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From the Editors**Divisibility and indivisibility**

Even before our whole world turned upside down, this year's edition of Erie's 40 Under 40 was destined to be one of numerological significance. Consider these factors (literally): it was *always* going to be our eighth class ($40 \div 8 = 5$), announced in the year 2020 ($40 \div 20 = 2$), which is our 10th as a print publication ($40 \div 10 = 4$). But also consider all that we *hadn't* factored into our plans — that it would arrive two months ($40 \div 2 = 20$) later than usual, five full months ($40 \div 5 = 8$) into a global pandemic, and be only our fourth ($40 \div 4 = 10$) issue back from publishing purgatory.

Despite the tidiness of those divisors, as editorial calendar devisers, we'd be lying if we said everything has gone quite as we surmised. Tongue twisters aside, though, one thing was absolutely no surprise — the breadth and diversity of 40 Under 40 candidates nominated by the Reader readership. Their faces range from those fresh out of college to those just settling into handsome maturity; their occupations run the gamut from accountant to woodworker (and everything in between); their interests and hobbies include anything from ghost-hunting to scuba diving to playing the ukulele. Although noteworthy for both their professional distinctions and their individual distinctiveness, these 40 men and women all share a common denominator — their drive to make Erie a better place across the board.

"Symmetry" and "congruity" probably won't be the first words we'll think of when reminiscing about 2020, a year that has laid bare long-ignored divisions within our society, and the ragged edges and crooked injustices that lie along those fault lines. Without a doubt, we'll be left with an ugly remainder when this is all said and done, with psychological and emotional baggage that will carry over far beyond 2021. Nonetheless, we have confidence our young people will outlive these struggles, and near certainty they will even our odds.

Why do we feel this way? Because the resilience, nimbleness, and enthusiasm of youth is so evident in these pages — kids at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House transcending their circumstances to create beautiful works of art and imagination; area high school students banding together to ignite social change; and of course, the young adults in Erie's 40 Under 40 classes both past and present who touch all levels of our community.

The mental calculus isn't really all that tough — our future is youth, and the future is bright.

The Inner-City Neighborhood Art House at 25

Over a quarter-century of helping kids bolster their ‘inner spirit’



Sister Annette Marshall, executive director of the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House, loves the new mural, installed by Erie artist Ehren Knapp earlier this summer.

By: Liz Allen

Ranging in age from 7 to 14, the youngsters at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House might be a bit wet behind the ears to join the ranks of the Erie Reader’s 40 Under 40 honorees.

And at age 76, Sister Annette Marshall, OSB, executive director of the Art House, jokes: “I’ve been around for a while.”

But if you take the measure of the places as well as the people that contribute to Erie’s vitality and ingenuity, the Neighborhood Art House would make the cut, especially because this year marks its 25th anniversary of “Inspiring a Better Future Through the Arts,” as its logo states.

Sister Annette, the staff, and the children refuse to let the pandemic stifle their creativity.

The Art House’s annual fundraiser, Taste of the Arts, which normally features cocktails, food stations, silent and live auctions, and the sale of children’s artwork, is going virtual this year, starting at 5 p.m. on Sept. 15.

Children who are part of Sister Pat Lupo’s Green Team program at the Art House organized a Climate Shoe Strike on July 24. Socially distanced in the Art House parking lot at 201 E. 10th St., the kids sang, beat drums, led chants, and, with the poise of seasoned activists, gave interviews to reporters. A student-designed flier to advertise the strike depicted the globe sizzling in a frying pan.

The winter-spring term at the Art House ended March 13 with the statewide shutdown order. “We thought maybe it would be for a few weeks,” said Rhonda Berlin, who teaches piano at the Art House.

When it became apparent that COVID-19 safety precautions would be here for a long time, she switched her lessons to Zoom. Not all of the kids, though, have pianos or keyboards at home, so when someone offered to donate keyboards, “We were able to connect them with families for porch drop-offs, with no contact, and we were able to get the students going again,” Berlin said.

The Art House also has a new mural on the side of the building facing East 10th Street. If you are taking a mural tour, be sure to stop to see this work by Erie artist Ehren Knapp. In lush colors and detailed drawings, Knapp depicts the marvelous array of creative endeavors available to girls and boys at the Art House, including gardening, sewing, weaving, photography, painting, poetry, voice, hoop dancing, and instrumental lessons.

Sister Annette is struck in particular by the image of the wide-eyed, happy girl in the middle, gazing straight ahead. Nearby, there’s a book titled *Hold Fast to Your Dreams*.

“That girl is looking into her future,” Sister Annette said.

When Benedictine sisters Mary Lou Kownacki and Joan Chittister came up with the idea for the Neighborhood Art House, their goal was to provide a bright-

er future for children who lack access to the enrichment activities that more well-to-do families take for granted. But they also looked back to the religious order’s past, to stay true to the ideals that brought the sisters from Bavaria to Erie in 1856.

“We came to educate the German immigrants,” Sister Annette said. But after St. Benedict Academy and St. Mary Catholic School closed on Erie’s east side, “We had no direct outreach to the children,” she said.

Families in need could get meals at Emmaus Soup Kitchen. They could find clothing at St. Martin Center. But the sisters realized that there was “no place for the children to build their inner spirit and develop hope,” she said. “They lived in a part of the city that didn’t have a lot of beauty and there was little exposure to the arts. Families couldn’t afford dance lessons and music lessons.”

On East 10th Street, close to their existing ministries, the sisters found a former Goodyear Tire store. “The parking lot was overgrown with weeds. It was an eyesore for the neighborhood but it’s where we wanted to be,” Sister Annette said. “The idea was to bring beauty to the neighborhood.”

The Art House began by offering after-school and summer classes in the visual, performing, and literary arts. Before Sister Annette became executive director of the Art House 10 years ago, she served as director of Erie-Allegheny Earth Force for 13 years. So when Sister Pat Lupo, OSB, was looking for a home to continue her work with youth on environmental issues, Sister Annette said: “Oh, come to the Art House and start an environmental strand.” Sister Pat also incorporates nature art into her curriculum.

Sister Annette said the statistics “blew me away” when she realized that 2,700 youngsters have been part of the Art House over the years. She considers herself an administrator, not an artist, but she has begun to dabble in painting with chalk and pastels and has also taken some clay classes.

The fact that Sister Annette keeps expanding her horizons isn’t a surprise. She showed her determination and grit from the time she was a young girl attending St. John the Baptist Catholic School (now closed) on East 27th Street. She wanted to attend the all-girls St. Benedict Academy for high school, but her father said he couldn’t afford it.

“I sold popcorn at the stadium. I babysat all summer. I sold greeting cards,” she recalled. “I earned the money so I would be able to go (to St. Ben’s).”

But after one year, her father made it clear: She would have to transfer to the public high school, Academy.

Then, just before 12th grade, her dad had another change of heart and allowed her to return to St. Ben’s for her senior year. That transfer put her on the path

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Margaret Mead, icon American cultural anthropologist, thought that change starts with the individual and that success should be measured in terms of the contributions an individual makes to her or his fellow human beings. The annual nomination of 40 outstanding, young Erie citizens in the Erie Reader is an impressive demonstration of how our community grows through their engagement, dedication, and strong belief in opportunities. As the organization that hosts the Civic Leadership Academy, which prepares Erie professionals for meaningful, fulfilling, and impactful engagement in their community, the Jefferson is proud to see 33 JCLA alumni having been recognized with this award for their achievements. We congratulate Erie's 40 und 40 Class of 2020 -- and all of the classes that came before them -- thank them for their commitment, innovative thinking, and community dedication, and wish them all the best in the future.

