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THE 2018

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ISSUE

VELOCITY NETWORK,
PENN STATE BEHREND, AND
THE ERIE INNOVATION DISTRICT

LOCAL BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES

LOOKING BACK AT THE MINORITY
YOUTH ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAM


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



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From the Editors

The crossroads of industry, innovation, and entrepreneurship

We welcome you to the fourth annual Industry, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Issue (lovingly referred to here as the "IzE" issue). Here, we look at the roadmap of industry in Erie, the innovations guiding us into the future, and the entrepreneurial backbone that drives our local economy.

Some in Erie with their eyes on that future often say that the region finds itself at a crossroads.

Pejoratively speaking, being at a crossroads typically isn't seen as a good thing. Make the wrong turn and the driver of development at the wheel of the vehicle of growth putters off the path to progress quietly into that good night.

To contextualize the crossroads, read the "Letter of Transmittal: Comprehensive Plan City of Erie" Charles Buki submitted to the Mayor of the City of Erie, members of Erie's City Council, and the planning commissioners.

In the letter, which the Erie Reader ran in its entirety April 13, 2016, Buki, the principal planner at czb, LLC., the urban planning commission that completed Erie Refocused, wrote: "In an important way, how Erie got here is a less pressing matter than that Erie is where it is. In point of fact, Erie is at a crossroads, and, make no mistake, the clock is ticking."

Buki outlined the glut of vacant housing units in Erie (4,700), the erosion of middle and upper income households over the past four decades (33 percent), and the city's declining population.

"With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless in the face of resistance to change and be thorough from the very start. By holding onto old ideas, the result for Erie will be nil. Half measures will avail Erie nothing because your city is at a turning point."

Crossroads present options in decision making — which at best is calculated and weighed; at worst, perhaps, left to chance. Either way, standing at a crossroads doesn't encourage momentum.

Crossroads offer something else: An intentional moment to see who else is on the road and perhaps a chance to cross paths or share lanes.

The opportunity for connection and convergence drives Joel Deuterman, CEO and President of Velocity Network. That is evident in both the multi-service technology company's continued deployment of its fiber Internet as well as its rapid-paced construction on its soon-to-be downtown headquarters. It drives Mercyhurst University's role in Erie's downtown innovation. It also drives Penn State Behrend Chancellor Ralph Ford, and the school's multi-million dollar Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Center. Ben Speggen checks in with these influential figures leading the charge in Erie's burgeoning centers of technology. He also tells the story of a new emerging leader on the scene — one who was almost counted out last November — John Persinger, new CEO of the Erie Downtown Development Corporation.

Looking at the overall state of Erie industry, Jim Wertz gets a word from Ken Louie, director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie, and analyzes crucial statistics from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

Oftentimes, those numbers don't reflect the success stories going on. In this issue, Matt Swanseger and Nick Warren highlight five growing businesses in Erie County, Cara Suppa follows up with three 40 Under 40 honorees who are continuing to find success, and Liz Allen spotlights three African-American entrepreneurs who are making quite an impact.

These connections fuel our future. They lead us in the right direction. By learning from the missteps of our past, and taking charge of our own future, the pathway becomes clear.

These crossroads are an opportunity. As industry, innovation, and entrepreneurship converge, we begin to see a hopeful destination up ahead.

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The State of Erie Industry in 2018

Analyzing statistics and mapping region's economy



By: Jim Wertz

The Erie economy is status quo. That's been the trend for more than a decade and while holding course is better than falling behind, the Erie economy lags behind both the Commonwealth and the nation in economic growth. Erie's gross domestic product (GDP) — the value of a regional economic output — grew at a rate of just under two percent during the past fifteen years, according to reports by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. When compared with GDP growth of 24 percent statewide and 30 percent nationally, the outlook becomes somewhat less optimistic. Erie's stagnant economic output is due in part to the fact that the local economy has not diversified at the rate of other metropolitan areas across the country. Traditional manufacturing still accounts for 22 percent of the local GDP, while the sector accounts for only 12 percent of GDP both in Pennsylvania and nationally. While many areas of the country have already begun to transition toward tech-based manufacturing of products

and services, Erie's economic absorption of the decline in traditional manufacturing during the past 35 years has primarily been through the expansion of government, healthcare, and education. Nevertheless, the collective momentum of initiatives at various stages of community engagement are promising as Erie industries look to diversify and positively impact the disparity between Erie's GDP and that of the Commonwealth and the country during the past fifteen years. "There are lots of positive things happening in Erie," says Ken Louie, director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie. "With Bayfront development, the *Erie Refocused* comprehensive plan, the Innovation District, these are all exciting things. If these things take root and help make the Erie economy more dynamic, then hopefully that will narrow the gap." Among those positive things happening in Erie is a boom in the industrial sector that makes computer and electronic products that began in 2015. "That sector has grown like gangbusters," Louie says. "If you compare the output in that sector in Erie to the

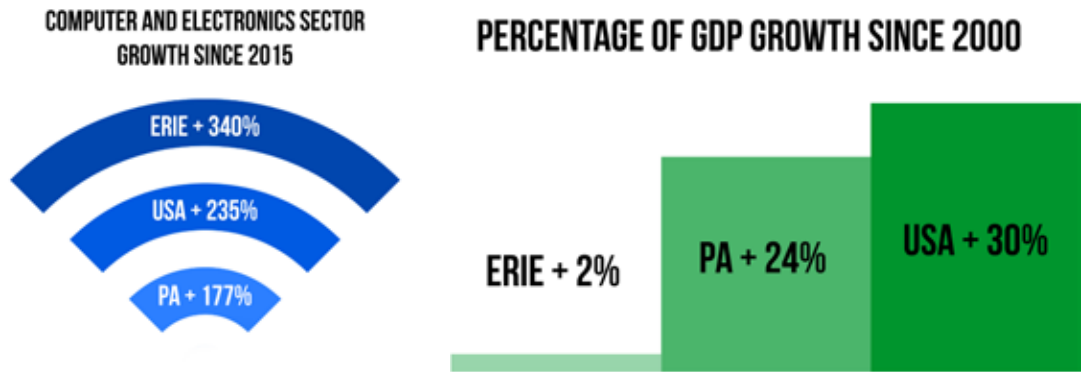
growth rate in the state and the nation, it's a faster growth rate in Erie. In Erie, computer and electronics products output grew by more than 340 percent, in PA it grew by 177 percent, and in the U.S. by 235 percent. That sector is very dynamic across the country, but the growth rate has been especially high in the Erie economy." One hypothesis is that skilled workers who are leaving larger manufacturing firms like General Electric, for example, are transferring their knowledge base to small startups, serving niche parts of the industries in which they formerly were employed or branching into other advanced manufacturing sectors. These companies tend to be smaller, often with just a few employees, but that makes them more nimble competitors than traditional industrial behemoths. "This is one of the more positive aspects in the evolution of the Erie economy," Louie believes. The rise of small, independent firms rooted in technical industries since 2015 has also helped fuel the expansion of Radius CoWork, located in the Renaissance Center in downtown Erie, and it helps to validate the establishment of the Innovation District, which is the collaborative effort of Mercyhurst University, Erie Insurance, Velocity Network, and McManis and Monsalve & Associates, as well as UPMC,

Ben Franklin Technology Partners, Dell EMC, and MCPc to cluster assets and industries in a geographic corridor that facilitates partnerships and knowledge-sharing. While the small startups may not yet have scaled up to the radar of the Innovation District, their success is integral to stabilizing the Erie economy long term. That's because they tend to provide family-sustaining wages at a time when Erie lags nearly 8,000 dollars behind the state and the nation in this category as well. That's the difference between a bus pass and personal transportation, or the difference between renting property and owning property. It also means that while more than 800 jobs have been added to the local economy in the past year, primarily in retail and hospitality industries, overall employment — or the number of people actually working in the Erie region — fell by approximately one percent, which suggests that working people are supplementing their household incomes with more than one job. "The jobs we've been losing since 2015 are the ones at bigger manufacturing firms like GE which are historically better paying jobs," Louie says. Those include blue collar jobs as well as white collar jobs, executive positions and third-party vendors that serve as links in the industrial eco-



system. As the region moves through 2018 and beyond, the momentum created in the more diversified industries that invest greater shares of capital in research and development will continue to play a more significant role in the overall economy. Without them, the relative stability of status quo economics will be put at greater risk and will present significant challenges to the investments of economic change being carried out by various stakeholders in downtown Erie and throughout the region. Dynamic industries will require dynamic leadership, as well as dynamic partners in business and government, to nurture, attract, and retain forward thinking talent. Rest assured, that network has no patience for the status quo.

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



A Better Chance

Minority Youth Entrepreneurial Program yields success



[left] Angela Euell McNair is a mother of five, including Angelina, 15, a ninth-grader at Collegiate Academy. Angelina got an introduction to running her own business when she made and sold scarves. [right] David Dix dreamt of opening his own nightclub as a teenager in the Minority Youth Entrepreneurial Program. Today, he is sole owner of Luminous Strategies, a public relations/international campaign management firm based in Harrisburg.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

By: Liz Allen

Twenty years ago, two 15-year-olds in Erie, Angela Euell McNair and David Dix, dreamed about starting their own businesses.

McNair wanted to run a second-shift childcare center.

Dix also would be working late hours — at his restaurant/bar/nightclub in the former Isaac Baker building, the art-deco treasure at E. Seventh and State streets. “It was a cool building. I thought it would be a great location, centered near some commerce, right across from City Hall,” he said. He named his business The Players Club, after a popular Outkast song.

While McNair, Dix and other teens studied financial literacy, learned about collateral and discovered how to devise a business plan by participating in the Minority Youth Entrepreneurial Program, Gary Lee was looking at the big picture. He worked to raise expectations, so that young African-Americans could see themselves as part of the process as Erie grew and prospered, especially on Erie’s bayfront.

Today, McNair, 37, and Dix, 38, attribute their success as entrepreneurs to the lessons they learned at the entrepreneurial training program.

McNair was a student at Central High School and Dix was at Cathedral Prep when they were accepted

into the program, which met for four hours a week, for 14 weeks, at Gannon University. With Lee and Justin Coleman as the instructors, the program was offered to 20 students twice a semester between 1992 and 1996, said Lee, who has served as director of administration for Erie County since 2014. Coleman is now a development director who has raised millions for a private school in California, said Dix.

“It really was ahead of its time,” Lee said about the entrepreneurial program as he paged through a calendar that one class designed and marketed as a college scholarship fundraiser.

The program began as a pilot project in Philadelphia at the urging of former state Sen. Roxanne Jones before expanding statewide. It ended when funding was cut.

“Hindsight is 20-20,” Lee said. “We as the leaders did not have the vision to leverage the money with private money.”

Not every student became an entrepreneur, and some who started businesses chose careers far afield from the ones they dreamed about as teenagers. A young man who wanted to become a doctor is a patent lawyer. Another who wanted to become a TV producer runs a successful DJ business in Pittsburgh. A would-be fashion designer is a nurse. A potential certified public accountant works for the federal government.

But the entrepreneurial skills they learned served them well.

“It gave us hope that we as young black kids could be successful business owners, or just successful, period,” said McNair, 37. “We had to figure out what business we wanted to have, and plan for it, how to get it together,” she recalled.

As a teen, she knew that she wanted to work with children. She also knew that although there were first-shift daycares owned by African-Americans in Erie, there were no minority-owned, second-shift childcare centers.

It took time for McNair to realize her dream. After receiving her bachelor’s degree in social work at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, she married, started her family and commuted once (and sometimes twice) a week to the University of Pittsburgh to earn her master’s degree in social work. “I’d leave at 5 o’clock in the morning and get home at seven,” she said.

Working as a mobile therapy behavior consultant, she began plans for her childcare center in 2013. Her dream became a reality in 2015, when she opened JumpStart Early Learning Center, at the Booker T. Washington Center. McNair, the mother of five children, including seven-year-old twin girls who are on the autism spectrum, knows firsthand the challenge of finding quality childcare, especially

in summer. “Enough is enough,” she decided. “It’s time to pursue my goals.”

But it was hard to find financing for her business. For the first two months, friends helped out as she ran without an operating budget to serve a couple of kids.

Now, the center, which cares for 50 to 60 children, is open first and second shift, seven days a week. She employs 10 people and is awaiting certification from Keystone STARS, a continuous improvement program for quality pre-K programs.

“The program itself was really rigorous. I remember going through a pretty intense interview process and application. It was the first time I ever experienced anything that intense.”

Today, Dix, 38, fondly remembers his dream to open a nightclub in downtown Erie. “I did not win the business plan competition,” he joked.

But the influence of the entrepreneur program stuck with him. “The program itself was really rigorous,” he said. “I remember going through a pretty intense interview process and application. It was the first time I ever experienced anything that intense.”

After high school, Dix pursued a double major in political science and marketing at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Eight years ago, he co-founded Luminous Strategies, a public relations/international campaign management firm, based in Harrisburg, with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. He became the sole owner a year-and-a-half ago.

On March 13, during Gov. Tom Wolf's roundtable discussion on racial disparities in Erie, held at Climate Changers ministry, Lee highlighted the success stories of the two young entrepreneurs.

In separate interviews later, McNair, Dix and Lee talked about their experiences with the entrepreneurial program and their hopes for Erie.

"I got black power economics ... at (age) 15," said Dix. "It not only inspired me but liberated me, that things were possible I didn't even fathom."

Entrepreneurship programs are needed now more than ever, he said. "Millennials can't count on working 40 hours a week at the same place for 40 years." Programs to retool the workforce should be "lauded, supported, encouraged," he said. "We have a failed educational model that doesn't account for how the economy works today. We have to start to train people who won't be working at the same place forever, particularly around technology that is transferable."

McNair said the teen entrepreneur-

ship program was helpful because it "gave you the mindframe that you can do more than what people perceive."

The program also "made other people feel like they have a voice." She has certainly exercised her voice. In November, she was elected to her second term on the Erie School Board, where she started the Better Together program to engage community members on important educational issues.

Lee would like to organize a reunion for graduates of the teen entrepreneurial program, and perhaps do a new calendar, to show where they are today.

Of course, he would show them the old calendar, the one that used a stock photo of a booming waterfront city, with "Dobbins Landing" superimposed on the picture. "We had a vision of what we wanted the city to look like," he said.

