025-26 Symphonic Series with a reflection on the horrors of war and a prayer for peace with Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, in collaboration with the Erie Philharmonic Chorus, Junior Chorus, and Youth Chorale. Preceding the composition in performance is John Williams' "Hymn To The Fallen" from *Saving Private Ryan* alongside the Erie Junior Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.

"Britten's *War Requiem* is a universal plan for peace," Erie Philharmonic Music Director Daniel Meyer describes. "It becomes this omnipresent prayer through combining the traditional Latin Requiem with Wilfred Owen's war texts."

Owen's own experiences as a soldier influenced his writing – many of his poems, including "Anthem for Doomed Youth," "But I Was Looking At The Permanent Stars," "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young," and "Strange Meeting" are derived from observations while at war. During the crossing of the Sambre-Oise Canal in Northern France, he was killed one week before the signing of the Armistice. Britten's views on pacifism influenced the piece, drawing from Owen's poetry alongside his grief for Piers Dunkerley, a friend who had survived World War II and taken his own life a few years prior. Premiering on May 30, 1962, to mark the consecration of Coventry Cathedral after its destruction during the Blitz, the

War Requiem was dedicated in memory of Dunkerley alongside three of Britten's friends who died during the war.

For Meyer, the pairing of *War Requiem* and "Hymn to the Fallen" echoed the impact of Britten and Owen's combined storytelling on veterans and communities worldwide. "The idea of interpolating the Williams was to kind of localize this universal experience, which is to say, honor our local veterans, honor our local families who have served in wars, and deserve some recognition for the sacrifice that they've made. And so, rather than do a standalone piece or something that was completely unrelated, I thought we might actually take a page out of Benjamin Britten's book by interpolating this poignant but short and beautiful 'Hymn To The Fallen' as a way to recognize and to honor those families locally who have made a sacrifice in an effort to keep us in peace."

The preparation for this performance requires multiple ensembles working in tandem, including the Junior Philharmonic with Jerry Anderson, the Philharmonic Chorus with Thomas Brooks, and members of the Junior and Youth Chorus under the direction of Sharon Downey. The children's choir in *War Requiem* is a major part of the emotional storytelling, singing in call-and-response with the adults and serving as a heavenly voice of innocence.

"I think from the beginning of his



The Erie Philharmonic closes out their 2025-2026 season with a performance of Britten's *War Requiem* as part of their symphonic series, featuring a collaboration between the orchestra alongside the Erie Philharmonic Chorus, Junior Chorus, and Youth Chorale.

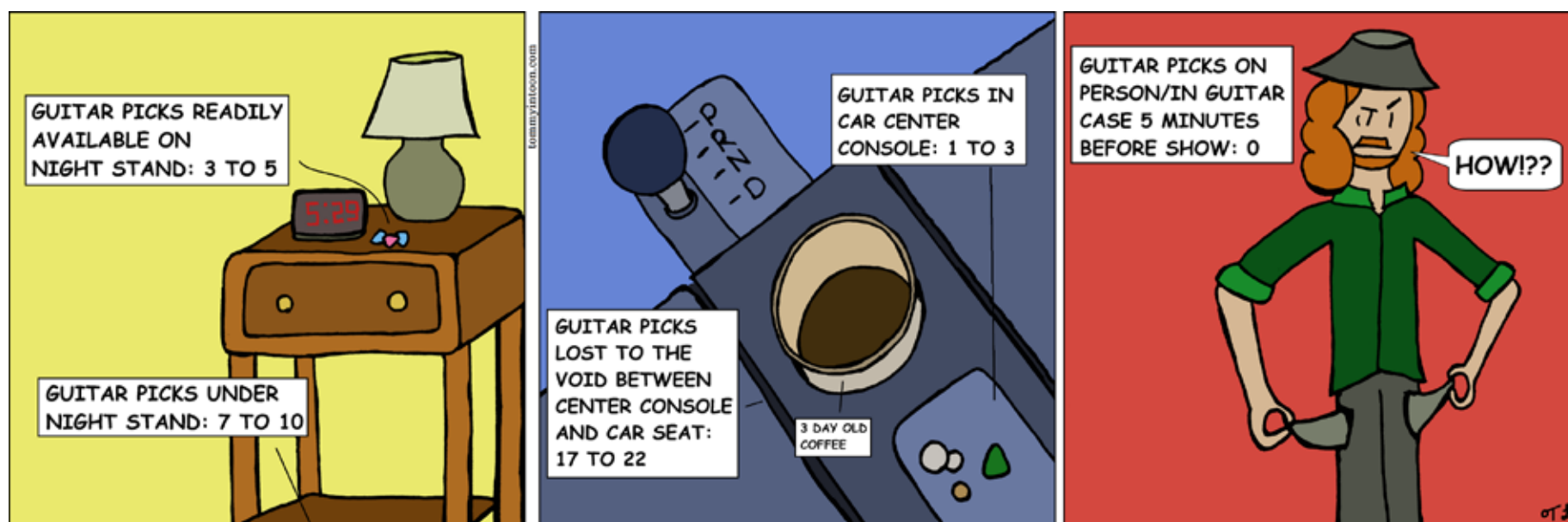
compositional career, he always cared about writing music that could be performed by and understood by young people," Meyer reflected when thinking about Britten's role in children's music education. "It serves as a warning that this innocence is easily destroyed and corrupted – if we continue down this path of destruction and war. And so, from a dramatic standpoint, the children's voices serve as a true foil to the drama, the bombast, and the wartime poetry of Owen, all transpiring on stage."