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LIZ ALLEN

to becoming a Benedictine herself, entering religious life after graduation at age 17.

She remembers having “such an affinity for those sisters. I could see they were grounded, loving, happy.”

Today, no one would think about encouraging a young girl to enter Catholic religious life at age 17, she said. But when Sister Annette was growing up, the expectation was that “you were on your way to your life’s work right after high school,” she said. For girls, the choices for your livelihood were narrow: becoming a nurse, teacher, secretary, maybe a factory worker, or getting married.

Now opportunities are wide-open, and the arts can help children reach all of their potential. That doesn’t mean the kids have to become professional artists. Instead, the Art House achieves its goals if the youngsters can build on their “inner beauty and inner strength,” Sister Annette said.

Of course, COVID-19 disrupted the Art House routines for months, but summer enrichment programs resumed after parents were surveyed and they said they would allow their children to return. Class sizes are much smaller. Children have their temperatures taken and wear masks. “The kids were wonderful with being aware of COVID-19,” she said. “They were not the least bit reckless.”

The summer reading program couldn’t take place, though, because kids would have had to sit too close together with volunteer readers.

But reading of a different sort went on — reading music, that is, for Rhonda Berlin’s piano and voice students, who took lessons on Zoom.

Three years ago, Berlin, 47, and her oldest daughter, Katie, 19, applied together to teach music lessons at the Art House.

“We answered a Facebook ad that they put out. I lived in Erie my whole life but I didn’t know a whole lot about the Art House,” Berlin said. “We ended up both starting there at the same time, teaching a couple of days a week.”

Youngsters from the Green Team environmental program at the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House participate in a socially distanced climate strike on July 24.

Katie, a French horn player and music education major at Youngstown State University, is back at college now, but before returning, she also used Zoom for her Art House lessons, teaching trumpet. Now Berlin’s younger daughter, Mandy, 17, has stepped in to teach Katie’s students.

Teaching music to Art House students via Zoom also led to an additional opportunity for Berlin — she’s now teaching piano and voice lessons virtually to other students. Because of the pandemic safety measures, “All of a sudden, there were all these kids with time on their hands and a lot of parents looking for structure and enrichment for their kids,” Berlin said. Using Zoom, “I can teach kids anywhere. I don’t have to worry about any dangers of teaching in person.”

To boost spirits these days, Berlin, who has long been active in local theater, recommends the music from *Rent*. That musical “sends such a good message about living life to the fullest,” she said.

There’s a reason the arts are finding a way to endure through the pandemic, Berlin said. “People are trying to find ways to feed their souls.”

Liz Allen was thrilled when her son delivered an acrylic painting to Erie from her 12-year-old granddaughter in Maryland on Aug. 20. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com

“Taste of the Arts 2020: Take Out Tuesday — Art to Go,” goes live on www.neighborhoodarthouse.org at 5 p.m. on Sept. 15 and closes at 11:50 p.m. on Sept. 29. You can browse in the children’s art gallery, place silent auction bids and purchase benefit tickets. To hear musical recitals by Neighborhood Art House students from Rhonda Berlin’s Zoom classes, visit the Neighborhood Art House page on Facebook.

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The Rebirth of the Erie County Student Coalition

Local student activist group makes a seat at the table for itself



Since its formation in 2018, the Erie County Student Coalition has seen representation from nine different Erie County high schools, with members taking charge in the arena of youth-led social change.

thing whether that be support for a specific policy or candidate, or being pro-life or pro-choice," she said.

Currently, the coalition is focused on recruiting students for the 2020-21 school year. Playing on Gen Z's affinity for social media, the ECSC is calling for new members via Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

"I first heard about it when I saw a notice for new members on my friend's Instagram story," said Hannah Smrcka, social media manager for the ECSC and Corry Area High School senior. "What made me want to join was that the world needs more youth involvement in each community because a community can only develop when all hands are included. Any good change that can come out of anything is important." That good change has been the apparent focus of the group's endeavors, despite the many setbacks it has faced in its short lifespan.

Project Highlights

This past fall, the group's highest priority was to host a town hall with Pennsylvania's 16th District Congressional candidates, including Republican incumbent Mike Kelly and Democratic challenger Kristy Gnbis. While Kelly rejected their invitation, he agreed to meet with group members in private in January.

"This meeting fostered candid, personal conversation about federal policy and overall was productive," Seliga said. "We hoped to schedule another meeting in the spring or summer but of course, this was halted due to the pandemic. At the meeting, we handed Congressman Kelly a very detailed letter outlining why in-person town halls are important and valuable. He said he would get back to us on it but we never received a response."

The coalition then collaborated with the Town Hall Project, creating a new volunteer program for students to find events with elected officials in their area through social media plat-

forms. The program also allows students to gain insight into political issues that affect them and their community. The program was first tested in Pennsylvania and will be promoted in other states such as Oregon, Michigan, and Colorado, Seliga said.

"I hope that we can support and help the students our age to see this movement and also see its importance and to bring about change," Smrcka said. "Educating the youth is the best way to bring effective change and new hope through the next generations."

In February, the ECSC was invited to attend a meeting of the Pennsylvania State Education Association North-western Region Executive Committee to introduce itself and its mission. The meeting led to the coalition's collaboration with Empower Erie, through which it helped raise awareness for a community college in Erie through a series of petitions and letter writing to the Pennsylvania State Board of Education.

February also saw the ECSC's biggest project to date, participation in a countywide initiative to implement the Crayola Color Cycle in as many schools as possible. Created by Crayola, this program allows K-12 students to collect and repurpose used markers. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the coalition set the program up at all North East K-12 schools collecting hundreds of markers in just one month. The group hopes to continue this effort once it is safe enough to do so in schools.

The COVID-19 Crisis

Like many organizations, the pandemic greatly impacted ECSC's plans in that in-person initiatives and meetings, which comprised the majority of its endeavors, were canceled. The town hall, arguably the group's most anticipated event, was canceled after months of hard work. On top of this change, members navigated balancing new methods of schooling and a different way of life, something Seliga said was frustrating and resulted in membership remaining stagnant and participation declining.

Still, the coalition is working to find a happy medium in the new virtual world it has found itself in.

By: Madeline Bruce and Hannah Wyman

In the wake of George Floyd's death and the consequential protests that have broken out across the nation, activism has found itself at the forefront of people's minds. Generation Z, a group of young people known for their unabashed dedication to social change, is no exception. In fact, students of Erie have answered this call to incite change in recent years. As the Erie County Student Coalition (ECSC) finds itself amidst an ever-shifting political climate, the group works to redefine itself and highlight young people taking action.

In the Beginning

Originally gathering to spearhead local high school walkouts in response to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, the ECSC was formed in 2018. The group saw initial success in its trip to Washington, D.C. for the March for Our Lives, a protest organized by survivors of the shooting. Following the march, the ECSC continued its efforts by meeting with local politicians and marching in Erie's pride parade.