As plans proceed for bayfront development, for the Erie Insurance expansion and for other projects in the city, that 20-year-old vision captured in a photo on that calendar is becoming reality. "I see inspiration and hope,"

said Lee. But many of the entrepreneur program participants don't live in Erie now. "My hope is that they will return to Erie someday and be a part of developing Erie's entrepreneurship ecosystem for all people," he said.

LIZ ALLEN, a retired editor from the Erie Times-News, still follows the careers of young people who wrote for the newspaper's teen program, Fresh Ink, and who worked as college interns.

Learn more: Do you want to meet and mingle with other entrepreneurs? Be sure to check out everything going on at Blasco Library, including in the Idea Lab and Digital Media Studio. The library offers many opportunities for young people to capitalize on their creativity, including the Teen Reading Lounge. The TRL will meet from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on April 12, 19 and 26. The program will focus on graphic novels and teens will design, create and complete the banner for Library Comic Con, set for May 19. For more information, visit www.erielibrary.org

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Kevin Arrington: Saying YES

Venture outside of your neighborhood and beyond the boundaries of Erie. Scope out business opportunities other than the traditional barber shop or beauty salon.

That is some of the advice that local people of color share with aspiring entrepreneurs.

"I want people to be encouraged to think outside the box, to look at what African-Americans are doing in other cities," said Angela McNair, who started JumpStart Early Learning Center in 2015.

New businesses form "always based on the need, but sometimes people don't know the need if they haven't been exposed to it," she said.

McNair's advice is similar to that of Kevin Arrington, director of the programs division for the Young Entrepreneur Society (YES) in Erie.

At a roundtable discussion led by Gov. Tom Wolf to discuss racial disparities in Erie, Arrington touted the benefits of entrepreneurship and encouraged participants to get involved in the Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership, where he is the only African-American board member.

In an interview, he talked about the powerful role that education and mentors played in shaping his life.

His mother, Maryanne Mitchell, a single parent, stressed to her four children that education was the way out of poverty. "But I can't afford to give you that education, so you have to get scholarships," she told her kids.

In addition to his mother, he credits retired Erie teachers Johnny Johnson and Barbara Drew, Biddy Brooks from Ganon University's Upward Bound program, and Erie City Councilman Mel Witherspoon with mentoring him.

Arrington, 46, embraced his mother's advice about pursuing postsecondary education. After graduating from Tech High School, where he studied data processing, he attended California University of Pennsylvania on scholarships, majoring in computer science and minoring in business management.

Going to college outside of Erie and then spending time in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Harrisburg was good for his personal and professional development, he said.

"A high percentage of youth and adults have never left Erie," he said. YES, which was formally incorporated in 2011, works with people of all ages on workforce development, soft skills and mentorship. "It's our job to broaden their horizons of what they can be," Arrington said.

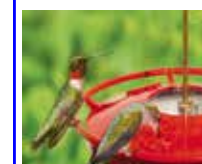
YES isn't specifically aimed at people of color. "We focus on everybody," said Arrington. But the YES model of working with nontraditional students means that minorities and women are introduced to the entrepreneurial culture in Erie. That, in turn, is good for business, he said.

"The challenge lies for all of us in northwestern Pennsylvania, especially those in positions of power, to diversify," he said. "For our business community to thrive, we have to be inclusive of everyone — workers, managers and customers."

With programs currently in Erie and Crawford County, YES is poised to expand geographically. "For more on YES, stay tuned, because growth is on the horizon," Arrington promised.

For more information about the Young Entrepreneur Society, visit www.trainedbyyes.org or call (814) 480-5771. — Liz Allen

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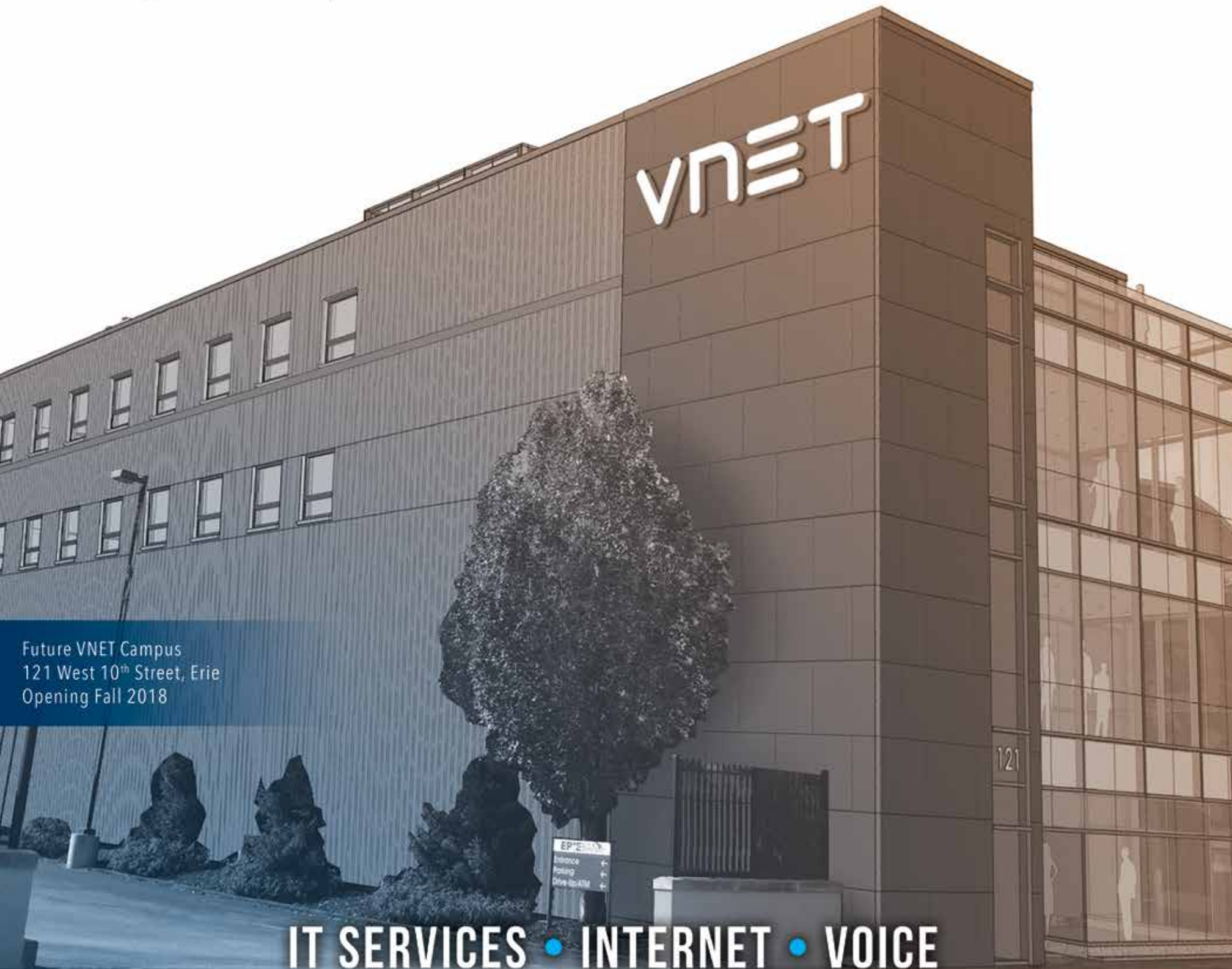
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Ideas, Industry, and Entrepreneurs

A look a Velocity Network, Penn State Behrend, and the Erie Innovation District



By: Ben Speggen

The current construction at the Rothrock building runs through the building with celerity. Fifteen years ago, Joel Deuter- man, the President and CEO of Velocity Network, was standing in the main atrium of Alcoa's Global Headquarters in Pittsburgh. For the first time, he was contemplating the relocation of his multi-service technology company in Erie, going to the Steel City to tour facilities for inspiration.

"Before people started talking about 'crashing' into each other in innovation district areas and spaces designed intentionally to create col- laboration and mindshare, Alcoa was cognizant of the fact that when you jump into an elevator, you're by your- self or merely with whoever else is on the elevator, and you miss the oppor- tunity to crash into other peers and other people in your organization," recalls Deuter- man.

"When I see someone in passing, I'm reminded of an idea or previous con- versation and then the mindshare be- gins all over again," he adds. "It's just a hyper-cool and efficient method of communication."

The desire to facilitate a more free-flowing exchange of ideas be- tween employees guides the open-air concept Kidder Wachter Architecture & Design drafted. A stairwell spring- ing from the center on the first floor of the under-intense-renovation

Rothrock building at 121 W. 10th St. snakes upwards to the fourth, not en- cased in a silo, but open to the entire building.

"It will just *really* empower every person that works for Velocity to have maximum communication amongst every other person," says Deuter- man.

Rothrock now reverberates with the buzzing pulse of construction. Originally constructed by Baldwin Brothers Real Estate in 1960, yet most recently sitting vacant for years, the new Velocity HQ will be a 38,590 square-foot renovation yielding a bustling intersection of smart ideas in a smart building. After some delays in development due to some budget complications that have since been ironed out without significantly in- creasing the bottom line, it is antici- pated to be open November 2018.

Velocity construction isn't limited to the Rothrock building; Deuter- man recently acquired the former Credit Bu- reau of Erie at 115 W. 11th St. at a sher- iff's sale for \$72,000. A block south, it extended the Velocity Campus foot- print in February 2018. Velocity pow- ers more than 600 buildings within the city and has nearly 500 miles worth of fiber crisscrossing Erie. And for those continually inquiring: *When can I get fiber in my home?*, fiber-to- the-home deployment has increased tenfold over the course of the past year.

At the end of 2017, Velocity provid- ed fiber to 10 residential units. That's

[top left] Penn State Behrend seniors Nick Spanglen (left) and Eric Orton (right) examine a scrap from a forging process for manufacturing defects. [bottom right] Karl Sanchak (center), managing director of Virginia-based consulting firm AB Innovations, LLC, was named the Erie Innovation District's first CEO in September of last year. He sits with interns Nick Samsel (left) and Jordan Fuller (right) at the brightly modern Innovation Hub located at 707 State St.

now approaching 150 with another 150 slated for construction in the im- mediate future. The goal is to power 1,000 residential units by the end of 2018 and add another 1,500 to 2,000 each year after that, a now-faster pace of deployment thanks to a new tech- nology that allows Velocity to plug a line in at a pole rather than splice each location individually.

Since the announcement of the plan to move and expand back in July 2016, Velocity's added 20 employees to its workforce, for a current staff of 71 total employees. That, in addition to

more crashing, is a quick and impact- ful win for a city Charles Buki encour- aged to eschew "half measures." Drop- ping in 70-plus employees making family-sustaining wages into the core of the city is both a feel-good (*Look, more people! Working in downtown! Where people have been leaving!*) and economic development (*Business! Downtown!*) injection.

"If you were talking five years ago, everyone would've said you're nuts," half-jokes Brad Wiertel, Velocity's Chief Operating Officer. "Even when we were looking at Ridgefield, people told us not to look downtown, not to waste our money down there."

"We beg of you to be fearless in the face of resistance," wrote Buki, the principal planner for czb, LLC., the ur- ban planning firm that completed *Erie Refocused*, the city's recently adopted city plan, in the "Letter of Transmittal: Comprehensive Plan City of Erie."

"Your city is at a turning point," he also wrote. "In point of fact, Erie is at a





MATTHEW BASHA-ACHA

Joel Deuterman stands at the construction site of the new Velocity Network headquarters in the Rothrock Building at 121 W. 10th St. The building will be replete with many modern amenities and feature an open-air design.

have led to three patent applications and two new start-up companies.”

Those collaborations include: Lace-N-Lock (a device developed by a team of students that helps people with disabilities or those recovering from surgery to tighten their shoes without having to bend down); a wall-framing tool envisioned by local house-flipper Jason Wokutch, who often works alone and often frames walls (read: really hard to do alone); and a fold-out emergency barricade (a portable, lighter barricade that could conveniently fit in the trunk of a police cruiser), an idea that came out of startup Grizzly Innovations.

“Innovation Commons is an important component in a growing network of resources for entrepreneurs and startups,” Ford says of the first site in the Northwest Pennsylvania Innovation Beehive Network.

In October 2017, the Beehive received a \$200,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant along with a \$200,000 match by the Ignite Erie Industry+University Business Acceleration Collaborative. That funding has created a unique business support network between Erie County’s four universities.

A three-year, \$1.5 million partnership, Penn State Behrend spearheads the Ignite Erie Industry+University collaborative with funding support coming the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. The framework drives collaboration with the caveat that funded projects must involve partners at more than one member institution.

Linked sites include Edinboro University of Pennsylvania’s Baron-Forness Library (a lab focusing on advertising, marketing, and public relations for business startups); Gannon University’s Small Business Development Center and the Erie Technology Incubator (focused on business development, including business analysis); and Mercyhurst University’s Ridge College of Intelligence Studies (concentrated on business intelligence services and solutions to help developers commercialize their ideas).

“As additional beehive sites open —

each focusing on a different aspect of business development — local entrepreneurs will have access to a host of complementary support services,” says Ford.

Those support systems include the Blasco Library’s Idea Lab, which launched in late October, helping to create a feeder system for business projects in the region.

“We’re helping them make their ideas a reality, which is good not only for the entrepreneurs, but also for the larger community.”

Ideas have space to become a reality, too, back in Erie’s downtown with the launch of the Erie Innovation District.

But *Innovation* and *District* often get bandied about casually. On a block brimming with millennials and Gen Zs toting the latest gadgets and gizmos, flippantly, one might say *look, an innovation district!*

Simply proclaiming physical space an innovation district does not an actual innovation district make.

As Brookings Institution Centennial Scholar Bruce Katz notes in “The Rise of Innovation Districts: A New Geography of Innovation in America.” “Innovation districts are the manifestation of mega-trends altering the location preferences of people and firms and, in the process, re-conceiving the very link between economy shaping, placemaking, and social networking.”

To best understand the recent evolution of the Erie Innovation District — not as a broad-brushed label but as an actual coalition of business and academia developing security, intelligence, and safety-based businesses housed at 717 State St. shared with the Erie Insurance Innovation Center — it’s best to review the timeline, and to keep Katz in mind.