Meyer believes in drawing on personal and emotional experiences during the rehearsal process, reflecting in the same manner as Britten and Williams did for their musicians, with Steven Spielberg bringing in Tom Hanks to read Abraham Lincoln's Bixby letter during the recording ses-

sions for *Saving Private Ryan*.

"I think you can't avoid your own personal experiences, and whether it's the stories from your family, whether it's your own grappling with history, in your high school history courses or reading books about heroism such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* or *Night* by Eli Wiesel. We need to keep revisiting these things if we're to truly appreciate what brought us here, but ultimately, to consider how we might steer away from conflict and find peaceful ways to coexist. In Britten's mind, that's the primary focus. I'm not convinced he thinks it's possible. But at least it's there as a glimmer of hope." – Thomas Taylor

7:30 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St.
// \$27-\$68 // For tickets and info: erie-phil.org



It's Gonna Be May at Centennial Hall

A packed slate of shows rings in Erie's newest venue

BEGINNING MONDAY, MAY 11

It's been one month since the newly renovated Centennial Hall ferociously opened with a sold-out Menzingers show. In the wake of such a massive event there is no slowing down for the new venue. Acts such as The Messthetics & James Brandon Lewis (featuring the rhythm section from D.C. punk band Fugazi) and Kofi Baker's Psychedelic Trip (led by the son of legendary drummer Ginger Baker) have played the venue since its grand reopening. As the month of May is known as a transition from the dreary days of winter into the warm days of summer, the following schedule of events at Centennial Hall will get you ready for the upcoming concert season. – Larry Wheaton

On **Monday, May 11**, the London Christian metalcore band Confessions of a Traitor are bringing The Sacred and Severed Tour to town. The tour features Syracuse, New York's Fight From Within and Midwest hardcore band ExitWounds. Starting the show off will be Tear from Grace from Meadville.

Solid State records band Wolves At The Gate will bring their Christian message to town on **Wednesday, May 13** with fellow like-minded artists Bloodlines and Heal The Hurt. Local metal favorite Storms Within will be opening the show.

Buffalo's post-hardcore band The

Bunny The Bear, who are known for wearing animal masks and mixing together synth-pop, alternative rock, and metal, will be at the Hall on **Thursday, May 21**. Also on the bill is Cleveland electronic metalcore band Unhealthy While Unhinged, Minneapolis's Divide The Fall, and East Central Indiana's Mantra Of Morta.

Saturday, May 23 is the annual Noob Night that's hosted by Oddity Productions. This evening allows up-and-coming bands to perform in a rapid-style showcase for fans, promoters, venue owners, and media outlets. The bands set to perform this year are P!nk Paradox, Phantom Clawz, Borland '71, Matt, Lee & The Tims, Survivors Guilt, Dimensions, Nu Sance, Dead End Dystopia, and Keke Diamond Band. This event is dedicated to the loving memory of Alex Harilla of Gimp Guy Underground, who supported local music throughout his life. This is a free event, with donations being accepted.

Boston-based hardcore-punk band Final Gasp and Blood Vulture are teaming up for a night of Gothic metal on **Sunday, May 24**. Blood Vulture is fronted by Jordan Olds, who is also known as Gwarsenio Hall, the host of the YouTube series *Two Minutes To Late Night*, which gained popularity during the pandemic. Opening the night will be Erie's own doom-masters Fog Giant.

On **Wednesday, May 27**, Blacklight

CENTENNIAL HALL



The folks at Centennial Hall want to fill up your calendar in May – they're hosting a slew of shows including the ever-favorite Noob Night, along with headliners like Confessions of a Traitor, Wolves At The Gate, Final Gasp, Gozu, and more.

Media band Gozu, who are known in the stoner metal community and Black Sabbath-inspired doom band Restless Spirit are making a mid-week stop at the Hall. Gozu has shared the stage with the likes of Baroness, The Obsessed, and Saint Vitus, amongst many others.

Post-black metal band Sadness will bring their unique subgenre of black-gaze to the Hall, counterbalanced by Chicago happy math rock band Snooze on **Friday, May 29**. Joining them will be death metal band Pains

from Illinois, along with Amplifiers and Mound of Orchids from southwestern Pennsylvania.

All these events are open to all ages and hosted at Centennial Hall (145 W. 11th St.), unless otherwise noted. For show times, prices, tickets, info and more, visit tickets.eriereader.com.