North East graduate Lauren Seliga, outgoing president of the ECSC, said the group began to dissipate in the fall

of 2018 due to its membership mainly being graduating seniors. It remained dormant until 2019, when Seliga and fellow North East grad Abby Caviglia decided to revive the group.

"Within a matter of weeks, we boosted membership to around 25 to 35 students, made the front page of the Erie Times, and had our first meeting," Seliga said. Now, the group has regained its footing in youth-led social change and is making a name for itself.

Mission & Membership

Comprised of approximately 45 members from nine different schools since its revitalization, the ECSC has seen representation from North East, Fairview, General McLane, McDowell, Cathedral Prep, Collegiate Academy, Corry, Mercyhurst Prep, Villa Maria Academy, and Girard. Today that number has fallen to 20 members due to several members graduating.

Staying true to its activist roots, the organization takes on issues considered to be more progressive such as climate change and gun violence prevention. However, Seliga explained "we also tackle issues such as voter registration, politician accountability, and youth involvement, which are not partisan."

"Our members have common goals, but we do not always agree on every-

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“Once school ended, ECSC members were able to participate more which allowed us, as an organization, to put our attention and efforts toward the Black Lives Matter movement,” Seliga said.

Though the ECSC did not attend protests as a collective group, Seliga said members took a more individualistic approach toward activism. Members attended protests in Erie, donated to foundations, signed petitions, and raised awareness on their social media accounts.

The coalition found that virtual petitions proved to be the most effective way for the ECSC to participate in the Black Lives Matter Movement while still working remotely.

“We understood that it can be difficult and overwhelming to sort through what petitions to sign or even donate to, which can deter people from participating,” Seliga said. “We decided to highlight petitions on our social media pages every couple days or so to help with this.”

They focused on posting petitions that weren't getting as much atten-

tion and were able to garner over 100 additional signatures and 70 shares on one petition. Some petitions the ECSC promoted include the “Include More Black History in PA School Curriculums” petition and the “Make It A Hate Crime To Remove A Hijab From A Muslim Woman's Head” petition.

“It's hard for any group to have to find a type of new normal, but I do believe that the ECSC has responded well to the pandemic and has still stayed as involved as we can — attending online meetings, trying to get organized for next year, and finding more students that want to be involved in the coalition,” said Smrcka.

Looking Ahead

As the ECSC prepares for the upcoming school year, its goals remain focused on student activism and are characteristically ambitious. Not only does the group plan to continue its Crayola Color Cycle initiative, it also aims to continue their work with the Town Hall Project to push students to volunteer through the student research program it helped create.

As the presidential general election draws near, the coalition hopes to reignite its voter registration programs through the League of Women Voters that were held at a few Erie County schools in 2018. Presque Isle beach cleanups and conversations about the environment are also in the works.

Appropriate for its demographics, a large goal for the ECSC is to become an online resource for students. Members are in the process of creating a social media team composed of graphic designers and reachers, which will help get the word out about politics via social media.

“This will allow us to make weekly posts on social media that sum up in simple, nonpartisan terms what happened politically that week, which is an initiative we have been talking about for a while now,” Seliga said. “A lot of students do not keep up with politics or do not sift through multiple sources, so the ECSC social media team will be working hard every week to read multiple sources from the left, right, and middle to provide students with accurate weekly updates

in hopes of piquing students' interest in politics since it truly does affect so many aspects of their lives.”

Despite the numerous hurdles the ECSC has faced since its inception, the passion these young people have for student activism refuses to fade. As Erie's social climate continues to transform, Erie students ambitiously confront challenges demonstrating the power of student advocacy.

“I'd show my peers how it is important and helpful for us and someday our children to be helping and being active in our community,” Smrcka said. “If someone does not feel compelled to help a community that raised them, then that means a change is needed in the community that can only be brought on by everyone in a community, not just the adults; which includes those that feel outcast.”

Erie Reader summer interns Madeline Bruce and Hannah Wyman are continuing their college educations at Gannon University and California University of Pennsylvania, respectively, this fall.

BIGGER THAN POLITICS AND ALWAYS FIGHTING FOR ERIE



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In three years, Dan Laughlin has brought \$16 million in yearly funding to keep Erie's schools open. He worked to keep LECOM here in Erie, and fought to get eight federal opportunity zones in his district.

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Erie's 40 Under 40: Class of 2020

Young men and women united in their push to get Erie over the hill

By: Erie Reader staff

Like Sisyphus of Greek myth, Erie has been fighting an uphill battle for what's seemed an eternity. Straining against decades of inertia and pessimism, it's been a constant push to get over the hill. If only we could build up enough momentum amongst ourselves to clear its crest, we might send our old burdens hurtling down the other side, free to visualize the infinite horizons in front of us.

Many who figure to be part of the "over-the-hill" gang when that happens are actually not yet "over the hill" — at least not in the traditional sense of the phrase. Age is but a number, and 40 is an arbitrary milestone — persons on either side of it can and do affect meaningful change. However, it is our young adults that have

the greatest role yet to play in transforming Erie into the diverse, prosperous, and inclusive destination we know it can be.

There's no way we flip Erie's script without harnessing the talents and ambitions of youth, and that is why we annually celebrate Erie's 40 Under 40. During an unprecedented year marked by dread and uncertainty, our eighth class represents another welcome dose of hope, strength, and resilience to emerge better than ever.

We can't wait.

Written by: Jonathan Burdick (JB), Chloe Forbes (CF), Ben Spегgen (BS), Rebecca Styn (RS), Cara Suppa (CS), Matt Swanseger (MS), Nick Warren (NW), and Jim Wertz (JW). Photographs by Jessica Hunter.

Jacob Bartko, 33

Executive Director, Community Access Media (CAM Erie)



Jacob Bartko has built his career with Community Access Media, serving as an intern in 2010, then production assistant, and ultimately becoming executive director in 2014. Through his role at CAM Erie, he gives a meaningful television production platform to hundreds of individuals and organizations. His work impacts many businesses, non-profit organizations, and individuals with small budgets, providing an economical outlet for creativity that may not otherwise be expressed.

Additionally, he is also involved in the community in many other ways. He dedicates his time serving on the board of directors of Junior Achievement of NWPA, as a member of two committees for the Young Erie Professionals (YEP), and as a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP). He has also previously volunteered to work with middle school youth through the Erie City Mission's Urban University program.

"Over the past ten years, I have worked to help numerous individuals and organizations bring their ideas to life by sharing their message. Working with the Erie residents from all different backgrounds, professions, and ethnicities has been the most rewarding experience of

my career at CAM."

He believes in giving people a platform and a voice. "Our organization was founded on the premise of freedom of speech. Every single person in our community, no matter their skin color, education level, or financial stability deserves the opportunity to be heard. My mission is to provide them the tools and resources they need to make their thoughts, ideas, and dreams come to life."

When he's not working, he can be found attending an Indians or Browns game, camping in the Allegheny Mountains, indulging at one of Erie County's craft breweries, or enjoying a beautiful Lake Erie sunset with his wife MacKenzie at their favorite spot in North Springfield. — RS

Sarah Bennett, 37

Campaign Manager for Clean Water Advocacy, PennFuture



We might take for granted that when we turn the sink handle and fill our glasses from the spigot, clean water comes out. Likewise, we might not think about how the Erie watershed provides that drinkable

water to more than 200,000 people throughout the area; supports, directly and indirectly, thousands of jobs; and provides a diverse variety of recreational opportunities.