Katz first visited Erie in 2014, presenting on his seminal 2013 work *The Metropolitan Revolution* at the Jefferson Educational Society’s Global Summit and returned the following year, this time to espouse the importance of Advanced Industries. Consistent in Katz’s message: Cities are on the vanguard of problem-solving and policy innovation — including innovation districts. Those in Erie were taking notes and making plans.

October 2016: the Erie Community Foundation, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, and the Susan Hirt Hagen Fund for Transformational Therapy announced a \$4 million grant

crossroads, and, make no mistake, the clock is ticking.”

In addition to making moves to impact the city’s bottom-line and downtown culture, Deuterman’s also attuned to constructing a forward-thinking building for his employees and clientele. Rothrock will be smart, equipped with lighting that adjusts to the amount of natural light (which will be penetrating through the sky lights and the signature glass bump-outs on the building’s front), smart temperature controls, reverse osmosis water fountains, and more.

“What I’m most excited about is the momentum that our relocation downtown has [brought to] the city,” Deuterman says. “The speculative buying of real estate — that hasn’t happened in 30 years! And now it is. My dipping the first toe in the water has helped launch a revitalization of the city.”

Interconnectivity continues to thrive southwest of Erie’s downtown, too.

“Innovation occurs at the places where people and ideas intersect,” Penn State Behrend Chancellor Ralph Ford said during the opening of the Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Center in July 2016. “This center will provide the ideal environment for interconnectivity.”

Headway at the \$16.5 million facility isn’t hard to see — a maxed capacity academic-side of the building, and an industry side continuing to attract new business to the region (read:

space is currently under construction for the announcement of a new partner in May). The former boasts, among many things, an environmental scanning electron microscope open to regional researchers (and not just those housed at Behrend), which, as one example, SKF Aerospace North America utilized to analyze irregularities in ceramic bearings in Apache helicopters, bringing in materials experts from Florida and North Carolina to look at samples.

Additionally, Behrend has introduced the Innovation Commons, an ideation and product-design space. The space serves another key purpose for the advancement of innovation in Erie, proving to be a successful prototype site for the Innovation Beehive in Erie County.

“Our open lab approach is a commitment to leveraging our resources for the benefit of our students and our community partners,” explains Ford, who adds that the intersection of ideas goes beyond the AMIC, extending onwards to the Innovation Commons housed in the campus’s Burke Center, a location that more than 10 years prior served as the nation’s first academic co-habitation of business and engineering schools in an effort to encourage cross-disciplinary learning.

“The students who work there have collaborated on more than 80 projects for entrepreneurs and start-up companies,” Ford says. “Those projects

to the Erie Innovation District.

September 2017: founding partners (Mercyhurst University, Erie Insurance, McManis and Monsalve Associates, and Velocity Network) introduced Karl Sanchack, managing director of AB Innovations LLC, a Virginia-based consulting firm, as the Erie Innovation District's first CEO.

November 2017: with Katz again in town presenting at the annual Global Summit on his latest book, *The New Localism* (which features Erie), the founding partners unveiled the 10,000 square-foot headquarters of the Erie ID on State Street, and Sanchack broke the news of a partnership with Dell. The partner count added UPMC, Ben Franklin Technology Partners, Dell EMC, and MCPc.

March 2: Mercyhurst collaborated with Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland State University to form the North Coast Cyber Research and Training Alliance to develop cybersecurity education and regional research and training programs supporting Erie ID efforts.

March 20: Erie ID inked an agreement with Singularity University, a Silicon Valley-based technology think tank, to conduct a 10-week accelerator program to help entrepreneurs transform fledgling ideas into startup businesses.

"I am looking not just within the Erie ecosystem, but also broadly," Sanchack says on the heels of the Singularity announcement. "What makes them very interesting is they're an innovation thought leader. They focus on things like artificial intelligence, blockchain — things that are industry-changing."

The latest announcement is thanks in part to Sanchack's past work with the tech think tank.

"That team ran the Smart City Accelerator in Columbus last year in 2017," says the Philadelphia native, who's no stranger to Erie, having spent the first two years of his baccalaureate days at Penn State Behrend and has worked with Singularity as well.

The space, designed by Erie Insurance, appears as one might imagine a fertile ground for new ideas would: Vibrant colors, open concept, rolling tables, walls that — despite what our parents told distinctly not to do — can be written on.

"Sharing our innovation space with Karl and the Innovation District team

has already been a great experience," says Christina Marsh, Chief Community and Economic Development Officer at Erie Insurance. "We're seeing multiple opportunities to learn from one another and accelerate initiatives like the one recently announced with Singularity University. Our continued efforts to work collaboratively are truly beginning to pay off."

As the walls waiting to be written on become the rough drafts of future businesses to be edited, rewritten, revised, and published is yet to be seen. But ripe with potential for a narrative re-shaping of Erie, the space is ready and the foundation is continually being reinforced with more announcements that Sanchack hints are still to come.

"We've seen around the country right now that as cities continue to evolve, oftentimes they become known for something, and that's especially true when you go to smaller-sized cities because they have to be a destination for something," says David Dausey, outgoing Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Mercyhurst and chair of the Innovation District, who was recently announced as the next Provost at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. "An innovation district, if done correctly, can add a vibrancy and a life and a feeling to the city and downtown that can help it to appear to people both within the city and outside the city that there's something going on and that there's excitement behind what's happening in that city, and that is one of the things that the Innovation District can drive."

While naysayers might not see the possibilities through the crossroads, others recognize the abounding potential in the miles ahead for Erie.

Katz along with co-author Jeremy Nowak write in *The New Localism*: "We don't need to travel farther than Erie, Pennsylvania, to see that grand things are possible and that cities can leverage their distinctive advantages."

At a crossroads, innovation leads the way for a post-industrial city and region on a path to redefining itself in the 21st century. And in 2018, innovation looks good on an incredibly bright Gem City.

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

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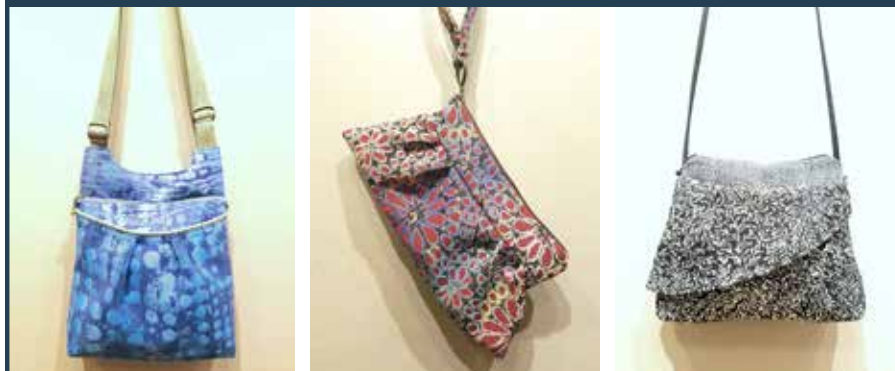
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The Optimism Sector

Five Erie companies exhibiting success, growth

By: Matt Swanseger and Nick Warren

Taken as a whole, Erie industry resembles a conglomerate — covering everything from organs to aerospace and mathematics to plastics. A diversified economy is more apt to survive with the times; while some parts may atrophy, others will grow, keeping precious talent and resources from bleeding out. While we have a ways to go in the recuperation process, the five unique companies listed herein signify there is hope. A community is made better by the compan(ies) that it keeps, and these companies aim to do just that by keeping well-paying jobs and well-credentialed people close to home.

Larson Texts/Big Ideas Learning

Dr. Ron Larson always loved teaching math; he just hated the way it was taught. As he watched his students struggle to grasp calculus, the limits of the Penn State Behrend professor's patience rapidly approached zero. Driven to produce a calculus textbook with the college student in mind, Larson set off to disrupt the status quo — he was the first to write his text according to the end design of the book (the layout was finalized first, then the text was placed to fit that layout, so nothing was broken across pages); he connected word problems to reality; all examples had a title. In 1976, after three years of rejection, he broke through in a major way. Over half of the publishers he submitted to (15 out of 26) accepted his manuscript; he and co-author Robert P. Hostetler accepted a contract from D.C. Heath and Company. The first edition of their calculus book sold 12,500 copies after publication in December 1978.

As his reputation grew, so did Larson's range and outreach. In 1983, he hired two additional employees, officially establishing Larson Texts. They branched out from covering calculus to all college level math, gradually working down to encompass everything from kindergarten to 12th grade. By the 1990s, the growth had accelerated to the point that Larson added a CEO, several new employees, and built a brand new building off Station Road to accommodate them. From there, the team conducted all software development in-house and brought the first electronic edition of calculus to the Internet. Unfortunately, they didn't have much time to get cozy in their new location, as the construction of the Bayfront Connector forced them to seek a new home.

Larson Texts found what appears to be their permanent residence in the former Belle Valley Elementary School on Norcross Road, where they have been encamped since 2000. The addition of a four-story, \$6 million annex (slated to be finished by Christmas) suggests they'll be sticking around a while. The greatest catalyst behind the expansion has been Big Ideas Learning. Now a decade strong, the Big Ideas brand is a self-contained entity, published in-house (Larson's work is contracted out to other publishers) and entailing everything from kindergarten to advanced calcu-



Matthew Totzke started at Larson Texts as an intern in college and ascended to the rank of CEO. The Big Ideas brand, published in-house, has been pivotal to the company's success since its inception 2008.

lus. No matter what level is being taught, the company abides by a single unifying philosophy: "Student-friendly. Teacher-friendly. Parent-friendly."

CEO Matt Totzke, who has been with the company since he was an undergrad intern barely 18 years of age, characterizes the operation as a "full service math shop." The writers and editors of the texts are all highly-qualified mathematicians or educators by trade, and the graphics design and software components are likewise handled on-site. Much of this talent is local, given the four area universities, especially nearby Penn State Behrend, with whom Larson/Big Ideas maintains a close relationship.

"We try hard to attract that talent to stay here with us," says Totzke. "We invest in the student as an intern in the hope that as a postgrad, we can get them to stay. We measure salaries and benefits relative to other major companies around here. Our next step is making more community inroads. There is untapped potential for us to be more helpful in the community because we are an education provider."

Organ Supply Industries

Have you ever lived with an ornery child, a nagging spouse, or an overbearing parent? You *probably* wouldn't trade them for a pipe organ because you love them (or something). But for the sake of argument, I'm here to tell you that a pipe organ is much more low-maintenance. In fact, generations may pass before it needs tended to. If you're shopping for a brand new pipe organ, you're doing it for the long haul — these instruments can (and do) endure for centuries. Whether you're repairing or upgrading an old organ or starting from scratch, Organ Supply Industries — America's largest organ supply company — is likely to be involved.

Organ Supply Industries traces its lineage through two men: Anton Gottfried and Fred Durst. Gottfried established the National Organ Supply Company in 1920, specializing in metal organ pipes. Durst, who served as Gottfried's superintendent, founded the Organ Supply Corporation in 1924. Durst's brother, Val, meanwhile had formed his own operation, Durst & Company in 1926. The National Organ Supply Company pipe shop was acquired by the Organ Supply Corporation (under Fred's son Carl) in 1958. In the early 1970s, Fred Gluck purchased both Durst-led companies and consolidated them under one name, Durst Organ Supply Company, Inc. In 1978, it was finally rechristened Organ Supply Industries, Inc.

Physically speaking, OSI's 45,000 square foot manufacturing space is nestled in the southwest corner of an industrial park off West Grandview Blvd. Metaphysically, the facility seems to occupy a different corner of time, as a team of skilled craftspeople cut, shape, assemble, and fine-tune the incredibly complex instruments piece by piece.

"This is a timeshare shop that allows craftsmen to continue their art around the world, all serving music in the end. It's like having Steinway in your backyard," says resident organ builder Bryan Timm.

OSI's handiwork can be found "everywhere from St. Patrick's Cathedral [Erie] to Crystal Cathedral [Garden Grove, Calif.] and all points in between." Globally, you can find examples as far afield as Barbados, Ingelheim (Germany), Sydney (Australia), and the Philippines. OSI has the manufacturing capability and flexibility to apply itself to most any project, which is not only good, but necessary for a highly specialized business.

"The instrument has to be assessed for the needs of the congregation. It's like investing in a mobile home versus a house," explains Timm. "The most critical things are that it makes logical sense and the instrument is serviceable. Otherwise you're building something that is going to die on the vine."

To ensure the longevity of their instruments and their



Organ pipes, formed from an amalgam of tin and lead, are one of the many components carefully crafted at the Organ Supply Industries facility.

company, OSI's business model is to "interface and supplement other organ builders with our shop where they have deficiencies." Continues Timm: "We've invested in modern machinery and we all share in it. We don't do advertisements; they come to us because of our expertise."

That expertise is hardly recognized outside the industry, as most of the organs are branded under another company's name. That doesn't matter to Timm, even for organs he designed from the ground up. What matters most is "that every dollar that comes into Organ Supply that goes to our employees is spent within the community. The revenue stream is global."

Whatever name you want to put on it, if the product came from OSI, you can bet it both started and ended on a good note.

Beaumont Technologies

One of Erie's largest and most successful industries can be summed up in just one word: plastics. There's a great future in plastics.

An important piece of that future is the ever-growing Beaumont Technologies. Founded in 1998 by John Beaumont, the company began as a two-man operation at Penn State Behrend's technology incubator. Today, they just moved into a 42,000 square foot building on West Ridge Road.

The company helped develop and patent an innovative technology known as the MeltFlipper® runner. Designed to control plastic flow in an injection mold, this technique used to run together molded parts helped improve consistency and reduce wasted material.

"We can help you from concept to reality, though every step of the project," described John's son Alex Beaumont, who serves as the company's director of business development. From initial design concepts to the final physical product, the company participates in nearly every facet of the process. "We deal with so

many different things, but it's all focused towards the plastic injection molding industry," Alex explained.