Idlestar Promotions is offering a May Mosh Pass for \$70, which includes admission to all of these shows for one price. For more info: tickets.eriereader.com

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PACA's May Production *The Shark is Broken* Has Emotional Bite

We're gonna need a bigger boat (or a smaller theater)

FRIDAY, MAY 15

Hollywood in the 1970s was a wild, raucous time – but on the other end of the spectrum were Robert Shaw, Roy Scheider, and Richard Dreyfuss, who dealt with chaos of another sort while filming the 1975 film *Jaws*. That chaos – represented by both external and internal conflict – is at the center of *The Shark is Broken*, a one-act play which first premiered in 2019, and is making its debut at the Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA) for a limited run this month.

"The play, which was co-written by Robert Shaw's son Ian, really does serve, in part, as a love letter from Ian to his father," explained Kate Neubert-Lechner, director of this production and a PACA regular. "At its core [it] is a character study into these three men and the tenuous relationships they formed while filming the movie and waiting for Bruce [the mechanical shark] to be ready for filming."

Of course, staging a play that's about the making of a film presents its own challenges, the main one being, according to Neubert-Lechner, putting together an authentic set, which in this instance has been designed and built by JR Fabin. What presented zero issues was the casting, with Rob Bush, Dan Strip, and Jesse Cammarata tackling the three main characters. Neubert-Lechner described their chemistry as amazing, and said, "I feel like my biggest job as a director on this one is to get out of their way, let them play, and help them hone in on what's going to work the best."

The Shark is Broken is part-comedy, part-drama, and while the audience might not relate to the making of a movie, Neubert-Lechner said that "despite the outer bravado of two of the characters in particular, underneath is deep insecurity and loneliness," a conflicted type of person with whom we've all been familiar at some



M. HARRISON PHOTOGRAPHY

PACA's May production *The Shark Is Broken* takes theater-goers behind the scenes of the making of the iconic film *Jaws* with a chaotic, one-act play that is described as "part-comedy, part-drama."

point and whose bite we might have felt. –Cara Suppa

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday shows at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$22.95 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

WhatARTu Doing on May 16?

Come see array of art and support Opened Eyes

SATURDAY, MAY 16

The fourth annual *WhatARTu* community-wide youth art gallery event will take place at Mercyhurst Preparatory School.

More than 300 submissions will fill the gymnasium this year, said Ceasar Westbrook, creative arts director for Opened Eyes, multidisciplinary artist, art educator, and 2020 40 Under 40 honoree.

Westbrook explained that Opened Eyes is an organization focused on mental health, wellness, and youth development. "We work to create safe, supportive spaces where individuals, especially young people, can express themselves, build confidence, and access resources that support their overall well-being."

A big piece of that work includes hosting events and programs that blend creativity, conversation, and mental wellness. "One of our signature events is *WhatARTu*, which highlights youth expression through art while promoting positive mental health and connection."

Showcasing the best artwork from first-graders through high school seniors in the area, this year's show will feature submissions from Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy, Mercyhurst Preparatory School, the School District of the City of Erie, Neighborhood Art House, Corry School District, and various other organizations and private institutions. Westbrook said the entries represent a wide variety such as paintings,

drawings, ceramics, photography, sculptures, and mixed media.

Aside from the artwork, he added there will be attractions for families and all to enjoy such as Triple D's and other food trucks, vendors with crafts and items for purchase, giveaways, as well as a raffle basket auction to benefit Opened Eyes. Proceeds from baskets will go directly toward supporting the programming of the non-profit, he said, including youth initiatives, community events, and expanding access to wellness resources in the Erie area.

Know a young artist who would help this event shine even more? Submissions are open until Tuesday, May 12. Drop off locations are the Erie Center for Arts and Technology (ECAT in the former Wayne School) and the Robert Benjamin Wiley Community Charter School. –Gretchen Gallagher Durney

Noon to 5 p.m. // Mercyhurst Preparatory School, 538 E. Grandview Blvd. // Free and open to the public // For more information, visit: openedeyes.org/whatartu

CONTRIBUTED



The folks at local nonprofit OpenedEyes present their annual student art show entitled *WhatARTu?* at Mercyhurst Prep – featuring artwork representing all media created by first-graders through high school seniors in the area.

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EVENTS

Erie Roller Derby Trivia Night at Voodoo Brewing

Roll on up to reopened brewery for raffles, prizes, food, and fun

TUESDAY, MAY 19

It's time for Erie Roller Derby's (ERD) yearly fundraising trivia event. This year, they've expanded into a larger space that will allow for more team entries. The event will be at the newly reopened downtown location of Voodoo Brewing Company, allowing ERD to host up to 30 teams instead of only 20, as in prior years.

This event allows ERD to offset costs for the derby season. "That includes jerseys, travel, venue and practice rental fees, and more," explains Allison McCartney, AKA Gash Ketchum, ERD's public relations manager. "As a non-profit, our ability to keep running is dependent on events like this," McCartney adds.

Trivia teams can register for \$40 per team with a maximum of 4 members. The expanded space allows for spectator attendance this year at a recommended \$5 donation per person at the door.

The event will also include a 50/50 drawing and a basket raffle. Voodoo's kitchen and bar will also be open

ALLISON MCCARTNEY



What's better than a trivia night at a local brewery with friends? A trivia night that benefits the Erie Roller Derby! Get a team of friends together, or just join to watch and enjoy the atmosphere while raising money for one of Erie's coolest sports.

during the event.