We may also not think about the policy work that goes into ensuring that the water stays clean. But thankfully for those of us not thinking of that, Sarah Bennett's on the job.

At PennFuture, this 37-year-old Sturgis, Mich. native serves as the campaign manager for Clear Water Advocacy, organizing a group of non-governmental organizations to develop a common agenda for Clean Water Advocacy in the Lake Erie watershed. From meeting with area and state leaders to community groups, this Michigan State University alumna who earned both her bachelor's degree (with high honors) and master's degree in zoology (with a concentration in ecology, evolutionary biology, and behavior), is helping to inform and guide policy for the best management practices to protect our region's water resources.

"I want to help lead Erie to make forward-thinking decisions to build a thriving, healthy, sustainable city with opportunities for everyone to succeed," says the former Mercyhurst University biology faculty member of 12 years. When she's not enjoying time camping with family, cooking and baking for friends and family, or playing soccer, this sister to six siblings stays active by serving on the Keep Erie County Beautiful advisory board and the advisory committee for Erie 2030, as well as being a member of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Chapter of Sigma Xi. — BS

Rachel Berlin, 39

Artist and Art Instructor, Owner, RLB Art Studio



Art is important, right now and always. "Art has a positive impact on people," Rachel Berlin explained.

It's no surprise then, that Berlin essentially lives her life for art.

Whether she's creating her own works, or helping others do the same, Berlin is making the world a more colorful place.

Originally from Jamestown, N.Y., she received her associate's degree from Jamestown Community College. She then went on to Edinboro University, where she was awarded her bachelor's and later her master's de-

Congratulations to Jeremy Peterson for being named one of Erie's 40 under 40



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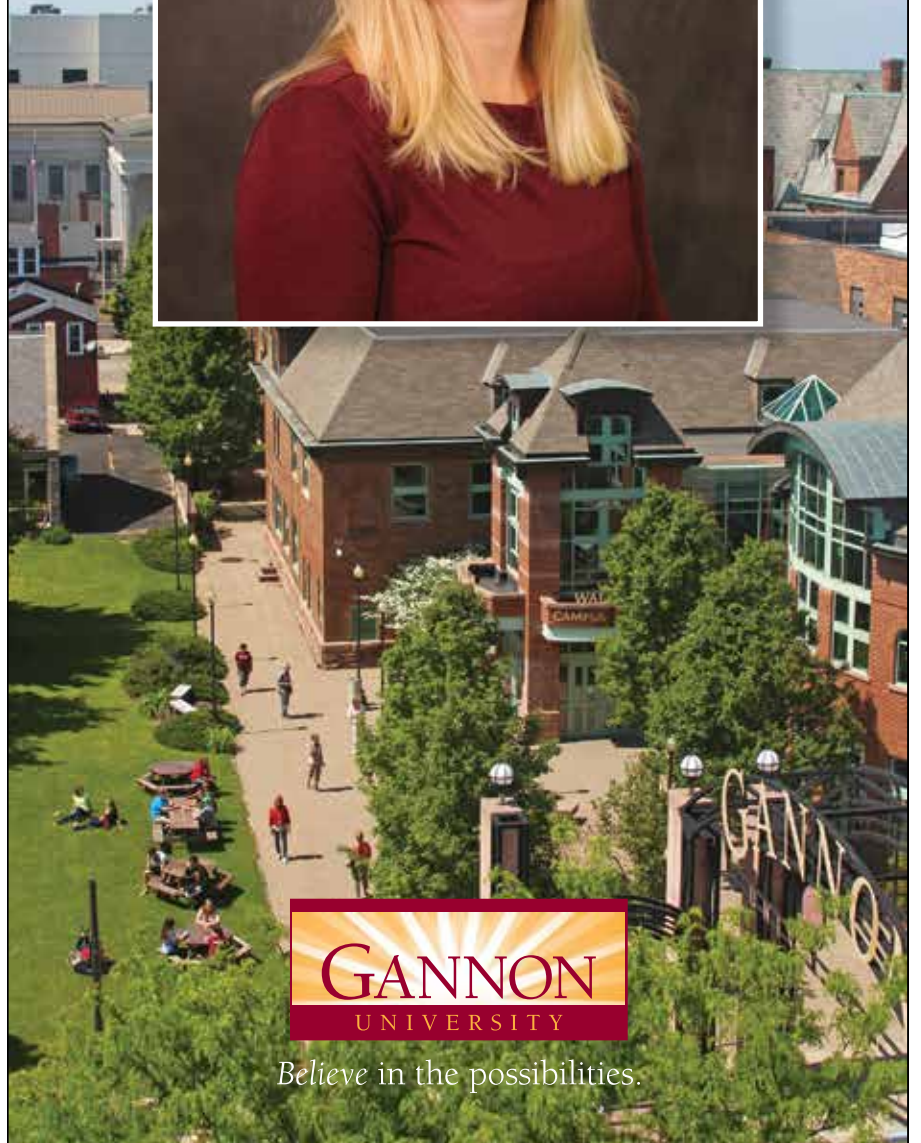
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gree in art education.

Her work has been seen all over Erie, from the Cummings Gallery at Mercyhurst to Pointe Four Vintage Boutique and The Topsy Bean. She's donated pieces to EmeryCare, The Epilepsy Project, as well as to local schools. She even curated a monthly art supply subscription service known as RLB Artbox, the item that kicked off the Reader's inaugural locally-made holiday gift list.

Perhaps what she's most proud of though, is "creating an art space that allows individuals to feel safe, confident, and create amazing art and have experiences that will last a lifetime."

That place is RLB Art Studio. There, she hosts classes, workshops, lessons, art parties, and a weeklong art camp.

She's also an avid gardener, paddleboarder, skier, and hiker. Her love for nature and water in particular led her to be a competitive swimmer and lifeguard.

Still, her heart's with art.

"Creating has always been a big part of who I am," she happily admits. "When I'm not involved in some sort of project a part of me feels void. I love creating art and helping others do the same. Realizing our creativeness is a treasure, and it feeds our souls." — NW

Maggie Beveridge, 34
Product Analyst II, Erie Insurance



"My parents raised me with so much love and acceptance that helping other people has always been what I wake up for," says this Erie native. "Practice kindness and patience with your loved ones and let that overflow for strangers. Create a space for tolerance and acceptance in your heart and home."

The Iroquois High School alumna, who went on to earn her bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in literature and writing from Edinboro University, practices what she preaches, surrounding herself with positivity. After losing her father, Bill, last year to cancer, and her mother Ginger just days before this publication, she "truly grasped how fleeting life can be" so she "soaks up every minute of time I can spend with my hilarious, creative, and all-around awesome 18-year old son, Dylan," going to shows and on road trips.

As a product analyst for Erie Insurance, Beveridge

assesses market demand for Erie Insurance product offerings. Outside the office, however, volunteerism is *always* in demand. Beveridge is an active presence with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, St. Martin's Center, Community Shelter Services, and the Erie Community Garden — despite gardening not being her strong suit.

While her father "could grow anything," this ukulele player, who rocks a mean cover of Rob Zombie's "Dragula," admits she watered a plastic cactus for two years. Nevertheless, she took the lead on the 20 raised garden beds alongside the Holland Street parking garage, and from empty beds she — with the help of many folks willing to nurture not only the produce, but also her through her grief — grew over 1,000 pounds of food for the Erie City Mission in just one year.