Not only that, but for four years, they've ran the American Injection Molding (AIM) Institute focusing on training and education all centered around plastics. Bringing in people from all over the country, the AIM Institute has evolved and grown alongside its parent company, proving itself a success in its own right. Serving as chair of the Penn State Behrend Plastics Engineering Technology program for 20 years, John Beaumont continues to educate new generations of plastic engineers. AIM's flagship program, the Plastics Technology and Engineering (PTE) Program, was recently accredited by the American National Standards

"There's so much opportunity for growth. It's just such a bright spot with everything that we're doing here, focused on growth and innovation, and giving people jobs and keeping them here."

Institute (ANSI).

"There's so much opportunity for growth" exclaimed marketing manager Lauren Blore. "It's just such a bright spot with everything that we're doing here, focused on growth and innovation, and giving people jobs and keeping them here."

Airborn

Over in Lake City, one business is hard at work making components used in space travel, aircraft, and lifesaving medical operations. Constructing electronic connectors and cable harnesses, as well as power supplies, Airborn provides parts for a huge array of different uses.

The Erie County operation began in 1988 in the form of CARON Enterprises, specializing in electromagnetic interference (EMI) and electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) electronic filtering. In 2001, CARON was acquired by Airborn, becoming one of 10 manufacturing sites for the company.

Director of Supply Chain Operations Jennifer Nelson, who oversees the company's Lake City facility, vouched that "it's an exciting company to be part of." Detailing some of the end uses of the company's products, she noted that "we support most of the large military contractors, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, BAE Systems, General Dynamic — that's who we sell to." One of the unique products made on site is a printed circuit board used for heart catheters.

The local facility recently had a job fair, looking for 40 to 50 new employees, to fill its first shift and add a second shift. "We're excited to be a manufacturer that's growing in the Erie County area. We're growing, and we have been consistently over the last couple years"

As an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) company, Airborn is in the top 100 largest companies, according to the National Center for employee own-



NICK WARREN

Mary Durlin of Girard assembling a cable harness at the Lake City division of Airborn, which began in 1988 as CARON Enterprises, specializing in electromagnetic interference (EMI) and electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) electronic filtering.

ership, being 100 percent employee-owned. "We give people that are in the Erie County area the opportunity to create a career for themselves and build personal wealth, and build for retirement." In addition to hiring experienced electronics assemblers, the company also offers entry-level positions, training their employees to industry standards for things like soldering and cable assembly.

Nelson was happy to note how they fit into the area's business mosaic, expressing that "Airborn not only creates a place where you can live, work, and grow your career, but you can also be part of your community."

Code Kit Pro

When disaster strikes someone, every second counts. Trained first responders, such as paramedics, EMTs, and firefighters need to have a clear,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Developed by Dr. Paul Malaspina of Erie, Code Kit Pro brings together important tools needed by trained responders, as well as products designed for civilians in emergency use.



NICK WARREN

John Divins of Erie works at an injection machine at Beaumont Technologies, founded in 1998 by John Beaumont. The company patented the MeltFlipper® runner, which controls plastic flow in an injection mold.

FEATURE

well-organized system at a moment's notice. One company in Erie is actively making a difference, cutting down the time it takes to save someone's life. Code Kit PRO produces specially designed medical packs for Platform Resuscitation Organizers (PRO).

Developed by Dr. Paul Malaspina of Erie, Code Kit Pro brings together important tools needed by trained responders, as well as products designed for civilians in emergency use. The company's offerings range from small "bystander" kits to fully stocked professional-grade systems.

The most streamlined offering, the "bystander" kit is designed to help with bleeding control and hemorrhaging. In its clear pouch, it contains gloves, scissors, gauze, larger dressings, a Coban-type wrap, and a tourniquet, with illustrated instructions. In addition to this model, two more additionally complex bleeding control kits are offered.

One of the larger flagship kits is the PEDI-PRO, designed for use by trained first responders to aid children in emergency situations. The size of a small duffel bag, the kit folds out, providing a small mat with a dozen clear storage compartments housing endotracheal tube sleeves, airway tools, devices to start IVs, catheters, and much more.

As part of the Erie Tech Incubator at Gannon University, Code Kit PRO is gaining attention as a small company. It received pre-seed funding from Ben Franklin Technology PARTners, and in January, they received the Pennsylvania Acceleration Project's Technology Accelerator Award. Their kits are used in schools, and in notable local companies, such as Erie Insurance.

The company's tagline is a simple one, "Innovate. Resuscitate." Founded with a noble vision built on decades of experience in the field, Code Kit PRO is one of the many local companies doing something new and different to help our community.

Together, each of these businesses fit together to create a distinct image, building on the past while always looking to the future, they're leaders of innovation, industry, and entrepreneurship.

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mswanseger@eriereader.com

Nick Warren can be reached at nwarren@eriereader.com

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Another Year Older, Another Year Wiser

A chat with some past 40 Under 40 winners



MAITHAM BASHA-AGHA

By: Cara Suppa

The Erie Reader wanted to catch up with a few past 40 Under 40 recipients, to talk progress, the evolution of their businesses, and the current state of small business here in Erie. We spoke to Aaron Lewis of Sphere Brakes, Kristi Bailey from the Erie Federal Credit Union and Katie Hanlin-Stachewicz of U Pick 6.

Cara Suppa: What's new with you and your business since you were featured in Erie Reader's 40 under 40?

Aaron Lewis: A lot has happened since 40 under 40. Most notably we've secured a government contract to scale our technology [spherical brakes that apply braking force multi-directionally and within a smaller effective diameter] on similar tactical vehicles. That may precipitate additional contracts based on how we and the technology perform. In addition to that business development opportunity, we're strategically partnering with a fellow PA supplier in the racing industry. Over the past few months we've secured development and testing opportunities with several championship winning race teams in an international racing venue.

Kristi Bailey: I'm still employed at Erie Federal Credit as Director of Business Development and Services. Last summer we opened our new branch and corporate offices in the former Glenwood Elementary School. It's been awesome being centrally located and so visible to the community — our membership is growing. Late last

summer, I also stepped up as the new President for Young Erie Professionals. I've been busy assisting with the transformation of the organization and am extremely impressed with the new leadership team and how much we have accomplished so far.

Katie Hanlin-Stachewicz: Quite a bit! In January of 2013 we opened U Pick 6 Public House on the west side of Erie, and an eastside location in October of 2015, the Harbor House on Buffalo Road, and with the growth of our pubs and restaurants, as well as the growth of our personal family, we decided to close my advertising business, Creative Affairs, so I could focus on marketing with U Pick 6 and raise our kids. We are currently working on two new concepts on the downtown bayfront — a new restaurant with an emphasis on fresh seafood, also featuring an oyster bar, as well as a rooftop bar overlooking the bay.

CS: Just the other night on the news they were talking about small businesses in Erie, and how there are more "deaths than births." But it looks like that tide could be changing, with more and more young entrepreneurs going for it in this city. What are your thoughts about the state of small businesses here in Erie?

AL: If we look at statistics, then yes, there will always be more deaths than births when it comes to startups. That is normal and that will never change regionally, nationally, internationally. But I think everyone needs to be aware that there is a very distinct difference between startups and

small businesses. That doesn't always come across as clear, and it really confuses the competitive and economic landscape of Erie. Based on my experiences, both small businesses and startups are thriving here in Erie. And I'm seeing a lot more involvement and collaboration with organizations who have been structured and funded to support that economic growth...I feel very confident in the direction Erie is moving.

KB: Small business is booming in Erie — and I've seen the proof in the new small businesses who come in to open new business accounts at Erie FCU. The trend has also been that most of these new business owners are under the age of 40. I love the entrepreneurial mindset and am happy there are young people out there willing to take risks to follow their passion — especially when it's to better our community!

KH: More "deaths than births" I think can be described with one word...revolution. Erie has several resources that promote and assist with small businesses. If you don't experience the growing pains, and learning from your mistakes, then how do you become successful or grow as a business and a person? Erie has passionate young entrepreneurs that continue to keep the business sector growing from the "deaths" to create more "births." If we keep the momentum moving, the revolution and growth of small business will continue. We are a good example of that!

CS: What is the one crucial piece of advice you would give to someone interested in starting a small business here in Erie?

AL: Start having conversations with the Ben Franklin Technology Partners, SCORE, the SBDC, the Innovation Collaborative, and Radius

CoWork. Those are just a few of the many resources anyone can reach out to for free to get candid advice and feedback. And, oh, by the way, all have world-class professionals and mentors collectively making Erie better and more competitive. Here's another golden nugget: Don't forget that there is a movement taking place throughout Erie called the Silver Tsunami [i.e., an aging workforce]. There are several hundred well-established small businesses in need of young entrepreneurs to take over the helm.

KB: Get connected and stay connected. This community is extremely passionate about supporting small business and shopping local whenever possible. The more people who know you and your business, the more they will want to support you and the success of your business!

KH: Never lose your passion. As hard as things may get or seem, always remember why you went into business. Without that, you can lose sight of your brand, company growth, and momentum. Once you create a culture within your business, always keep that in sight!

CS: Were there any opportunities, resources or advantages here in Erie that you made use of (or continue to use) to start your business/help it grow and thrive?

AL: Sure, look at my answer to question three. I've worked with and continue to work with all of them. In



MAITHAM BASHA-AGHA

[top left] Katie Hanlin-Stachewicz stands behind the bar at the U Pick 6 Tap House on lower State Street. The U Pick 6 family aims to expand in the near future, with plans for an oyster bar and rooftop bar near the bayfront. [bottom right] Kristi Bailey, Director of Business and Development Services at Erie Federal Credit Union, is pleased with the increased visibility that's come with their new offices in the former Glenwood Elementary School.

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FEATURE



MATTHAM BASHA-AGHA

addition to those companies, my affiliates have stepped up in so many ways to hedge the burden of start up costs while significantly reducing risk. I'm very grateful for their continued support.

KB: I love Radius CoWork in the Renaissance Center and the people who are involved there. Each time I visit, I leave feeling really energized about our city's future. There are a lot of great people doing amazing things there.

KH: We feel that we need to support local business in hopes of creating that culture of supporting each other and the local Erie economy. Just to name a few [resources]: business banking with Northwest Savings Bank, who took a chance on us and our vision; C.A. Curtze & Sons, who have helped us with products; Schaffner, Knight, Minnaugh & Co., who gave us great tax and business advice; Jason Elwell Construction for our construction and maintenance needs; and Copyright Printing, who helps us with our printing needs, and many more.

CS: What do you think are some of the greatest challenges for starting a small business in Erie?

AL: My greatest challenges have come with the plethora of requirements and regulations around government contracting. Despite having a strong regional procurement technical assistance center representing NWP, there is a serious knowledge gap in what it takes to conform and execute government contracts efficiently.

KB: People starting a small business in Erie have a difficult time figuring out where to start! There are so many organizations willing to help and who have the resources, it's just tough

Aaron Lewis of Sphere Brakes has enjoyed an uptick in buyers of his patented braking technology, in both the military and racing industries.

knowing who does what in the beginning. It'd be great to have some sort of road map for starting a small business in Erie and list all the resources available to them.

KH: I think some of the greatest challenges come with start-up for any business. It's establishing business relationships with the right people, finding dedicated employees, and creating that culture of doing "good business."

CS: Other than your own, what is your favorite small business in Erie and why?

AL: That's a tough question because the list is so diverse. My favorite "start-up" that I've been watching for quite some time is RendrFX. They have a very tangible product which is easy for me to understand and provides opportunities for rapid growth.

KB: I'm a bit partial to Ember + Forge. My friend, Hannah Kirby, followed her passion and took a risk to open a very cool "local" coffee shop downtown. Her business is doing great and watching her succeed has been a pleasure.

KH: As a mother, a few of my favorite businesses in Erie are where I create memories with my family: Sunday breakfast at Avantis, visits to the Experience Children's Museum or the Erie Zoo, a trip to Waldameer Park, painting at Claytopia...just to name a few! I am sure there will be plenty more as we continue to raise our family here in Erie.

Cara Suppa can be reached at csuppa@eriereader.com

From Candidate to CEO

Republican Mayoral Candidate John Persinger will lead downtown Erie development as Erie Downtown Development Corporation CEO



MAITHAM BASHA-AGHA

By: Ben Speggen

As the clock crawled on throughout the night of Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2017, John Persinger held on to hope. Erie, Pennsylvania's first serious Republican candidate for mayor in decades had been told victory was improbable at best, more likely impossible.

With all precincts reporting, Democrat Joe Schember, who emerged from a contested primary against six challengers, reportedly had tallied more votes and media outlets were heralding him as Erie's next mayor. Outside of Calamari's on an otherwise quiet State Street, standing on the sidewalk under the orange glow of a pulsing street light, chatting with victory-party-turned-center-for-condolence attendees, Persinger said he hadn't conceded yet. He would wait until the morning to review the vote count.

The morning came and the news held.

While the race was close by Erie standards — with a 3-to-1 Democratic voter registration edge — Persinger trailed Schember by 1,315 votes, a 6.75 percent defeat. Persinger called to congratulate Schember, and Erie's long blue line of mayors stretched on-

wards.

Then came the question that always follows: So what's next?

For Schember, the answer was clear: Implement the transition plan presumably worked on for a few weeks — if not months — leading up the general election outcome. Then, become mayor on Jan. 2, 2018.

For Persinger, the path was less clear. Many wondered where it might lead him.

Would he simply return to his full-time job — which he never left whilst running for mayor — as an attorney at MacDonald, Illig, Jones, & Britton? Would he find a bi-partisan place in the Schember administration? Would he re-gear the political machine he built to run for another race? Would the defeat be too crippling of a blow? Would he...

So went the list.

And for good cause. The 30-something had a good message. He stuck to it. He put up a good challenge. Ran a clean race. And caught a lot of attention during the campaign — including national coverage from Salena Zito for both the New York Post ["This die-hard Democratic city is about to turn Republican"] and the Washington Examiner ["Erie tells an ominous sign for

Despite his loss in the 2017 City of Erie mayoral race, John Persinger will play a major role in the city's trajectory as CEO of the Erie Downtown Development Corporation.

Democrats"].

He also launched a mobile headquarters with an RV and got creative with campaign advertising by hiring a plane to fly over Erie with a banner broadcasting: Vote Persinger. Both were creative, if not different. And Erie seemed to welcome that.

But at the end of the day, he came up short in the polls, unable to sway enough Democrats to abandon their party. Wherever his path may lead him, it wouldn't be to City Hall.