The event is expected to last about two hours, and the competition will be based on general trivia across various categories. There will be prizes for first and second place, and ERD members will be mingling in attendance. McCartney says, "If trivia isn't your thing, come and hang out any-

way. Voodoo has dart boards, pool tables, and cornhole boards available." – Edwina Capozziello

Doors at 6 p.m., trivia at 7 p.m. // Voodoo Brewing Company, 101 Boston Store Place // \$40 per team or \$5 suggested donation for spectators // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

A More Accessible Approach to Boating: The Erie Community Boating Program

Bayfront Maritime Center offers affordable options for boating opportunities

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

Have you ever found yourself looking out onto the bay in the summer, seeing all the boaters and kayakers enjoying time on the water, and wishing that you were out there? Thanks to the Bayfront Maritime Center, that wish can now become a reality.

Through their Erie Community Boating (ECB) Program, getting out onto the water is easier than ever. "Our goal is simple: we want to make the water accessible to everyone in our community, regardless of experience or background," said Robin Mascharka, executive director at the Bayfront Maritime Center. "Boating and sailing shouldn't feel out of reach."

The program offers an array of options and inclusive opportunities for both individuals and families, from open boating sessions to structured programming, allowing participants to enjoy these water activities in a safe and supportive environment.

For those who've never sailed before or feel a bit rusty in their skills, the Maritime Center offers both new and refresher sailing courses for those interested in getting out on the water. Led by certified instructors, these hands-on training courses are geared toward anyone from beginner to intermediate level and teach a range of topics from the basics of sailing to more advanced techniques.

"These lessons aren't just about learning to sail," Mascharka said. "They build confidence, teamwork, and a lifelong connection to the water."

The program offers month-to-month membership options for adults, youth, duos, and families to join, with options for kayak/canoe, sailing, or a combination of the two. Prices range from \$20 - \$150, depending on selected membership. – Ally Kutz

The Bayfront Maritime Center, 40 Holland St., will be hosting four open house dates: May 27 from 4 to 8 p.m.,



The folks at the Bayfront Maritime Center have introduced their Community Boating Program to help make boating as accessible as possible this summer. Learn more at one of four open house dates scheduled throughout the season.

May 29 from 4 to 8 p.m., May 30 from noon to 6 p.m., and May 31 from noon to 4 p.m. For more info or questions, visit bayfrontcenter.org or email info@bayfrontcenter.org

Erie Reader Book Club: May 2026

The Sentence by Louise Erdrich

SUNDAY, MAY 31

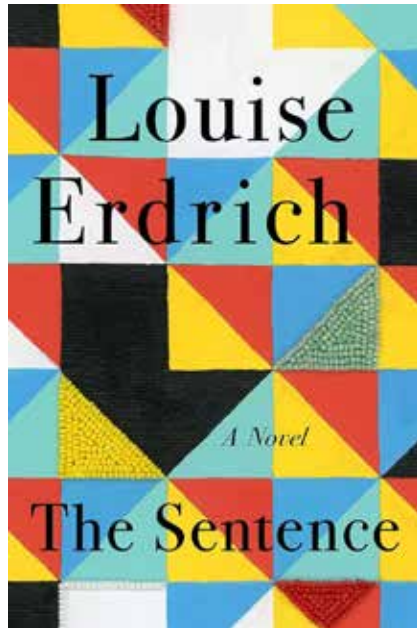
The Erie Reader Book Club will be reading and discussing *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich in conjunction with the Summer Preview issue of the Reader.

This summer, the City of Erie is taking on an initiative called the Summer of Reading (featured herein), with a multitude of businesses, organizations, and members of local government coming together to support literacy efforts and encourage folks of all ages to read more.

And what better way to celebrate this initiative than by choosing this book? Erdrich's *The Sentence* examines what we owe to the living and the dead, and, more widely, what we owe to the reader and to the book – a perfect choice for our theme.

The Sentence is the story of a Minneapolis independent bookstore and one of its employees, Tookie, as she navigates a multitude of trials: re-integrating into society after years of incarceration (during which she avidly read to survive); a complex marriage and family life; and the haunting of the bookstore by its most annoying customer, Flora, who dies at the start of the story.

Starting on All Souls' Day 2019 and ending on All Souls' Day 2020, the book follows Tookie as she takes it upon herself to solve the mystery



of Flora's haunting, while also dealing with her familial relationships and coming to terms with the real-life events of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd.

Part mystery, part realism, and wholly profound, *The Sentence* allows readers to escape into the rich and emotional narrative and answer these questions of what is truly owed to those in our lives. – Ally Kutz

1 p.m. // Werner Books and Coffee, 3608 Liberty St. // Free to join, cost of book not included // For more info: wernerbooks.com

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MOVIES

Michael is Unexceptional and Cowardly

Who's bad?