"Don't ever allow anyone to tell you that empathy is a weakness," she says. "And if someone slams a door in the face of what you are passionate about, look yourself square in the mirror and tell the world: 'Underestimate me; that will be fun.'" — BS

Eric J Brotherson, 37
Director of Business Intelligence, Erie Federal Credit Union



Eric Brotherson is an Erieite who is truly passionate about his community. In addition to his career with the Erie Federal Credit Union, he serves as a board member and co-chair of the Tobacco Cessation Program with the American Heart Association, creative director for Young Erie Professionals (YEP), an MIS advisory board member for Penn State Behrend's Black School of Business, an advisory board member for Marquis Software, and Wellness Program chair for the credit union. He thrives in an environment where things are constantly changing, affording him opportunities to grow professionally and personally.

When Eric's not volunteering or working, he enjoys skiing, art, traveling, and of course, spending time with his family and two puppies — Ollie and Archie.

As for his future hopes? "I want to influence, grow, and inspire existing and future generations of Erie. Erie is a destination and has so many assets; we should grow together and make it better!"

He also considers himself shy. "This might be a sur-

prise to some, but I am a shy person initially. However, get me to open up and we will have a long-lasting friendship."

Eric holds a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems, an associate's degree in business administration, and is SAP certified. Two fun and probably little-known facts about Eric? He enjoys participating in ghost investigations and has 10 — yes, 10 — tattoos. — RS

Aaron Coseo, 38
Director of Engineering and Media Operations, WQLN



From the microphone to the transmitting antenna, Aaron Coseo is responsible for all the equipment needed to broadcast WQLN PBS/NPR. He has worked at WQLN for 15 years, starting as a board operator right out of college and making his way up to director. His commitment to the station stems from his love of Erie.

When he's not enjoying time with his family, Coseo is a man with a plan. He has designed and installed the broadcast facilities for WQLN PBS, WQLN NPR, and Mercyhurst University, and is the chief engineer for LakerTV at Mercyhurst and WERG-FM at Gannon. Any local content creation, including concert recordings, debates, documentaries, educational programming, local event promotion, and even the recent news conferences led by County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper have all been coordinated by Coseo. Programs like Sounds Around Town and Erie Eats are some of his most noteworthy productions.

"I want WQLN to be a platform for Erieites to showcase their talents or passions," says Coseo. "No matter what happens, it's important to me that our viewers and listeners have the programming they rely on to stay informed, entertained, and safe." — CF

Emily Crofoot, 38
Supervisor of High Impact Prevention, Northwest Rural AIDS Alliance

Emily Crofoot, the supervisor of high impact prevention for the Northwest Rural AIDS Alliance, is here to bridge the very real gap in the public's knowledge of HIV and where the facts stand today. The North East native and Mercyhurst University grad supervises the



with cultural competency and inclusion training, speakers, outreach, and community events could begin the process to assist in the divide and acceptance of diversity,” Crofoot says.

And even with two beloved hounds, an appreciation for the outdoors, and a badass motorcycle hobby, Crofoot also finds time to further invest in her community by running a social skills group for adults on the autism spectrum through KaleidAScope, Inc. — CS

Charlotte Marr de Vries, 33
Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Penn State Behrend

Charlotte Marr de Vries is instrumental in engineering the Penn State Behrend experience. Working on different committees, she is an advocate for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) along with broadening the participation of other underrepresented demographics in engineering.

She has been involved in projects spanning from a NASA fellowship working for the International Space Station in 2017 to utilizing 3D printers in libraries to print assistive living products for the elderly communities of Erie during quarantine. After working for NASA’s Environmental Control and Life Support Systems Group, she introduced a senior project at Penn State Behrend where students design a line-following robot. She believes that her duty as an educator is to “make sure that the path to success is both achievable and

HIV High Impact Prevention program, “which provides education, outreach, and training to the Erie community about HIV, in order to educate about the disease and reduce the stigma.”

In addition to her work through Northwest, Crofoot is a member of the Erie County HIV task force and the LGBTQ+ Advisory board to Mayor Schember, making HIV education and testing accessible to all and advocating for equality. It supports her vision of a more accepting and inclusive Erie.

“I believe that educating the various communities



visible to all students within the Erie School System.”

When she’s not busy creating opportunities for her students, she can be found creating escape rooms in her garage or hosting a game night with her husband and two-year-old daughter. She was also a soprano in the Erie Philharmonic Chorus prior to quarantine. The one piece of advice she gives her students is, “you never want to self-select, if there is something you want, you should always at least try for it.”

Her tenacity has paid off as she is now a woman of many hats, including a Penn State Nittany Lion hat she knitted herself. — CF



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Amanda Duncan, 36**Program Manager, Young Erie Professionals, Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership**

In a world of professionals, Amanda Duncan is a boss. Anyone that's worked with her should be able to attest that she quickly becomes the person to look to. When that room is filled with some of the biggest movers and shakers in Erie? Amanda is *still* very much that person. Focused, trustworthy, and somehow still able to crack a joke while answering countless questions, Amanda is a leader among leaders.

In addition to her work with YEP, she's a member of the Athena Circle of Trust, an AmeriCorps alumna, a donor for the Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank, and a mother of three.

Duncan is also quite the cook, and would have likely been a chef in another life. "I come from a big Sicilian family and we live life through food," she explained. "Cooking is my love language. In my pandemic boredom, I've taken to hosting an occasional cooking show on my Instagram and working to translate some of my favorite recipes to a blog."

Graduating from McDowell, she went on to earn degrees in psychology and public policy management from the University of Pittsburgh and their Graduate School for Public and International Affairs. She then went on to serve the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience (PULSE) as their recruitment and partnership coordinator.

"When I moved back three years ago, I felt like I was starting from scratch," she admitted. "My personal goal was to take what I had learned about successful community development in Pittsburgh and apply it here."

And apply it she did. Breathing new life into YEP, she proved "that Erie's young leaders are here to step up and lead. We aren't asking permission anymore. We are taking our rightful seat at the table and demanding change and action to make Erie a place we are proud to call home." — NW

Jason Easter, 38**Regional Business Development Manager, Sandals & Beaches Resorts**

"What I want to do to make Erie a better place is always be accessible and helpful for our youth,"



says the Erie born-and-bred Jason Easter, who prioritizes volunteering in his life. "It takes a village to raise a child — at one point I was exactly that child."

Those familiar with Easter might know of the Cathedral Prep grad's spot on the 2000 Rambler roster that won the state championship title in football. Or that while at Prep he also ran track. Or that he went on to study marketing at Gannon University. Or that he serves on the Board of Directors of Bayfront NATO Inc., as well as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center. Or that he's a volunteer coach with many local sports organizations. Or that he's a certified autism professional volunteer with the Sandals Foundation, where during his day job as the regional business development manager for the resort company, he identifies and develops strategic business relationships with industry partners and potential customers.

What many might *not* know is that he was raised by a single mother who passed away when he was just four years old, whose grandmother took over raising him until she passed on when he was just 13 years old, leaving his 23-year-old aunt to care for him with the help of other supportive family members and coaches throughout his childhood.