The next 16 weeks that followed the election, for Persinger, seemed quiet. At least to the general public.

Withdrawing mostly from the public eye, he returned to his 9-to-5, celebrated the holidays, and then took a vacation to Florida, where he would occupy his mornings building sandcastles with his kids. After long days and seemingly endless nights on the campaign trail, it was time to spend time with the family, so he'd intentionally leave his cell phone in his uncle's condo, where he and family were staying.

One of those mornings when he was out building castles in the sand a call came in.

Leaving the voicemail was Erie Insurance CEO and President Tim NeCastro.

For a moment, Persinger speculated what NeCastro might want to talk about and then called him back. A series of exchanges and meetings led to an announcement at the Erie Art Museum on Tuesday, Feb. 27, as a crowd shuffled its way into the multipurpose space to see NeCastro and Persinger on stage together.

John Persinger, it was announced, would become the first CEO of the Erie Downtown Development Corporation.

According to its website, "the newly founded EDDC, a privately funded nonprofit led by a group of business and community leaders, is working to-

gether in the name of transformational change. The EDDC's core mission is to fuel economic growth through real estate development in downtown Erie."

As NeCastro often tells it— including on the day of the announcement in the Erie Art Museum — he got the idea after he approached Charles Buki at the Jefferson Educational Society. Buki, the principal planner for the czb, LLC planning firm that submitted Erie Refocused, the City of Erie's comprehensive plan and community decision-making guide, was presenting at the Jefferson to provide insight on how cities and stakeholders can implement plans. Buki told NeCastro to examine Cincinnati's Center City Development Corporation, a nationally recognized darling in development circles.

But why 3CDC?

"It's analogue," Buki says of the corporation that formed back in July 2003 as a 501(c) 3, a tax-exempt, private, nonprofit corporation whose mission and strategic focus is to strengthen the core assets of downtown by revitalizing and connecting the Central Business District and the urban, working-class district Over-the-Rhine (OTR). "It's a great model for Erie to consider and personalize."

Drawing inspiration from what's been accomplished in Cincinnati over the past 15 years, the EDDC looks to address a critical issue facing Erie: increase the tax base through real estate development and concentrate on an area from Perry Square to Third Street and from Sassafras Street to Holland Street. And it's using the most recent battery of community plans in Erie: Erie Refocused (city plan), Emerge 2040 (regional plan), and the Erie Downtown Master Plan (micro focus on the city's center).

3CDC was able to accomplish what, according to Buki, "defied conventional responses for decades" in a "stubbornly distressed" neighborhood.

"The durable engine is the one that is a true partnership between public and private stakeholders," Buki adds. "The shaping of a city is never done solely with private capital or solely

done with public dollars but through a marriage of the two. The best way to transform the city is to find the optimal blend of public incentives and private appetite for risk that results in an overall confidence from folks on the sideline to jump in and invest in that community.”

To date, investment in the EDDC through the Erie Equity Fund totals more than \$20 million, including a \$5 million investment from Erie Insurance and \$2.5 million each from the Erie Community Foundation, Gannon University, UPMC Hamot, ErieBank, and Northwest Bank for a total of \$17.5 million, and most recently \$1.5 million from Marquette Savings Bank.

And just days after becoming Mayor-elect, Joe Schember endorsed Erie Refocused.

“It was a real bold stroke for the Mayor-elect right out of the box to embrace the plan and to formalize it with the establishment of a planning office and then hire a first-rate planning director,” Buki says of Schember and Kathy Wyrosdick, who moved from the Erie County Planning Department to the City. “Without that, the EDDC, the private sector, doesn’t have a partner. That by itself is a huge foundational element to the future success of the EDDC.”

On the campaign trail, Schember and Persinger spent more time back-patting than taking jabs at one another. In fact, the heat built leading up to the primaries cooled during the general election, as the two were amicable and good-natured.

“I’m very excited and happy with this announcement today,” Schember says after NeCastro and Persinger

left the stage. “I can’t think of a better person to lead the EDDC. I think he’s going to do a great job, and I look forward to working with him. You’ll see us working together to transform Erie as quickly as possible.”

And during the lead-up to November’s election, Schember and Persinger regularly met with the EDDC.

“During the campaign, we met with [Schember and Persinger] once a month to keep them apprised of what we were doing because we knew we would need that alignment with the city,” NeCastro explains. “During that time, it didn’t occur to me immediately that John would be a good candidate, but in December when we had interviewed a number of candidates, I kept coming back to ‘something was missing’. And what was missing was that foresight and that vision and that passion that John brought to the table.”

“It became abundantly clear to me, really over the Christmas holiday that he was the right guy. And I was hoping that when I called him he would see it that way also, but I seriously was not sure that he would.”

NeCastro told the audience at the Art Museum that he thought it might’ve been a crazy idea.

Persinger responded with: “Crazy, I’m the guy who ran for Mayor of Erie — as a Republican.”

After the announcement, while fielding questions on what the next steps would be, Persinger was focused on the long-term.

“I want to make sure I have my head around all of the issues. First thing’s first, I want to sit down with the Board,” he says. “We’ll prioritize what we’ll be working on, what our agenda

is going to be not only for the short-term but for the long-term, because this is really focused on the long-term success of Erie in transforming the downtown core so that we can have long-term success for the region.”

Like NeCastro’s palpable excitement and infectious enthusiasm for Erie and the development and progress thereof, Persinger’s passion for Erie is evident, too. To those considering the various candidates — some coming in from as far as San Diego — that passion took priority over real estate and development background.

“One thing that we learned early on from others that have done this type of work before is that the most important attribute from a CEO of this type of organization is passion. That it’s in their DNA, they love what they do, they wake up and can’t wait to get started,” says Christina Marsh, Chief Community and Economic Development Officer at Erie Insurance. “John demonstrated that during the campaign and certainly demonstrated that during the interviews. He’s from here, his heart’s here; we believe that will go a long way.”

And to move the EDDC forward, having a leader with vision and passion outweighs one with real estate acquisition and management in their portfolio.

“We have deep real estate expertise on our board, not necessarily the members themselves but with the institutions,” NeCastro adds. “The old saying: ‘It takes a village’ — we’re going to surround John with whatever resources he needs. And don’t underestimate his ability to catch on. He will be a top-notch real estate developer in

a couple years’ time, I’m convinced of it. He’s the kind of person that doesn’t see obstacles; he sees opportunities. That was the other thing that convinced me that he’s the right guy.”

Day 1 as EDDC CEO for Persinger began Monday, March 12. While the public largely celebrated the naming of Persinger to the position since the Feb. 27 announcement, the appetite of immediate expectation remains to be seen.

In the now, NeCastro notes that catching Persinger up to speed is the priority. From there, it’s on to assembling a team, and then working on projects underway or up for consideration in an effort to build a better Erie using muscle from both the public and private sector.

“You always want to keep in mind that the customer is the citizen of the community,” Buki notes. “You always want to be asking yourself as director or as a member of the Board ‘How does what we’re about to do result in helping my community become better?’”

“You will out of necessity focus on a particular real estate transaction, but you will not be only praying at the altar of the greater return that transaction will provide. You will serve two masters: one master is the transaction itself and what it has to return. The other master is: how does the completed project add to a better city? An entity like this has a true double-bottom-line approach on a daily basis.”

Ben Speggen can be contacted at bSpeggen@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter at [@BenSpeggen](https://twitter.com/BenSpeggen).

Just Toyin’ Witcha – By B. Toy

An idea for the City of Erie’s suggestion box:

The next time you expect to have thousands of people wandering downtown



with tons of aluminum and plastic, maybe put out some recycle bins?

Thank you,
The Earth

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Schedule of Events

9:30 am **Product Design, Part 1**
10:30 am **Erie's Manufacturing History**
11:15 am **Elements & Principles of Design**
11:30 am **Chair Chat conversation**
1:00 pm **Cooper Hewitt Access + Ability Exhibit**
1:30 pm **Product Design, Part 2**
2:30 pm **Screening of film Design Disrupters**
(Followed by panel discussion)

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Paolello and Gone Open *Blues by the Barrel*



Guitarist James Paolello and bassist Josh Gone form a formidable American roots duo on *Blues by the Barrel*, their debut album being celebrated at Room 33.

Imagine walking into a juke joint and hearing someone like Robert Johnson or Blind Lemon Jefferson (both active during that time), then giving a password to sip on some freshly bootlegged liquor. Just beyond the bookshelf at Room 33's entryway, you'll hear music that will find you transported to a different time.

The duo formed in the fall of 2016, after the two met doing some guitar repair. Paolello, an accomplished luthier and instrument repairman has been helping local musicians for years out of his home workshop, while Gone has long been entertaining Erie audiences in rock and punk bands like Detroit Red and Diesel Houdini. The two became fast friends and decided to team up.

Paolello remarked that he "got into traditional Delta and country blues after a long hiatus from not performing, and just researching more [about] traditional American roots music." In his words, he had "always enjoyed playing slide guitar, but decided to try and take it to the next level when I got back into playing." With its 10 tracks recorded at Left Of The Dial Studios with Kevin Brown, and featuring layout and art from Gabe Poland and McKenzie Sprague, the record is worth a look and a listen, and from the sound of *Blues by the Barrel*, the two are certainly at that next level. — Nick Warren

7 p.m. to 10 p.m. // 1033 State St. // facebook.com/paolelloandgone

It's Lit at the Rook with Tropidelic and LiTZ

FRIDAY, MAR. 30

Fusing funk, hip-hop, and reggae with a dash of metal and more, Cuyahoga River Valley-grown and Cleveland-hewn Tropidelic are well-known throughout the region and beyond for putting out a fun-hearted, fired-up amalgam of grooves.

And the last couple of times they came through the King's Rook were, by any goers' standards, some party nights to remember.

Now, add new Rook favorites LiTZ — a not-to-be-missed funk/jam/go-go/soul/electronica/everything powerhouse from Maryland — to the mix, and it's starting to sound like another one for the books.

That's what's going down Friday, and the people behind the party are recommending being ready to show up early, and stay up late.

— Ryan Smith



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

It Takes You To Make a Thing Go Right at the '90s Flashback Tour

FRIDAY, MAR. 30

Fans of '90s R&B who still love to get their groove on every once in a while should make their way downtown to Erie's historic Warner Theatre for the '90s Flashback Tour, where Color Me Badd ("I Wanna Sex You Up"), Rob Base ("It Takes Two"), Money B and Young Hump of Digital Underground ("Humpty Dance") and Dru Hill featuring Sis-qo (seriously, who could forget the "Thong Song"?) will be on hand to pump the jams and keep the party raging. If you're of a certain age, you will undoubtedly be transported back to the middle school dance where the fashions were terrible (shapeless baby-doll dresses, anyone?), the grinding got broken up by hawk-like chaperones, and someone always ended up betrayed and crying in the girls' restroom. Ah, memories. — Cara Suppa

8 p.m. // 811 State Street // \$48-68 // erieevents.com/events/90s-flashback-tour

MUSIC

Brit Floyd Eclipse World Tour 2018

Mar. 28 — 7:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. britfloyd.com.

Bootleggers Bible Club

Mar. 29 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Mark Morris

Mar. 30 — 5 to 7 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Dave Callaghan Jazz

Mar. 30 — 6 to 9 p.m.
The Skunk & Goat Tavern, 17 W. Main St, North East, PA 16428 skunkandgoattavern.com.

Acoustic Gypsies

Mar. 30 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Bourbon Barrel, 1213 State St. bourbonbarrelerie.com.

Geek Army

Mar. 30 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Big Bar, 14 E. 10th St. facebook.com.

Tomkat Black and 1000hp (Godsmack Tribute)

Mar. 30 — 6 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com.

Liam Alone

Mar. 30 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Millcreek Brewing Company, 4102 W. Lake Rd. facebook.com.

Paolello and Gone CD Release Party

Mar. 30 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Room 33, 1033 State St. facebook.com.

90's Flashback Tour

Mar. 30 — 8 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Cruisin'

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

Tropidelic and Litz

Mar. 30 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com.

Luicidal, Maniacal Device and Mala Sangre

Mar. 30 — 9:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Scotty's Martini Lounge, 301 German St. facebook.com.

Claire Stuczynski

Mar. 31 — 5 to 7 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

I See Stars

Mar. 31 — 6:30 to 11 p.m.

Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com.

Whiskey Road

Mar. 31 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Taylor-Maid

Mar. 31 — 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 W. Lake Rd. facebook.com.

Weazildust

Mar. 31 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com.

Tazz

Mar. 31 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com.

Simone Dinnerstein Master Class

Apr. 4 — 5 to 7 p.m.
Walker Recital Hall, 501

E. 38th St. eriephil.org.

Simone Dinnerstein Live from Studio Q

Apr. 6 — noon to 1 p.m.
WQLN Studios, 8425 Peach St. eriephil.org.

Refuge

Apr. 6 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Big Bar, 14 E. 10th St. facebook.com.

Heather Pierson Acoustic Trio

Apr. 6 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, 7180 Perry Hwy. heatherpierson.com.

An Evening with Gary Lucas

Apr. 6 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Artlore Studio, 3406 W. Lake Rd. artlorestudio.com.

Ashley

Apr. 6 — 8 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Irish Cousins, 3924 Main St. facebook.com.

Roots of a Rebellion and Sun Dried Vibes

Apr. 6 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com.

April Beats

Apr. 7 — 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com.

The Earth Quakers

Apr. 7 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Big Bar, 14 E. 10th St. facebook.com.

Big Daddy Weave and Brandon Heath

Apr. 7 — 7 p.m.
First Alliance Church, 2939 Zimmerly Rd. bigdaddyweave.com.

Simone Dinnerstein Returns

Have a Chat and a Meal with Erie’s Most Talented Filmmakers



SATURDAY, MARCH 31

There’s been a film renaissance in Erie lately.

Recent feature-length productions have explored themes as diverse as throat injuries, fracking accidents, and all-female biker gangs. Tickets are selling alarmingly fast for the Film Society of Northwestern Pennsylvania’s art house screenings at the Bourbon Barrel. For those of us looking to create videos of our own, organizations like the Greater Erie Arts Rental, Three-Gloves Productions, and MenajErie (which produces our own contribution to the zeitgeist, *Endnotes with Nick Warren*) offer a variety of professional services.