One would be hard-pressed to find a figure in pop culture more influential and groundbreaking, or as controversial as Michael Jackson. He revolutionized pop music, dominated the charts for decades, and broke down racial barriers. His personal life, however, was mired in controversy and criminal investigations. But you would know nothing about that if the new biopic *Michael* was your guide through his life.

Produced by the surviving members of Jackson's family (sans Janet and daughter Paris), it is the most sanitized real-life story ever told, hitting all the typical beats of the musician biopic formula. But the fact that it doesn't even hint at the unsavory truths about Jackson's life makes it the most cowardly film in years.

The film introduces us to a young Michael Jackson (Juliano Krue Valdi) as his father (Colman Domingo) forces him and his brothers to perform music as a way to escape the poverty of Gary, Indiana. As an adult, Michael (now played by Jackson's nephew, Jaafar) breaks out on his own and becomes a



pop sensation, but the shadow of his father's abuse still looms over his life.

If you've seen *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Rocketman*, *Elvis*, or *Walk Hard*, you've already seen this film. Full of all the same story beats and melodrama, it is on autopilot the whole time. Colman Domingo gives a chilling performance as Joe, and, it should go without saying, the soundtrack is excellent.

Jaafar Jackson himself gets the mannerisms of MJ right, but he feels less like a person and more wax museum figure. I was hoping we'd be done with

these cookie-cutter biopics, but, as this will surely make a billion dollars, it seems we'll be inundated with them until the end of time. – Forest Taylor

Directed by Antoine Fuqua // Written by John Logan // Starring Jaafar Jackson, Colman Domingo, Nia Long, Juliano Krue Valdi, KeiLyn Durrel Jones, Miles Teller, Kendrick Sampson, Joseph David-Jones, Jamal Henderson, Rhyann Hill, Trey Horton, Jessica Sula, Larenz Tate, Laura Harrier, and Mike Myers // Lionsgate Films // 128 minutes // Rated PG-13

Mother Mary is a Hallucinatory Trip

A star is born



Films about the complex lives of famous performers are always terrific opportunities for interesting filmmaking. Unfortunately, so many of these films follow the most routine story beats and, at worst, become sanitized drivel like *Bohemian Rhapsody* or *Michael*. That was why I was excited to see a voice as unique as David Lowery (*A Ghost Story*, *The Green Knight*) tackle the double life of a pop star with his film *Mother Mary*. The result is a nightmarish trip into the psyche that combines the complex characterization of films like *Black Swan* and *Perfect Blue* with some hallucinatory imagery straight out of a Ken Russell film.

The plot follows Mother Mary (Anne Hathaway), a pop star with costumes so gaudy they would make Lady Gaga blush, who is on the verge of a comeback tour after an onstage tragedy. With just days left before her first performance, she goes to her former cos-



tume designer, Sam Anselm (Michaela Coel) to design the perfect outfit for her show. As they work on the costume, Sam and Mary confront their estranged friendship and Mary confesses to a "red ghost" that has been possessing her body.

The film is essentially a two-character chamber piece, but through flashbacks and dreamlike imagery, Lowery asks the question of who really controls a performer's stage identity; the performer or the people working behind the scenes? He tells this story of art at the expense of humanity with some in-

credible imagery and sound, as well as powerful performances from its two leads. There are moments where the visuals threaten to overtake the film, but this tale of the beautiful nightmare that is creativity is unlike anything in recent memory. – Forest Taylor

Written and directed by David Lowery // Starring Anne Hathaway, Michaela Coel, Hunter Schafer, Sian Clifford, Kaia Gerber, Alba Baptista, Atheena Frizzell, Jessica Brown Fiday, Isaura Barbe-Brown, Jeanne Nicole Ni Ainle, and FKA twigs // A24 // 112 minutes // Rated R



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This is Why I Love You

By: Mabel Howard, Mabeline "The Artist"

No single person controls you
 I know that you will show up each day
 And when I decide to rise I can see you
 Your loyalty is unwavering
 You never truly go away
 you're hidden by the elements of nature
 and once they leave or shift
 I get to see you for who you truly are
 I could never become jealous that you're
 bright enough to warm all that pass by
 There's beauty in a touch that you can feel from something that has no
 arms, hands or fingers...
 Your radiance lingers....
 Deep into my subconscious mind...
 Giving me opportunities to
 experience you in my dreams...
 which I'm blessed to also
 have during the day...
 And when I want to drift away
 from my daily commitments...
 I have the authority to look up to the sky...
 And in the midst of my gaze
 I get to SEE YOUR RAYS...
 Shining down on me...
 This is why I love you!