"I love that my sons, kids I coached, and youth I have interacted with not only see me now, but know the story of how I got where I am today," says the 38-year-old father of three sons — Devin, Gavin, and Jaxson — with his wife, Meghan. "By coming together and putting others first, our community is way stronger than we know at building each other up." — BS

Chris Elliott, 34**VP of Finance, Barber National Institute**

One could easily imagine the Elliot family crest framed in ribbons of adding machine tape. Chris, his three brothers, and his father are all accountants — go figure(s).

"We are quite the party when we are all together, as you can only imagine five accountants would be," he quips.

Certainly, number-crunching is in Elliott's blood. Six months removed from college, he passed all four sections of the CPA licensing exam on his first attempt — a feat matched by less than 10 percent of his peers. More

than that, however, he credits hard work, a willingness to learn, and the support of others for elevating him to a leadership role with one of Erie's largest nonprofits. Since becoming the vice president of the Barber National Institute's finance department at the age of 32, Elliott has helped it achieve its goal of improving the lives of individuals with disabilities, guiding sound monetary decisions and directing staff with aplomb.



Although he laments not having more time to volunteer in the community — he is the father of three small children, after all — he is grateful to work for an organization with whom he has such a strong personal connection. Elliot's son was born with a rare genetic condition that limits his ability to communicate, rendering his future "one big question mark."

A hobby gardener with a nurturing mentality, Elliott affirmed that "helping kids and adults, just like my son, throughout the Erie region, by supporting local organizations that do great work, is something I want to do to make Erie a better place for all its citizens." — MS

Derick Fiedler, 28**Professional Speaker and Founder of "The Paradigm Journals: A Mindfulness Project"**

In 2014, after years of struggling with anxiety and depression, Derick Fiedler began exploring the concept

of mindfulness: the idea that you can accept that some parts of life are unpleasant without either stifling those feelings inward or getting caught up in those feelings emotionally.

He began traveling and living out of his backpack, a self-help journey that eventually led to him chronicling his personal struggles with mental health for a mindfulness project he calls "The Paradigm Journals."

"Since fourth grade, anxiety attacks would seemingly come out of nowhere. Wherever I was, I'd suddenly become stricken in an instant by physical pain, clenching my chest, gasping for air, covered in sweat," one of his essays reads, before describing some of the steps he took on his own journey to overcome such attacks.

By 2017, he was giving a TEDx Talk at Penn State Behrend on the stigma surrounding depression. He was recognized by Governor Tom Wolf at the Pennsylvania State Dinner, was the official speaker for the National Alliance on Mental Illness for Erie County, and secured a two-year grant-funded position at Penn State Behrend as their mental health outreach coordinator. He also began sharing his story and message on college campuses, middle schools, high schools, and even the Erie Reader itself, hoping to help remove the stigma surrounding depression and anxiety.

"Derick's presentation made a profound impact on many of our students, as he was able to connect with them on a very realistic level," praised Andrew Krahe, Harborcreek Junior High School's principal.

"In 2011, Erie was ranked the fourth most depressed city in the country," Fiedler says. "I believe the opposite of depression and addiction is connection. Connection to ourselves, to nature, and our neighbors."

That connection has been key to his own journey coping with anxiety and depression, but also is central to his mindfulness movement. He hopes to film a short documentary in Vietnam for "The Paradigm Journals" next year. — JB

Patrick Fisher, 35
Executive Director, Erie Arts & Culture



To truly be invested in a community and its future goes beyond simply being a citizen. Patrick Fisher exemplifies this in many ways, being not only the executive director of Erie Arts & Culture, but also part of

several organizations that ensure culture and creativity are woven into the fabric of everyday life here in Erie.

Born in Erie and raised in Cochranton, he went on to receive his associate's degree in sports and entertainment promotional management at Northwood University, then got his bachelor's degree in business administration from Penn State Behrend. He worked in the airline industry for seven years, lived in Alaska for three years starting a peony farm, then spent a year traveling North America in a camper. He's been straightedge (an ethos championing abstinence from drugs and alcohol owing debt to the hardcore music scene) since age 15 and vegan since he was 21. He still enjoys hiking, day trips to surrounding cities, reading, cooking, attending cultural events and art exhibitions, and spending time with his two three-legged dogs.

Fisher holds many roles in the Erie community, including spots on the Erie Downtown Partnership's Board of Directors, the City of Erie's Better Together Council and Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee, Erie County's Destination Erie/Emerge 2040 Steering Committee, the Hamot Health Foundation's Board of Corporators, and the Awesome Foundation's Our West Bayfront Chapter as a founding trustee.

"I believe that our region can be a magnet for cultural and creative professionals where non-profit cultural organizations and for-profit creative industries can thrive," Fisher said. "I want our sector to lead the way to a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive community — improving the social equity and cultural vitality of the area." — CF

Ejay Fyke, 38
Field Organizer, Pennsylvania Democratic Party



Ejay Fyke is a community organizer who works in political spaces. He served in a leadership role on Attorney Ron DiNicola's 2018 bid for Congress in the 16th District and helped launch the 2020 congressional campaign of 40 Under 40 alumna Kristy Gnbis before joining the Pennsylvania Democratic Party as a field organizer for the 2020 election cycle.

But the work of this Erie Central High School and Edinboro University graduate transcends politics. Fyke volunteers for the Police Athletic League that serves kids in the City of Erie; he worked tirelessly organizing

for the community college effort on behalf of Empower Erie, the non-profit that drove the educational initiative; and he's secured funding and support from the Erie County Court of Common Pleas and Erie County Adult Probation for a program called Energize Erie that will work with at-risk teens in the city of Erie.

"I just want to help as many people as I can, however I can," Fyke says.

To that end, this father of two is working on his master's degree in organizational leadership from Mercyhurst University and he serves on the executive boards of the Erie County Democratic Party and Mi Corazon, an Erie based nonprofit that works to bring aid and education to children throughout the Philippines. — JW

Maria Gangemi, 39
Production Coordinator/Local Talent Purchaser/Event Producer/Stage Manager/Audio Stage Patch Technician



To try to name all the things Maria Gangemi does would be a job all on its own, but simply put she is an advocate. The General McLane graduate received degrees from both Brown College and Edinboro University. She is also a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. When she's not contributing to the production of events like Celebrate Erie, playing in her band, The Pageville Project, making art, or gardening, she is creating an environment where music and performance can thrive in Erie.

"Music and performing arts unite a community," Gangemi states. "The connection between musicians on a stage and a body of thousands of concert attendees creates an extraordinary exchange of kinetic energy. This reciprocity dispels individual differences, encourages a welcome distraction from the world's problems, and brings people together through a common unforgettable, entertaining experience."

One of her favorite experiences was curating and booking the musical and live performance talent on all five stages of Celebrate Erie 2019, as well as debuting the Living Room Stage. Unlike other areas in the festival's history, this stage allowed local singer-songwriters and acoustic artists to share their talent. She also co-founded the Arts and Drafts Festival alongside

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Drew Kauffman, a local photographer who shared the same vision of bringing music, art, and beer together.

In the future, she's already hoping to work with other like-minded individuals who share the same passion she does in promoting the abundant talent of musicians and performers in Erie. — JW

Melissa Goodwill, 33

Education & Program Coordinator, Asbury Woods Partnership

As impressive as her academic resume is — a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and dual master's degrees in parks and resource management and environmental education — it is her decade of hands-on experience in environmental issues that makes Melissa Goodwill such a standout among her peers.