Accordingly, the Greater Erie Film Office has decided a celebration is in order. The Film and New Media Dinner Party is set to occur on a Saturday night

at the tail-end of March in the Hemingway Ballroom of the Ambassador Conference Center. At the pre-party happy hour, multi-instrumentalist Leeanna Golembiewski, a recent TEDxErie performer, will entertain guests with her unique “mash-ups” of familiar tunes, as well as some songs of her own. In addition, drinks will be complimentary with the price of admission. Finally, the head chef of the Ambassador is preparing a special meal for all attendees.

The Film and New Media Dinner Party is designed to showcase local innovators, and 40 regional filmmakers have been invited to attend free of cost. Expect some fun gadgetry as you navigate the room, such as a SlowMo Video Booth from R.Frank photography and virtual-reality gaming software from Oculus Rift.

If you’re looking to get a start in the world of film and video, this should be an excellent networking opportunity. If your business is looking to expand into new media, this is something you might not want to miss. And if you’re just a local nerd who loves movies, drop by for a meal and some chit-chat with inspiring people. — Dan Schank

6 p.m. // \$50 for tickets, \$150 for tickets and hotel reservation // Ambassador Conference Center, 7794 Peach St. // filmsocietynwpa.org

How Nine Young Activists Changed American Schools

Civil rights icon to share triumph over segregation



Carlotta Walls LaNier, the youngest member of the Little Rock Nine, will speak at Mercyhurst University on Tuesday, April 3, 7 p.m. The program is free and open to the public, but tickets are required. In September 1957, Walls LaNier and eight other young people started a wave of integration in American schools that inspired the civil rights movement.

borne Division to accompany the students into school.

Carlotta Walls LaNier, the youngest of the Arkansas Nine, was only 14 years old. Bullied, harassed, and threatened with lynching, she persisted, even after her family’s home was bombed, becoming the first black female to graduate from Central High School, in 1960.

Walls LaNier will share her personal story and inspire others to continue the fight for social justice when she speaks in Erie at Mercyhurst University’s Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center. The event is a gift from Harborcreek resident Doris Cipolla in loving memory of her partner, Charlene M. Tanner, honoring their shared interest in social justice, peace, and the environment.

After graduating from Central High, Walls LaNier studied at Michigan State University before moving to Colorado, where she earned her bachelor’s

TUESDAY, APRIL 3

Before lunch counter sit-ins and civil rights marches, nine gutsy black students climbed the steps to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, where armed National Guardsmen blocked them from entering the all-white school.

It was high time someone tested the 1954 Supreme Court decision that unanimously declared “separate but equal” schools for black and white students unconstitutional. Taunted by racial slurs and confronted by an angry white mob, the students turned on their heels, took their battle to the courts with NAACP lawyers, and won. On September 23, 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower dispatched soldiers from the U. S. Army’s 101st Air

Apr. 7 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811
State St. eriephil.org.

Lespecial and The Blind Spots

Apr. 7 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921
Peach St. facebook.com.

Ish, Living Room and Slow Motion Breakdown

Apr. 7 — 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.
Scotty’s Martini Lounge, 301
German St. facebook.com.

Mark & Jack

Apr. 8 — 1 to 4 p.m.
Arundel Cellars & Brewing Co.,
11727 E. Main Rd. North East,
PA 16428 facebook.com.

DANCE

A Year to Remember

Apr. 6, 7 — 8 p.m.
Dafmark Dance Theatre
& Academy, 1033 State
St. dafmark.org.

Lake Erie National Cheer & Dance Championships

Apr. 8
Erie Insurance Arena,
809 French St. championcheercentral.com.

FOOD & DRINK

Film & New Media Dinner Party

Mar. 31 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Ambassador Center, 7794
Peach St. filmsocietynwpa.org.

Erie Micro Brew Fest

Apr. 7 — 1 to 8 p.m.
The Brewerie at Union Station,
123 W. 14th St. wqln.org.

Vegetarian/Vegan Dinner and Trivia

Apr. 7 — 5 to 7 p.m.
Women’s Club of Erie, 259 W.
6th St. eriewomansclub.com.

Sip N Paint at the Isle House

Apr. 7 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Presque Isle Wine Cellars,
9440 W. Main Rd, North East,
PA 16428 piwine.com.

MOVIES

Aircraft Carrier

Ongoing — 11 a.m. &
2 p.m. & 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental
Center, 301 Peninsula Dr.
biggreenscreen.com.

Prehistoric Planet

Ongoing — noon & 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental
Center, 301 Peninsula Dr.
biggreenscreen.com.

Flight of the Butterflies

Ongoing — 1 p.m. & 4 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental
Center, 301 Peninsula Dr.
biggreenscreen.com.

Windbag the Sailor (1936)

Mar. 29 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 W.
Lake Rd. facebook.com.

Miss Representation

Mar. 29 — 6 p.m.
Edinboro University Frank
G. Pogue Student Center,
405 Scotland Rd, Edinboro,
PA 16444 edinboro.edu.

The Shape of Water

Apr. 4 — 5:30 p.m.
Bourbon Barrel, 1213 State
St. filmsocietynwpa.org.

Film & Her: A Female Filmmaker Showcase

Apr. 5 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Bourbon Barrel, 1213 State
St. filmmandher.com.

The Met: Live in HD - Così fan tutte

Apr. 7 — 12:55 p.m.
Mary D’Angelo Performing
Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St.
miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Bravura Vs. Gelatin Skeleton

Apr. 7 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 W.
Lake Rd. facebook.com.

NT Live: Julius Caesar

Apr. 8 — 12:55 p.m.
Mary D’Angelo Performing
Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St.
miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Call Me By Your Name

Apr. 11 — 5:30 p.m.
Bourbon Barrel, 1213 State
St. filmsocietynwpa.org.

VISUAL ARTS

The Annual Gmitter Scholarship Exhibition

Ongoing through Mar. 31
Bruce Gallery in Doucette Hall, 215 Meadville
St. brucegallery.info.

All the World is a Photograph

Ongoing through Apr. 7
Heeschen Gallery, 910 Market
St, Meadville, PA 16335
pattilarsenphotos.com.

Daniel Burke: Callings

Ongoing through Apr. 8

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

Laura Gooley: The Stimulus of Perception Photographs and Brian Pardini: Sculpture

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

Patricia S. Yahh Student Art Show

Ongoing through Apr. 27
John M. Lilley Library at Penn
State Behrend, 4951 Behrend
College Dr. sites.psu.edu.

Urban Chatter: Textile Art by Sharon Kerry-Harlan

Ongoing through Apr. 29
Erie Art Museum, 411 State
St. erieartmuseum.org.

Senior Art Thesis Exhibition

Ongoing through May 13
(Reception Apr. 7 — 2 to 4 p.m.)
Mercyhurst University
Cummings Gallery, 501 E. 38th

CALENDAR



degree from Colorado State College, now the University of Northern Colorado. She, along with other members of the Little Rock Nine, is the recipient of the nation's highest civil honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, awarded by President Bill Clinton, the Springarn Medal from the NAACP, and the Lincoln Leadership Prize awarded by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation. Walls LaNier is the recipient of four honorary doctorate degrees and is an inductee in the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame.

A successful real estate broker for the company she founded 30 years ago, Walls LaNier is president of the Little Rock Nine Foundation. The Foundation is dedicated to education and to the proposition that racist ideology will not dictate educational policies and practices in the 21st century.

Her book for young readers, *A Mighty Long Way, My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School*, includes

an introduction by President Bill Clinton, former Arkansas governor. Today her school dress is in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

Walls LaNier's visit to Erie is an opportunity to ask, What can we do, alone and with others, to confront racism? How can we stem what some

say is an alarming return to segregation within American schools? How can we as individuals and as citizens make a positive difference in our schools, communities, and nation?

Thurgood Marshall, the young attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund who successfully argued *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* before the United States Supreme Court — and later became the first African-American Associate Justice of the Supreme Court (1967-1991) — has some advice:

"Where you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on."

—Lisa Gensheimer

7 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, Mercyhurst University, 501 East 38th Street // free tickets at PAC box office

St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Gary Spinosa: Divine Instinct

Ongoing through Jan. 6, 2019
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

James McMurray: Faces and Paces

Ongoing through June 10, 2019
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Annual Student Show, Juried by Susan Barnett

Apr. 3 through Apr. 15
(Reception Apr. 3 — 6 to 7 p.m.)
Doane Hall of Art at Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St. Meadville, PA 16335 allegheny.edu.

Second Sundays

Apr. 8 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Teenage Kicks

Apr. 10 through Apr. 21
Bruce Gallery in Doucette Hall, 215 Meadville St, Edinboro,

PA 16444 brucegallery.info.

THEATER

Over Here

Apr. 6, 7 — 7 p.m. Apr. 8 — 2 p.m.
Seneca High School, 10770 Wattsburg Rd. wattsburg.org.

Dirty Dancing

Apr. 9 — 7:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. us.dirtydancingontour.com.

Til Beth Do Us Part

Apr. 10, 11 — noon
Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

SPORTS

Boys Middle School Lacrosse Clinics

Mar. 31 & Apr. 7 — 1 to 3 p.m.
McDowell North Gym, 3580 W. 38th St. trojanlacrosse.org.

COMMUNITY

Great Lakes Shipwreck Exhibition

Ongoing through Apr. 13
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trepci.org.

DiscoverE

Mar. 28 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trepci.org.

Tots in Nature Class: My One Little Cloud

Mar. 29 & Apr. 2, 5, 9 — 9 to 10 a.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Family Storytime

Mar. 29 — 10 to 10:45 a.m.
Lincoln Community Center Library, 1255 Manchester Rd. erielibrary.org.

Preschool Nature Discovery Class: Tall Tall

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[DOWNSTAIRS]

FRIDAY, APRIL 6
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+ SUN DRIED VIBES
[DOWNSTAIRS]

SATURDAY, APRIL 7
LESPECIAL
+ THE BLIND SPOTS
[DOWNSTAIRS]

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Emerging Women in Film Celebrated

THURSDAY, APR. 5

Film & Her wants to see women emerge successful in the filmmaking industry.

The organization that showcases women in film will kick off its 2018 tour along the East Coast at the Bourbon Barrel in Erie.

Film & Her was started to celebrate talented female filmmakers and to support them by showing off their films.

This year, Film & Her hopes to take its work a few steps further. It intends to create a community of women in film, start an educational workshop program and provide resources and support that will help expand female filmmaking.

It has already held successful showcases in places like Erie and Savannah, Georgia, but Film & Her hopes to soon add showcases in other cities across the East Coast and eventually across the country. — Tracy Geibel



7 p.m. to 10 p.m. // Bourbon Barrel, 1213 State St. // \$10 // facebook.com/BourbonBarrelErie

Everybody Walk The Dinosaur at Bayfront Convention Center

SATURDAY, APR. 7

It's about time to take a nostalgic trip way back — like, so way back it's primordial — by way of the Tom Ridge Environmental Center's Time Lab.

Discover the Dinosaurs: Time Trek runs its course of history on Saturday, April 7 and Sunday, April 8 at the Bayfront Convention Center, inviting young folks, old folks, and the rest of us along for a glimpse of the likes of mega, prehistoric dinosaurs — and even some dragons that are the stuff of mythical magical inspiration in different cultures around the world.

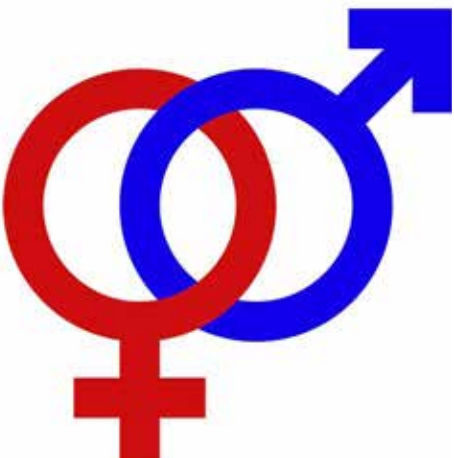
There's plenty of hands-on stuff, too: Dinosaur poop, design-a-dino activities, a cool race-through-time labyrinth, trivia challenges, movies — you know, dinosaurs (and dragons) all day. Learning, in a fun way.

— Ryan Smith



April 7, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; April 8, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. // Bayfront Convention Center // discoverthedinosaurs.com

Penn State Behrend's 2018 Gender Conference Encourages the Silent to Speak Up



THURSDAY, APR. 5

For those of us interested in gender equality, the past few months have been both hopeful and horrifying. Every awful story about a Harvey Weinstein or a Louis C.K. seems contrasted with an inspiring one about a woman holding a powerful man accountable. With recent events in mind, "Speech and Silence" was chosen as the theme for Penn State Behrend's 11th Annual Gender Conference.

"The theme came from several student leaders this year," according to Sarah Whitney, who teaches English Literature and Women's Studies. "They were processing the rapid chain of events galvanizing the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements and suggested we host a conference on the theme of speaking up."

With this in mind, several students reached out to their female professors to hear about how gender dynamics have impacted the work in their disciplines. On April 6, a diverse group of academics in fields ranging from Anthropology to Computer Engineering will gather to address this topic —

and to offer mentoring advice to young women looking to follow in their footsteps.

Another big theme of this year's conference is the role of the bystander in situations where gender-based violence or harassment occurs. On April 5, psychology professor Melanie Hetzel-Riggin will discuss the barriers that often stand in the way of positive interventions. In a later session, two students will debate the relationship between bystanders and bullying.

At 6 p.m. that evening, keynote speaker Samantha Tornello of Penn State Altoona will discuss the role of gay fatherhood in our society, with a specific focus on the ways that household chores and childcare responsibilities are divided. Gender diversity will also be addressed by members of Trigon, Behrend's Gay-Straight Alliance, through a roundtable devoted to "the multiplicities of identity, and the manner in which our identities are layered and intersectional."