Mabeline hosts and promotes a variety of community building programs that focus on the Art of Healing through poetry and writing, including Live Poetry at Cafe 7-10 and The Poetry X-Change at Werner Books and Coffee. She can be reached at gamewithmabel@gmail.com



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Eastern Recluse

Eastern Recluse

Daddy Done Did It Records



You'll never hear the word "crayons" the same way again. This spectacular debut from local dirt-rockers Eastern Recluse is bursting with personality and hummable riffs, the eponymous EP's seven glorious tracks worthy of replays all year long. Ideal for fans of bands like Dinosaur Jr. and the Meat Puppets, Eastern Recluse combines the modern psych-tinged sensibilities of artists like MJ Lenderman with the guitar-laden slacker rock of the 1990s. Built out of the longtime collaboration between guitarist Mark Nardo and vocalist Elliott Witherow, the two were joined by bassist David DeFranco and drummer Alex Wardi, recording the album at MindRocket RecordingStudio in West Middlesex, Pennsylvania. You're going to want to play this loudly. Save for the intimately acoustic, titular closing cut, each track is sharp with lushly overdriven tones and straight-ahead rock prowess from the rhythm section. Witherow's delivery and lyrics take things to the next level, at times funny, others mysteriously evocative, and always styled with a unique and lovable drawl. This recording is a blessing, with hopefully much more to come from this quartet in the future. – Nick Warren



My New Band Believe

My New Band Believe

Rough Trade



If you have followed alternative rock in the past decade, you have likely heard of the United Kingdom's Windmill scene. Named after the eponymous Brixton club, this musical movement birthed a slew of the most exciting, theatrical bands in recent memory: Shame, Caroline, Black Country New Road, and, seminally, Black Midi. However, as Black Midi announced an indefinite hiatus in August 2024, bassist and co-vocalist Cameron Picton had little planned in terms of a follow-up. After touring and releasing a few CD-exclusive solo projects, Picton's vision of a new band formed when Caroline reached out with an interest in collaboration. Completed in December 2025 and released in April 2026, Cameron Picton has unveiled his newest effort, *My New Band Believe*. Rather than sticking with the traditional lineup format, *Believe* is fluid in its membership and artistry. While Picton stays as frontman, a collection of more than 50 musicians serve as collaborators on the effort, encompassing the majority of the Windmill scene. The result is a debut project with a massive scale: ornately lush and worldly strings and horns meld together in a fashion akin to the best chamber and baroque tunes of their respective eras. All the while, Picton and a choir regale us with picturesque narratives of love and loss. The authorship on tracks such as "Love Story," "Actress," and the non-album single "Numerology" feels like an artist unencumbered by the confines of their genre or sound, free to make whatever their hearts desire. Whatever *My New Band Believe* has in store, there's no doubt about its authenticity and expression. – Nathaniel Clark



Earl Sweatshirt, MIKE, & SURF GANG

POMPEII // UTILITY

10k, Tan Cressida, and Surf Gang Records



Earl Sweatshirt and MIKE are not experimental rappers, and despite what fellow rapper/one-sided beef-starter JPEGMAFIA might have you believe, they don't claim to be. They are, however, evolving rappers. From Earl's mid-2010s output to 2019's *Some Rap Songs* and recent collaborations with The Alchemist, Earl has lived in a number of subgenres over the past 15 years, most recently arriving at "ambient plugg" with friend and peer MIKE. On their unwieldy double-album with production team SURF GANG, the rappers consciously mumble their way through a series of uneasy, surreal, and consistently fascinating beats. If it all sounds a bit strange, it is – but in a way that scratches a very specific itch. The rappers clearly influence each other, with Earl adopting MIKE's shamelessly lackadaisical flow and the pair featuring on each other's halves of the record. But the most interesting highlight of *POMPEII // UTILITY* is the completely unique production from SURF GANG, adding glitchy textures to trap and cloud rap beats that make both halves of the project feel like a cohesive whole. *POMPEII // UTILITY* is not a rap album for everyone, but for those willing to put in the time, it's an incredibly rewarding experience. – Aaron Mook