Goodwill, an avid outdoors person and runner, leads the Asbury Woods Nature Center's education programming and ambassador wildlife care, the former of which involves heading up a team that "provides curriculum-based visits to over 12,000 students every year."

"I want to grow new partnerships and build upon existing partnerships that Asbury Woods has ... to help youth living in the city of Erie have the opportunity to ... build a stronger connection with the natural world," she says.

Goodwill was also the brainpower behind the new low ropes course at Asbury, proving she's not afraid to mix a little play into her work. In addition to hobbies like trav-



el, reading and hiking, she is a dedicated volunteer at the Tamarack Wildlife Center, where she rescues and transports injured animals.

Goodwill's nominator remarked, "Melissa's dedication to the environment has had [and will have] an incredibly positive impact on students of all levels, adults, wildlife, and the green spaces of Erie for many years." — CS

Emmy Hackshaw, MHA, 27

Senior Participant Recruiter, All of Us Research Program

Emmy Hackshaw maintains a healthy interest in a number of things — including photography, camp-



ing, hiking, biking, gardening, scuba diving, skiing, dog-walking, and reading — but ranking first is health. As senior participant recruiter for the All of Us research program through her alma mater, the University of Pittsburgh (Master of Health Administration in Policy in Management), Hackshaw seeks to engage and educate the community through public health research.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), All of Us is one of the more ambitious health research efforts in U.S. history, with a participation goal of 1 million Americans from a diversity of backgrounds. The pro-

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gram will examine how biology, lifestyle, and environment intersect to influence the overall health of both individuals and communities. It's the first study of its kind to come to Erie, and researchers hope to use its insights to develop improved treatments and preventatives for a variety of diseases.

Like herself, Hackshaw wants *all of us* to be able to live life to the fullest right here in the Gem City. "I want to continue to be a positive advocate for Erie, encourage young people to seek opportunity here, and be an ally for inclusion and diversity in our community."

A leader by example in both her professional and personal lives, Hackshaw finds time in between her various hobbies to serve on the Erie Art Museum Board and Department of Human Services' Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Advisory Board, as well as the campaign committee for Kristy (Gnibus) for Congress.

This newly-certified birth doula would like to see Erie more than crawl — she would like to see it take its next big stride forward. — MS

Nicole Himmelwright, 30
Mechanical Engineer, Wabtec Corporation



Picture a two-story home on wheels carrying anywhere from 100 to 400 tons of material. For those drawing a blank, we're describing a locomotive.

As an electrical packaging engineer for off-highway vehicles by day, this 30-year-old Danielsville, Pennsylvania native who now calls Erie home doesn't have to picture it — she lives it, designing control group assemblies that direct the vehicle's engine and controls electrical power circuits at Wabtec. And she and her colleagues have earned awards for that work, including one for Subsystem Design of the Year and Outstanding Product Launch at their internal Engineering Awards ceremony for two major product launches with global customers.

When this Northampton High School alumna with bachelor's and master's degrees from Stony Brook University in mechanical engineering (and a grad certificate in additive manufacturing and design from Penn State University) isn't working with heavy machinery, you can find her volunteering as a mentor with the FIRST Robotics Team 291 and participating as a presenter for STEM outreach programs such as Wabtec Girls and Math Options. In fact, her nominators were quick to point out her commitment to serving as a role

model and inspiring and mentoring women interested in STEM careers.

When she's not indulging her creative side — she plays several musical instruments and enjoys drawing and painting — or spending time with her husband and their two German shepherds while out backpacking, canoeing, or otherwise enjoying the great outdoors, she volunteers with Make-A-Wish and the Boys & Girls Club in addition to events like Bids for Kids, which notched over \$2 million to local charity chapters.

"For young adults who may not have this exposure, I want to continue serving as an early education mentor for career opportunity outreach, especially for my own STEM/STEAM fields," she says (STEAM = Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). — BS

James J. Hodge, Ph.D., 34
Director, Susan Hirt Hagen CORE at Penn State Behrend



As director of CORE, Dr. James Hodge oversees a number of youth wellness initiatives, including the Mentor Project, Positive Youth Development, and the Community Schools Initiative, which includes a partnership with Iroquois Elementary School. In 2019, James led training programs for 225 youth mentors at 11 sites in Erie County. He also led two youth summits, with 237 students from 13 schools.

He is a board member for Emma's Footprints, which helps families navigate the loss of a child through miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death. He serves on the executive committees of UnifiedErie and the Erie Coalition for a Trauma-Informed Community.

"I love Erie, and I firmly believe in the vision for Erie's future," says the Florida native and Penn State Behrend graduate. "It is clearly evident that so many people are investing significant time and resources into making Erie an even better place for its residents, and transforming the area into a true destination city. Our youth hold a large part of the key to making this vision for Erie a reality, and it is extremely rewarding to work closely with this cohort every day to promote growth and resilience." — JW

Danae Johnson, 33
Executive Administrative Assistant, ApexDrop

"I don't know that I have any answers to making Erie a better place, but I am committed to being a good



person and spreading kindness, knowledge, and any other resources I possess to others in hopes that it will cause a ripple effect to inspire others to do the same," says this 33-year-old Lake City native.

Aside from serving as the right-hand woman to the CEO and founder of ApexDrop, where she serves as a self-described "gatekeeper" that helps prioritize the flow of business on a daily basis at the fast-growing marketing startup, the Girard High School alumna who went on to study justice administration at the University of Louisville also leads ApexCares, a committee of more than a dozen employees that was created to foster a culture of giving back to the community.

Under her leadership over the past year, the group's members have supported a growing number of non-profits in a variety of ways, ranging from organizing volunteer efforts to support Habitat for Humanity to working a COVID-19 cleaning and sanitizing supply drive for the Erie City Mission's Grace House to supporting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness Walk in Erie, among many others.

When she's not working, she enjoys creating memories and sharing experiences with her family and appreciates spending time at Presque Isle because "being near the water is my 'happy place.'"

The "handyman" of the house, she loves putting things together and "cannot wait to have a She-Shed!" But on the day she celebrates that, you won't find any balloons anywhere near her, as she admits she suffers from globophobia. — BS

Tony Kellogg, 39
Musician

A song a day keeps the stagnation away. Early on in his 38th year, local musician Tony Kellogg challenged himself to write an original song a day, every day, for 365 consecutive days — and upload a performance of it online. It wasn't easy, but the former Eagle Scout and Totin' Chip recipient just kept hacking away at it (Totin' Chip = the Boy Scouts of America's certificate of axe-wielding eligibility).

"When I started my 'original song a day for a year' project (TK365), I thought I had way more material — turns out I had to write 290 songs in the end!"