If that's not enough, expect additional conversations about sex trafficking, Shakespeare, disability rights, and African-American visibility on film. Documentaries pertaining to campus sexual assault, hookup culture, and second wave feminism will be screened. Each event will occur free of charge throughout the day on Thursday and Friday — and you don't need a student I.D. to participate. — Dan Schank

Events will occur throughout the day on Thurs. April 5 & Fri. April 6 // Penn State Behrend, Reed Union Building, 4701 College Dr. // free

Grass, Small Small Pond

Mar. 29 & Apr. 2, 5, 9 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Learn to Accessorize

Mar. 29 — 2 to 3 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Digital Media Festival

Mar. 29, 30 — 4 to 10 p.m.
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. sites.psu.edu.

Women's Empowerment

Panel

Mar. 29 — 6 p.m.
Edinboro University Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd, Edinboro, PA 16444 edinboro.edu.

Smith Creative Writers Series

Mar. 29 -- 6 to 7:15 p.m.
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Owen Benjamin

Mar. 29 — 7 p.m. & Mar. 30, 31 — 6:45 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr's Last Laugh, 1402 State

St. jrslastlaugh.com.

Easter Egg-stravaganza

Mar. 30 — 10 a.m. to noon
Erie Maritime Museum, 150 E. Front St. flagshipniagara.org.

Fly Fishing Instructional Workshop

Mar. 31 — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Cabin 2 on West Pond at Water Works in Presque Isle State Park, 1 Peninsula Dr. trecpi.org.

Spring Expo

Mar. 31 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Saga Club, 3828 Washing-

ton Ave. facebook.com.

STREAM Studio

Apr. 2 — 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
Millcreek Branch Library, 2088 Interchange Rd. erielibrary.org.

Legends of the Night Sky

Apr. 3 — 7 p.m.
Edinboro University Planetarium, 230 Scotland Rd, Edinboro, PA 16444 edinboro.edu.

Author Anthony Flaccavento Evening Presentation

Apr. 3 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Compton Hall 107A at

Edinboro University, 210 E. Normal St, Edinboro, PA 16444 facebook.com.

Tinkergarten

Apr. 4 — 10 to 11:15 a.m. & Apr. 6, 7 — 9:30 to 10:45 a.m.
Veterans Park, Love & Zimmerly Rd. tinkergarten.com.

Divorce Ministry

Apr. 4 — 6:30 to 8 p.m.
St. Mark Catholic Center, 429 E. Grandview Blvd. eriercd.org.

Adult Art Classes

Apr. 4, 11 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Lake Erie Arboretum at

Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org.

Speech and Silence, 11th annual Penn State Behrend Gender Conference

Apr. 5, 6 — 8 a.m.
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

The Diverse Experiences of Gay Fathers

Apr. 5 — 6 to 8 p.m.
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Chris Titus

Spend a Special Evening with Gary Lucas at Artlore Studio



FRIDAY, APR. 6

This April, Artlore Studio will be hosting a very special show. The performer in question has been referred to as a “guitarist, innovator, legendary musician” and lastly an “artist of the creative highest level.” His name is Gary Lucas, and he was a member of the psychedelic and experimental rock bands Captain Beefheart and Gods and Monsters.

While Captain Beefheart gets remembered for many reasons — their 1969 magnum opus *Trout Mask Replica*, lead performer Don Van Vlet’s competitive (and at times, contentious) friendship with peer Frank Zappa — but Lucas actually performed on two of Captain Beefheart’s most critically acclaimed and successful ’80s ventures. Lucas is credited as performing guitar and French horn on 1980’s *Doc at the Radar Station* as well as glass-finger guitar, slide guitar and a National steel duolian on 1982’s *Ice*

Cream for Crow (noted by John Peel to be one of Captain Beefheart’s best albums).

“I believe the importance of Captain Beefheart is huge,” says Artlore Studios owner Stephen Trohoske. “I still believe he remains one of the most effortlessly eccentric musicians to emerge from rock culture. Like Zappa, I believe he brought a high level of both physical playing and creativity to the music as well as a sense of humor that always seemed to keep the music human.”

“It’s all part of our vision at Artlore Studio and we plan to continue to do shows like this in the future,” continues Trohoske. “This is a creative space and we want to keep that vision strong and growing.”

Over the years, Lucas has performed with an incredible resume of artists, including Nick Cave, Lou Reed, Allen Ginsberg, Iggy Pop and Jeff Buckley, who most notably performed in Lucas’ band Gods and Monsters in the 1990s. Lucas’ influence and legacy is reflected even in Erie’s own psychedelic acts, and as Trohoske will be the first to say, a performance like Lucas’ is liable to both entertain and inspire audiences. — Aaron Mook

8 p.m. to 10 p.m. // 3406 West Lake Road // \$35

Simone Dinnerstein to Perform at Erie Phil Season Finale

SATURDAY, APRIL 7

The Erie Philharmonic’s 2017-18 season is almost over, but there’s one last show.

In what promises to be a memorable finale, Simone Dinnerstein, a New York-based pianist with an international following, will perform a keyboard concerto by J. S. Bach and the world-premiere of American icon Philip Glass’s Piano Concerto No. 3, a new work co-commissioned by the Erie Philharmonic.

A graduate of the Julliard School, Dinnerstein has performed at the Sydney Opera House, London’s Wigmore Hall and with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Tokyo Symphony, the New York Philharmonic and previously the Erie Philharmonic, too.

In 2007, Dinnerstein released her own versions of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, which reached number one on the U.S. Billboard Classical Chart in its first week and was also listed as one of the “Best of 2007” by The New York Times and others. Dinnerstein had raised the money to record her versions on her own.

The season finale will open with Sergei Prokofiev’s Classical Symphony and close with Ravel Daphnis and Chloé Suites 1 & 2. For the last time — until the next season — the suites will showcase the orchestra in all its glory. The show will be led by conductor Daniel Meyer.

Prior to Saturday’s performance, Dinnerstein will be featured on Live from Studio Q from noon to 1 p.m. Friday, April 6 at WQLN Public Media, 8425 Peach St. It is free and open to the public. — Tracy Geibel



8 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$10-52 // 455-1375 // eriephil.org

Theresa Caputo Brings the Next Life into Your Life at the Warner Theatre

SUNDAY, APR. 8

What do yellow flowers mean to you? Where does the blue car fit into your life? Did your grandma always make you strawberry milkshakes? Questions like these are at the core of what beloved psychic and star of *Long Island Medium*, Theresa Caputo, does — and she is bringing her sense of those who exist in the next life into the lives of a very lucky audience right here in Erie’s Warner Theatre.

Whether it’s putting your mind at ease over an argument that you thought could never be resolved because of a loved one’s death, giving grieving family members a newfound sense of peace, or allowing the dead to convey their guidance and advice from beyond the grave to those who wander and are lost, Caputo will offer her unique combination of extrasensory perception, warmth, humor and sass to her readings, giving comfort and joy to the audience members who need it most, from the people they loved the most. — Cara Suppa



7:30 p.m. // 811 State St. // \$39.75 and up // eriewarnertheatre.com/events

Apr. 5 — 7 p.m. & Apr. 6, 7 — 6:45 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr’s Last Laugh, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.com.

Primitive Skills Series: Fire Starting
Apr. 6 — 6 to 7 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trepci.org.

Converging Rivers: Healthcare and the Intersections of Religion, Culture and Ethics
Apr. 6 -- 7 p.m.
Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

St. Peak’s Day
Apr. 7
Peek’n Peak Resort, 1405 Olde Rd. pknpk.com.

Discover The Dinosaurs: Time Trek
Apr. 7 — 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. & Apr. 8 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier discover

erthedinosauers.com.

2018 Success by 6 Early Learning Expo
Apr. 7 — 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Millcreek Mall, 5800 Peach St. unitedwayerie.org.

Hack the Lake-Hack-a-thon
Apr. 7, 8 — noon
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Erie Handmade Fair Supports Autism Society NWPA
Apr. 7 — noon to 5 p.m.
Polish Falcons Club, 431 E. 3rd St. facebook.com.

NICU Reunion
Apr. 7 — noon to 5 p.m.
Gannon University Athletic Center, 109 University Sq. saint-vincent.childrensmiraclenetworkhospitals.org.

Theresa Caputo Live! The Experience
Apr. 8 — 7:30 p.m.

Warner Theatre, 811 State St. theresacaputo.com.

Little Leaves
Apr. 9 — 10 to 10:45 a.m.
Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org.

Erie Talent Share
Apr. 10 -- 6 to 8 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

Milton Hershey School Informational
Apr. 11 -- 6 p.m.
Golden Corral, 7500 Peach St. mhskids.org.

Open Mic Night
Apr. 11 — 7 p.m.
Jr’s Last Laugh, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.com.

Presque Isle State Park After Dark: Long Pond Trail
Apr. 11 — 7:30 to 9 p.m.
East Pier Parking Lot in Presque Isle State Park, 1 Peninsula Dr. trepci.org.

CALENDAR

Enjoy Unforgettable Sets from Lespecial and The Blind Spots at Kings Rook Club



Lespecial will look to move the Kings Rook crowd with its genre-bending blend.

tious changes of the band's mood and tempo," reads one introduction to the band.

Paired with Lespecial are The Blind Spots, a slightly more traditional outfit but one that refuses to be pigeonholed nonetheless. Combining folk influence with synth-driven rhythms, the band is led by dynamic vocals of singer Maddy Walsh. Walsh's comparisons

run the gamut from Adele to Bonnie Raitt, as well as one most female vocalists are all too familiar with.

"I sound nothing like Janis [Joplin]!" Walsh proclaims in a press statement. "I think people see a female vocalist having that much fun commanding the stage and that's what they're forced to say. It's a giant compliment, of course, but it's a shame we don't have more rockin' ladies to look to. The tides are shifting, though."

As always, this popular venue offers an amalgamation of sounds, from the straightforward progressive-rock and Americana tags to the more ambitious "apocalyptic dub" and "moxie-rock" of this show's performers. Once again, Kings Rook Club has offered those 21 and up another shot at an unforgettable (and free) evening of music this April. — Aaron Mook

9 p.m. to 2 a.m. // 1921 Peach Street // Free Show

SATURDAY, APR. 7

No stranger to unique bills, Erie's Kings Rook Club will be hosting one of this season's most eclectic and creatively satisfying shows. Pairing two bands with a history of mashing genres together, the venue's downstairs room will be the setting for a doubleheader featuring Connecticut-based Lespecial and Ithaca, New York's The Blind Spots.

Now split between Boston and New York, Lespecial is comprised of three childhood friends who each bring an essential component to the stage as well as the studio. The unparalleled sound they create is influenced by numerous genres, from post-rock to dubstep and even something called "death-funk."

"Injecting splashes of color and wicked chops into their heavy groove foundations or driving assaults, this dynamic battery simultaneously eases and propels Lespecial through the frac-