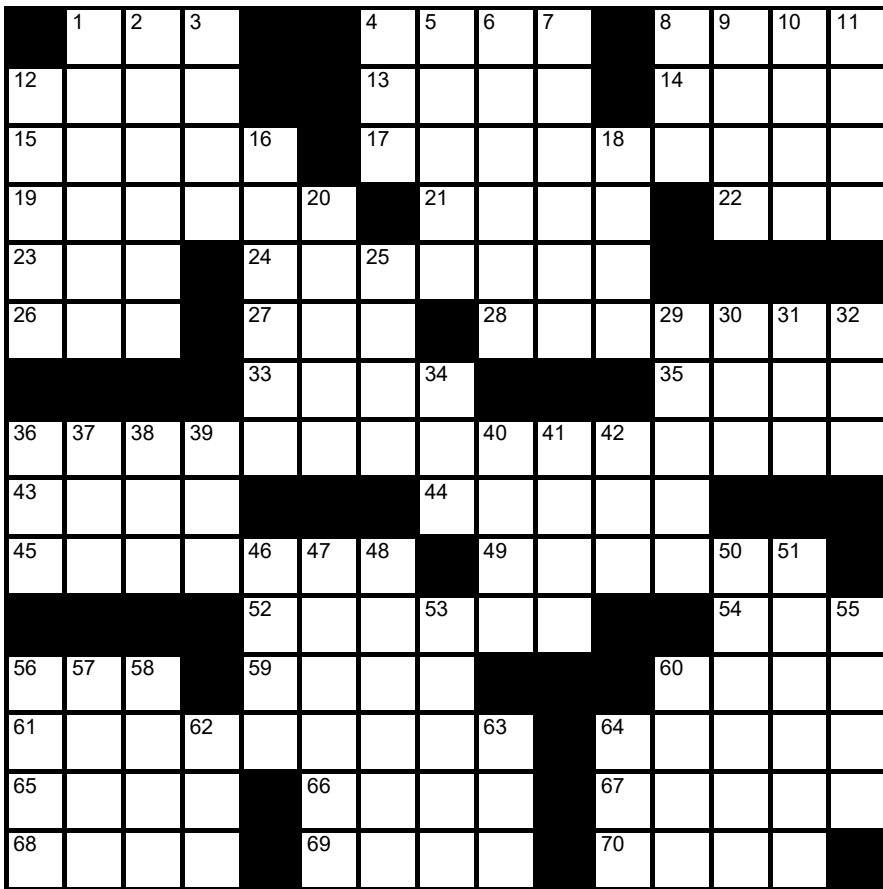
The Third Mind

Spellbinder!

Yep Roc



Supergroups like The Travelling Wilburys or releases like *June 1, 1974* are collaborations transcending expectations but rarely homogeneous enough to leave individual careers at the door. Yet this psych folk rock EP (a supplement to their album *Right Now!*) from The Third Mind with its impressive lineup of seasoned musicians Dave Alvin, David Immerglück, Michael Jerome, and Victor Krummenacher as it gels seamlessly, without ego. First track, the instrumental "Spellbinder" is a nod to influential Hungarian folk/jazz guitarist Gábor Szabó. It flows with rhythms hinting of Curtis Mayfield through foaming bubbles of The Ventures while rippling vibes of early Trans Am. The stark gothic blues of Otis Rush's "Reap What You Sow" stomps with chugging Bonham beats and moaning guitar solos like Peter Green. Original "Before We Said Goodbye" with its string track is melancholy and obtuse like a Scott Walker tune, moving between soft calm and purging urgency. The final track, a Jesse Colin Young come Leon Thomas/Pharoah Sanders remix, is reminiscent of the best transitions found in '80s Dead's *Drums/Space*. It creates a lush vortex and other-worldliness. Jesse Sykes' vocals are enriched with an Eartha Kitt/Sandy Denny/Grace Slick range, keeping pace with strength and wisdom. This album hits like sitting in the basement of a friend with an obscenely well-curated record collection, listening to the deepest cuts. – Melissa Sullivan