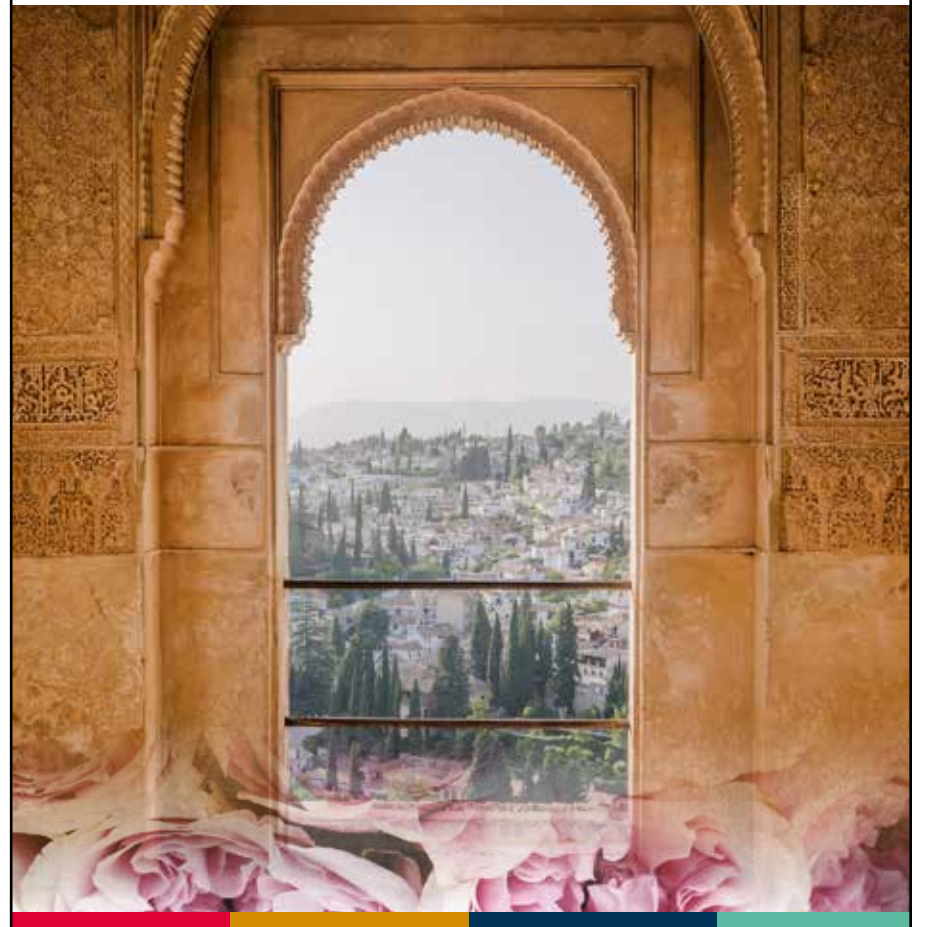
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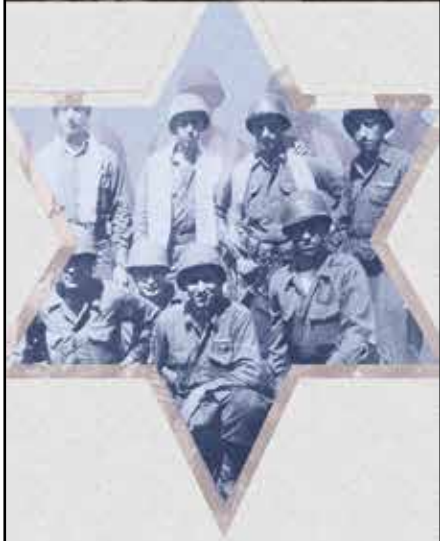
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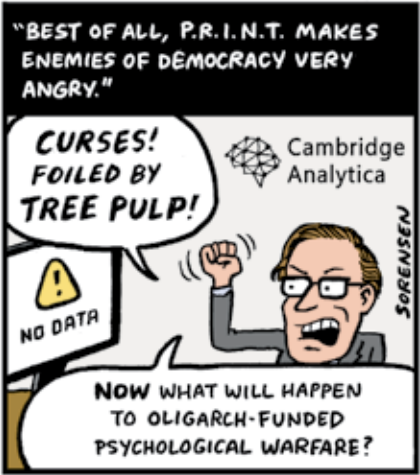
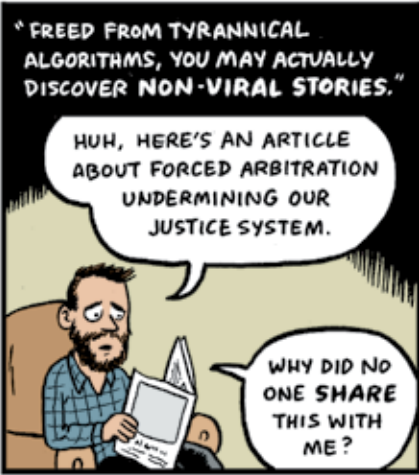
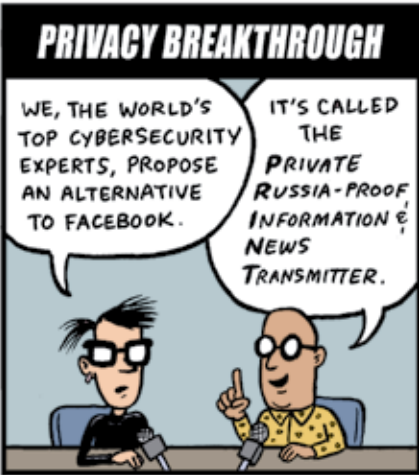
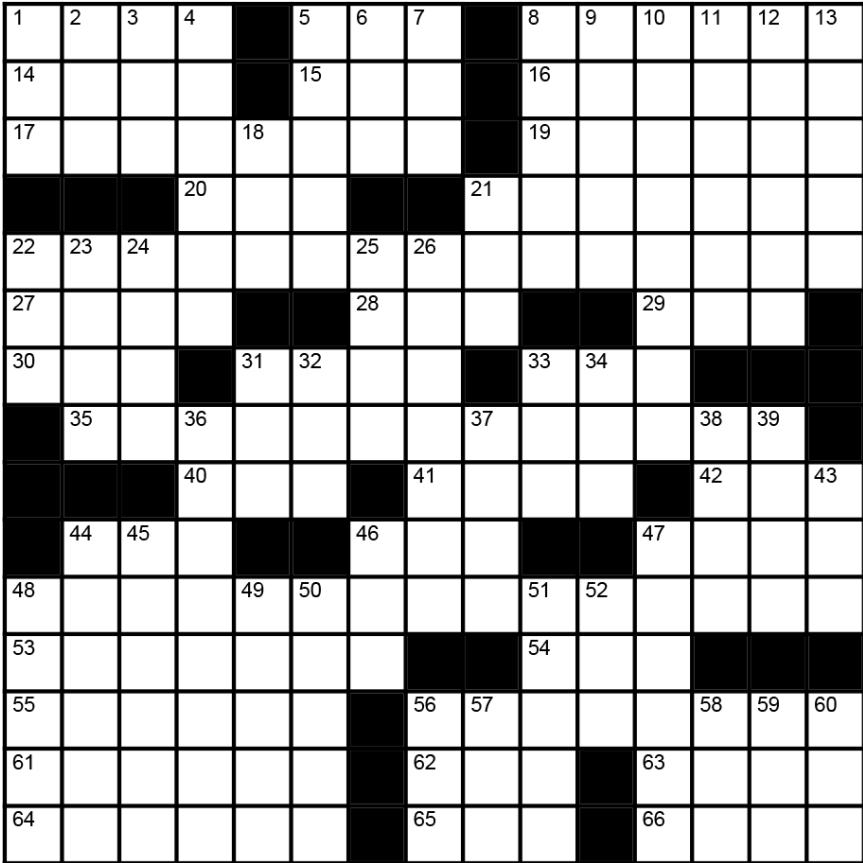
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Across

1. Gilberto's partner on "The Girl From Ipanema," 1964
5. Go out for a while?
8. Migratory insect
14. Notion
15. Animal in an Aesop fable
16. "Romanian Rhapsodies" composer
17. What one might say the NRA is?
19. Hot spot
20. Org. backing Obamacare
21. Under debate
22. What a Guinness-loving tourist in Dublin might exclaim when seeing all his options?
27. ____-Cola
28. Reverse of SSW
29. Black ____
30. Note between fa and la
31. Mad Libs specification
33. Scooby-____
35. Back street where everyone disparages Time's 2007 Person of the Year?
40. Facebook had one in 2012, for short
41. A few
42. Naval burial site, maybe
44. "Kung Fu" actor Philip
46. Quid pro ____
47. TKOs, e.g.
48. Homer's cry of alarm after a violent robbery is committed at the Kwik-E-Mart?

53. A few
54. "Do not insert swab into ____ canal" (warning on boxes of Q-tips)
55. Narcissus, e.g.
56. Considering the additions to 17-, 22-, 35- and 48-Across, a valid assessment of this crossword puzzle
61. Mailed or faxed
62. Take home
63. Somewhat
64. [I find this mildly amusing]
65. Caps Lock, e.g.
66. ____ Gaga

Down

1. Band's booking
2. Email address ending for a student
3. X amount
4. Mexican revolutionary played by Brando
5. Kind of spray
6. Fiery end?
7. "Gangnam Style" singer
8. Resulted in
9. "____ by land ..."
10. Center of moral corruption
11. Depletes
12. TV series set at Sacred Heart Hospital
13. Schleps
18. June portrayer in "Henry & June"
21. Summer cooler

22. Liverpool lads
23. Earring style
24. Org. that tweeted "we'll see him in court" a day after Donald Trump was elected U.S. president
25. "Movin' ____" ("The Jeffersons" theme)
26. Fashion designer whose last name sounds like a popular hog call
31. Beat by a hair
32. Middle name of Sean Lennon
33. Hydroelectric project
34. Estadio cheer
36. Worker with light metal
37. It may follow eleven
38. "Cómo ____ usted?"
39. Info on a wine label
43. Cash cache
44. Nadir's opposite
45. Call before a snap
46. Amt.
47. Story that's "to be continued"
48. Emily Dickinson poem "For Every Bird ____"
49. Proverbial waste maker
50. Pirouetting, perhaps
51. Irascible
52. Fashion item always seen in mid-Manhattan?
56. It's kept in a pen
57. Golf peg
58. Org. for Raptors and Hawks
59. What Rick called Ilsa
60. Filthy digs



MUSIC REVIEWS

The Decemberists
I'll Be Your Girl
Capitol Records

★★★★

Overall, The Decemberists are a fantastic band. In two different ways, what makes them great seems far in the past. This is the eighth full-length album by the group, and the truth is, the first four albums solely shoulder the weight of the band's greatness, while the latter half of their catalog fails to hit the mark. What the band truly excels at is sounding like they're out of place in time, hearkening back to sea shanties and story-songs that have been passed down from the 1800s. Putting a fresh spin on these sounds made them one of the favorite bands of the early 2000s for fans and critics alike. The first minute-and-a-half of the introductory song "Once In My Life" holds a lot of promise. Then the synths cut in. Perhaps only The Decemberists would find themselves with the unusual problem of sounding anachronistic to themselves. Eight albums in, *I'll Be Your Girl* feels like a traditional sophomore slump, with a misguided new direction. Colin Meloy and the gang still know how to sound gorgeous though, and there are plenty of melodies and layered orchestrations to enjoy, but it's certainly no *Picaresque*. — Nick Warren



Preoccupations
New Material
Jagjaguwar Records

★★★★

Preoccupations, the Calgary-based post-punk band formerly known as Viet Cong, are now three full-lengths into their career. With each album, they have further cemented their sonic vision, and *New Material* is no different; it's filled with drums that sounds like overturned trash cans, guitars sharp enough to rip holes in your speakers and the kind of vampiric vocals that would make Ian Curtis blush. They are, for all intents and purposes, the premiere post-punk band in 2018. And *New Material* is an album for fans of the genre, plain and simple. At only 36 minutes spread across eight tracks, it can be a bit frustrating to hear the band not push themselves toward any new ground. The things that work here, however, work well; opening track and single "Espionage" inserts unforgettably playful synth work over its dance-driven rhythm section, while closing track "Compliance" simmers with a building, grainy ambiance that is liable to blow your headphones out. But these are the highlights, and with a little more time and experimentation before LP4, Preoccupations may return with their magnum opus someday soon. — Aaron Mook



Hot Snakes
Jericho Sirens
Sub Pop

★★★★★

For those unfamiliar with the work of either Rick Froberg or John Reis, Hot Snakes' sound might hit you like a ton of bricks. In fact, the vicious, metallic, overdriven sound is likely to do that either way. The band almost has its own language of music, a fully-defined onslaught of kinetic energy that never holds back. It's the band's fluency that allows for such an articulated attack, and it's a welcome feeling that truly gets the blood flowing. This kind of connection makes perfect sense, as Froberg and Reis have been playing together for over 30 years. The two are responsible for influential bands like Pitchfork and Drive Like Jehu, while Reis found much-deserved success as the frontman for Rocket From the Crypt. Hot Snakes formed in 1999, and have laid dormant since 2004. Both musicians remained preoccupied during that time, Reis with the Night Marchers and Froberg with Obits. From the opening downbeats of "I Need a Doctor" to the final riffs of "Death of a Sportsman," *Jericho Sirens* is completely cohesive. As good as ever, the return of Hot Snakes is a welcome one. — Nick Warren



Mount Eerie
Now Only
P.W. Elverum & Sun

★★★★★

Despite being another potential masterwork in its own right, *Now Only* is a clear continuation and companion piece to last year's *A Crow Looked at Me*, an album that graphically portrayed the death of singer-songwriter Phil Elverum's wife. An album like *A Crow Looked at Me* is essential but not easy listening, a quality that *Now Only* also shares. It is at times a refreshing perspective on how someone can pick up the pieces and carry forward with their life — despite it being shattered in front of them. For the most part, *Now Only* is a slightly easier listen, picking up where the unflinching grief and despair of its predecessor left off and now addressing the things that come next: fatherhood ("Distortion"), art ("Two Paintings By Nikolai Astrup") and one's own mortality ("Earth"). A connection can be drawn to the extreme stream of consciousness of Sun Kil Moon's Mark Kozelek (this being Elverum's Universal Themes), but between Elverum's soft monotone and more traditional playing (see: the title track's hook), *Now Only* will be a little more comprehensible for most listeners. — Aaron Mook



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Maitham's Corner

Brian Slawin



Brian Slawin moved to Erie from St. Louis in 2015 after receiving an email from the Penn State Alumni Association detailing the Invent Penn State program and the central role that Ben Franklin Technology Partners play in helping new business ideas to flourish and existing companies to accelerate and grow.

vision?

BS: I'm beginning to see us focus on a vision I call "10/100/1,000/\$1 million". It's more than realistic that in the next 10 years, 100 tech companies will collectively employ 1,000 tech workers and each company will generate at least \$1M in revenue, per year. It can be done and I think Erie is the place that can do it. So, what will it take to get there? A laser focus on building four pillars of a truly innovative community: 1) LIVE, 2) LEARN, 3) PLAY, and 4) BUILD.

I'm fortunate to be in Erie and Northwest PA now because even in the past two years since I moved here, so many positive activities have gained real momentum.

MB: Let's say I want to start a small startup business in Erie but I have zero idea about the process. What are the do's and don'ts?

BS: There's really only one "do" and that's get engaged. For those that are more socially networked, definitely join the Erie Entrepreneurs community on Facebook and by all means read the "7 Ways to Get Involved with the Erie Entrepreneurial Community" (<https://tinyurl.com/7WaysErie>).

When he's not out snapping photos, Maitham Basha can be reached at maitham@eriereader.com

By: Maitham Basha

I recently sat down with Brian Slawin, the NW Regional Director and Portfolio Manager for Ben Franklin Technology Partners. The St. Louis native and Penn State graduate shared his optimistic outlook for small manufacturers and technology entrepreneurs in northwestern Pennsylvania.

Maitham Basha: Please tell us about the Ben Franklin partnership.

Brian Slawin: The Ben Franklin Technology Partnership is a PA-statewide early-stage seed investor providing investment capital and business support services to emerging tech-based companies and small, existing manufacturers. By providing committed entrepreneurs with the connections,

mentoring and capital to go from idea to startup, Ben Franklin continues to create a significant economic impact (\$25 billion, 51,000 jobs and \$3.60 of PA state tax revenue for every \$1 invested) since 1985.

MB: Which start-up companies have you helped out and what has been the success rate?

BS: In the past year, Ben Franklin has invested in 34 companies and provide much more than capital. Through our Transformations Business Support program, we provide more than 10,000 hours of support to help our clients start and run a successful business. Those companies have gone on to generate more than \$163 million in revenue and created or retained more than 1,100 jobs

in 2017 alone. We also invest in innovative entrepreneurial development programs that help mentor and support the companies that come to us for support.

MB: You seem very optimistic about Erie and its future especially about the entrepreneurial startups and the downtown innovation hub... please tell us more.

BS: Entrepreneurs, by their nature, are optimistic about the future. But even the most rose-colored glasses can be tempered with reality. I'm fortunate to be in Erie and Northwest PA now because even in the past two years since I moved here, so many positive activities have gained real momentum. One of the most visible is the Erie Innovation District

that's focused on creating the next generation of businesses and industries that will spring from Erie. And of course, our collective vision extends well beyond the business environment. Our children are the future and Senator Dan Laughlin fought for \$14 million from the state to sustain our schools. These are just some of the reasons for, "Why Erie!" and the excitement I see from the people that we get to work with on the next generation of what's going to be great about Erie.

MB: We have a new administration in City Hall, Erie Insurance is expanding, Velocity net is moving downtown, and the Renaissance Building is becoming a hub for innovators and creatives. Let's look 10 years from now. What is Erie's

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