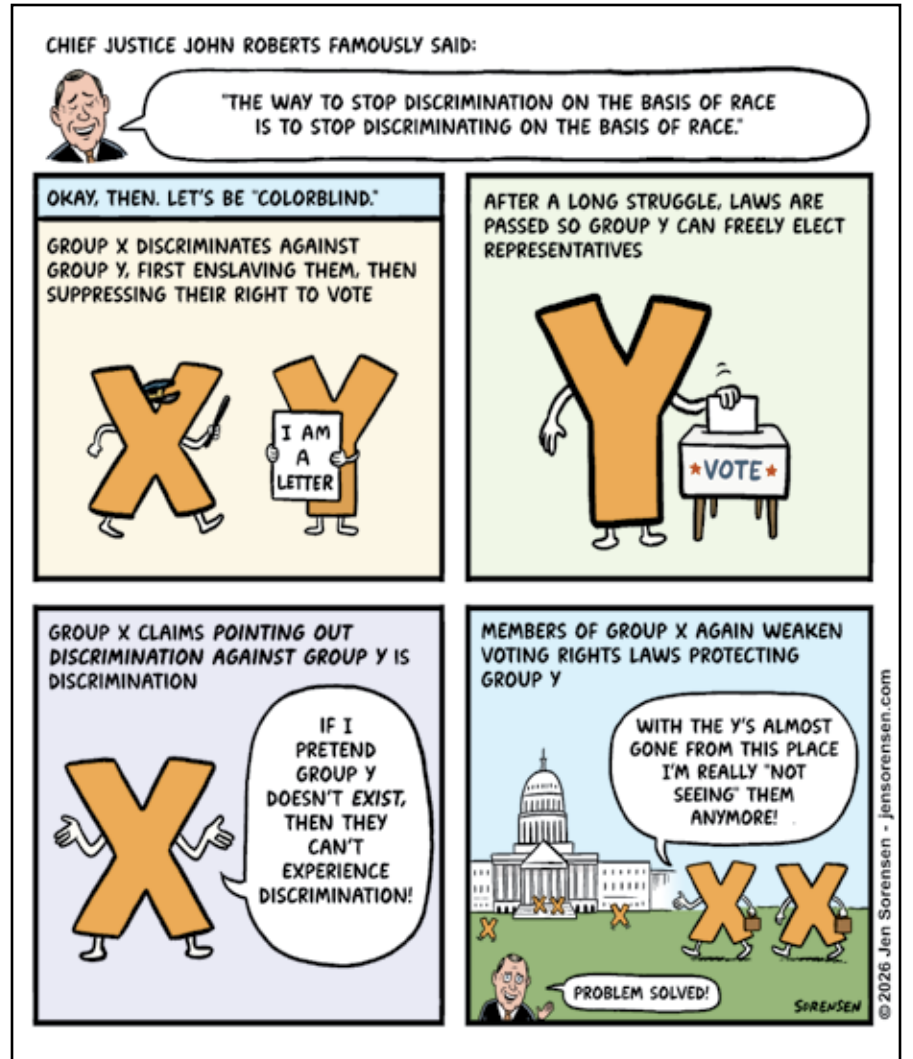
Across

- 1. 2018 documentary about a Supreme Court Justice [
- 4. John Lennon's in-laws
- 8. ___ Boys (antagonists in "KPop Demon Hunters")
- 12. Saline drop
- 13. "___ & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming"
- 14. Amanda who came back to the U.S. in 2011
- 15. Belgian WWI battle site
- 17. Lemonheads lead vocalist
- 19. Dragged along
- 21. Moises who missed the ball destroyed 2/25/04
- 22. "Atlas Shrugged" author Rand
- 23. Had for breakfast
- 24. Got detached
- 26. "The Grand Budapest Hotel" director Anderson
- 27. Dye brand
- 28. South Carolina city (or puzzle writer Matt, the founding editor of Jonesin')
- 33. Actor Idris of 2017's "The Dark Tower"
- 35. 40-Down-shaped container
- 36. A quarter of a century
- 43. 2012 acronym akin to "Be adventurous"
- 44. Tangle ... or disentangle
- 45. Emperor who abdicated on 4/30/2019
- 49. Motion detector part
- 52. S.W. who founded the cookware brand called ___ ware
- 54. 2008 kids' movie "___'s Island"
- 56. Neurological test letters
- 59. ___ and Howdy (polar bear mascots of the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics)
- 60. Eugene of "A Mighty

Down

- 1. Public esteem
- 2. Canal boats
- 3. Davies who is the Taskmaster
- 4. 2021 U.K. award for "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom" actor Toby Jones
- 5. Astral phenomena (with the fancy plural)
- 6. Bump's place, idiomatically
- 7. "Why you little ..."
- 8. Precursor to rocksteady
- 9. Elsa's "Frozen" sister
- 10. "Looking for a New Love" singer Watley
- 11. Nerve cell's impulse transmitter
- 12. Patriots defensive back who scored during the 2002 Super Bowl
- 16. Clandestine
- 18. "The Simpsons" beer brand
- 20. "The ___" (podcast hosted by Michael Barbaro and Sabrina Tavernise)
- 25. Initialism in manufacturing meaning "mean time before failure" (that's a freebie)

- 29. Emotions, slangily
- 30. Rap group with a 2013 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nomination
- 31. Suffix after mountain or auction
- 32. "___ truly" (brief closing)
- 34. French electronic group with the 2007 album "Pocket Symphony"
- 36. Children's theater, for short
- 37. Fried rice vessel
- 38. Peyton Manning's brother
- 39. Classic Japanese drama form
- 40. Flower holder
- 41. At any time
- 42. Miyazaki's money
- 46. Journey's "___ Should Break Your Heart"
- 47. Brosnan / Rush movie "The ___ of Panama"
- 48. Words after "truth"
- 50. Simple to prepare, as a meal
- 51. Muralist Diego
- 53. Amanda who retired, then "unretired" from acting in 2010
- 55. "___ Breckinridge" (Gore Vidal novel)
- 56. Quaint expletive
- 57. ___ Stanley Gardner (author whose Perry Mason character inspired the 2020 HBO series)
- 58. "Top Chef" judge Simmons
- 60. Queue
- 62. Show whose season finale was directed by Quentin Tarantino
- 63. Decimal point
- 64. "Trap Queen" rapper Fetty ___



Answers to last puzzle



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 Sensory Open House Celebration
 Winefest 2026
 Barber National Institute Events 2026
 Downtown Edinboro Arts & Music Fest
 Boro With the Works
 2026 Highland Games & Scottish Festival

2026 Erie's Blues & Jazz Festival
 Erie Bird Observatory
 The Nutcracker 2026
 8 Greast Tuesdays
 Summer on State
 87th Annual Save An Eye All-Star Football Game
 Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership
 Onyx Exchange Campus Grand Opening Celebration
 Bowl for Kid's Sake, Bingo for Kid's Sake
 Tethered Immersive
 Great American Book Fair
 Goodell Gardens & Homestead
 Harborcreek Community Engagement Team
 32nd Annual Zabawa Polish Festival
 Red, White, & Blue Gala
 JES Programming/Global Summit
 VMercy Center for Women
 Guns 'N Hoses Softball
 Keystone Nonprofit Conference

Community Connection Events
 Presque Isle Light Station
 Presque Isle Partnership
 Lens of Change: A Student Film Festival
 2026 PurpleOne Domestic Violence Conference
 Erie Irish Festival
 Scouting America - French Creek Council
 St. Paul's Italian Festival
 Oktoberfest
 Forever Curious Festival and 20th Anniversary
 French Creek Festival
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