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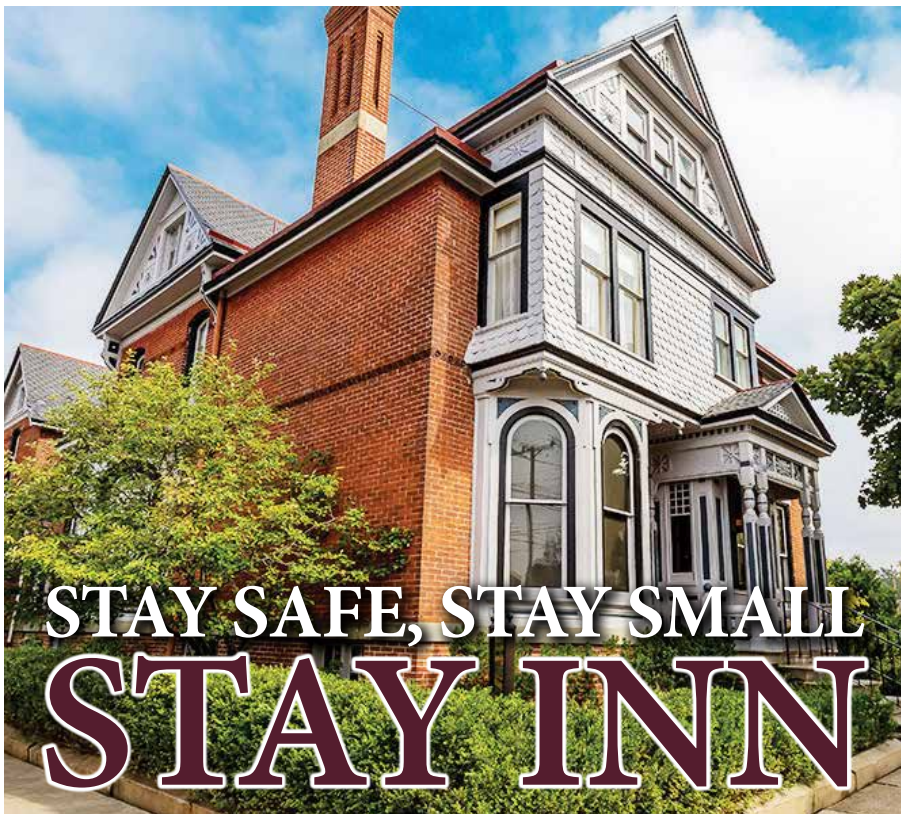
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raphies, with the predominantly acoustic tunes showcasing a wide spectrum of moods, colors, and styles, although the blues were never too far from the center. What else would you expect from the frontman of the TK Blues Company? His performances with that group and contributions to several others have made him a fixture of Erie's live music scene, with a sense of workmanship and authenticity behind his craft that both listeners and fellow musicians truly admire.

Not only does Kellogg keep his creative wheels spinning, but he also keeps Erie cyclists' wheels spinning as a bicycle mechanic with Competitive Gear. As with songwriting, he has been delighted to learn the process of building and repairing bikes as he's gone along, gaining an appreciation of how the parts fit together. Now he hopes Erie will follow suit.

An avid cyclist himself, Kellogg explained that he "would love to see bicycle transportation used and tolerated throughout the city; and also a newfound appreciation for original music through larger city events."

That's a vision he doesn't have to peddle to us. — MS

Laura-Marie Koitsch, 39

Co-Founder and Assistant Director of Landbird Conservation, Erie Bird Observatory



A little birdie told us Laura-Marie Koitsch's accomplishments were worthy of sitting up and taking notice of. More accurately, a small flock of them — Koitsch was one of this year's most-nominated candidates.

They weren't just flapping their gums; Koitsch is involved in a flutter of conservation, research, public education, and public outreach efforts in our community. Not only is she co-founder of Erie Bird Observatory, a migratory bird research station at Presque Isle State Park, but she's also actively engaged in the Eastern Bird Banding Association (council member), the Regional Science Consortium (board member), the Presque Isle Audubon, Flagship Niagara League, Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh (via Powdermill Nature Reserve), Tamarack Wildlife Center, Wilson Ornithological Society, and Association of Field Ornithologists.

A bird in Koitsch's hands is worth two in her tireless conservational push, as she maintains a dually sharp focus in both learning about (once going as far as Antarctica to do so!) and teaching about migratory avifauna. Throughout the year, she's busy carefully observing, banding, and tracking avian populations while also eagerly sharing her passion with the public. During these educational sessions, she is able to readily cultivate a newfound appreciation of and awe in the wondrous natural world found right here in Erie's backyard — referring to it as a sort of magic that transcends language and culture barriers.

These endeavors are not just noble; they're vital. "Much of my work centers around trying to make Erie a better place for both the people and for the birds that inhabit it. What's really cool is that these aren't mutually exclusive, they're very much intertwined — make things better for one group and you make things better for both. Birds are indicator species — they provide valuable information on the overall condition of an ecosystem and of other species in that ecosystem." That means you, humans. — MS

Holly Kozirowski, 36

Technical Director at Hero BX



As technical director at Hero BX, Holly oversees fuel quality testing labs and research and development for all three HBX locations. She also serves as HBX quality management representative for the BQ-9000 Producer Program (for national biodiesel accreditation) and previously helped design and create the Penn State Behrend BioDiesel lab. Through this work, she helps reduce a reliance on fossil fuel-based products, and promote the industry of clean bio-diesel

Her work has also not gone without notice, as in 2019, she was nominated and approved to represent Biodiesel Producers as a "commissioner" for the National Biodiesel Accreditation Commission. Commissioners design, implement, and improve BQ-9000 programs, as well as review and approve audits for marketers, producers, retailers, and labs seeking BQ-9000 accreditation.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Allegheny College and in her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and children — outdoors. "We hike, canoe, fish, swim, and ski."

Little known fact — Holly graduated high school as co-valedictorian.

As for what she wants to do to make Erie a better place? "It all starts with educating our youth. I want to continue outreach in local schools and universities, as well as engage with students at STEAM and science fairs to promote renewable energy and capture their interest in science careers. If we provide the tools, they have the power to make an impact for future generations." — RS

Chris Lantinen, 31

Instructor & Campus Newspaper Management, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania; Social Media Specialist/Podcast Specialist, Edinboro's Center for Branding and Strategic Communication



"Pure dead brilliant" is the phrase Scots would use to describe something or someone exceptionally good. In this case, we're using it to describe Chris Lantinen, who has strong ties to Edinboro University, receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees at Edinboro (and their Scotsmen of the fighting variety), then moving up the ranks to emerge as a leader.

In addition to being a teacher and advisor, Lantinen was a freelance producer for Atlantic Records' podcast department, where from 2010-2019, he built and ran Modern-Vinyl.com, which gave daily updates on new releases and more, reaching 2.6 million readers a year. This spawned *The Modern Vinyl Podcast*, a music podcast now known as *Stereo Confidential*. The podcast accumulated over 250,000 downloads and won the music category of the 2018 Podcast Awards, beating out nine other nominees across the country. After his success with the podcast, he wanted to turn his attention back to the local news scene.

Lantinen took lead in the construction of the new, state-of-the-art podcast studio within Edinboro's Bar-on-Forness Library. In addition to being part of Edinboro's Center for Branding and Strategic Communication, he is the advisor for the university's newspaper, *The Spectator*.

News is something that he is passionate about, saying, "Helping put creative, empathetic, and morally strong journalists out into the world helps everyone, including Erie, stay informed and helps fight against the 'fake news' narrative."

There's something special about the 'Boro that keeps students coming back, and it's not just Flip Café. — CF

Aaron Loncki, 29
Marketing Strategist, City of Erie



Aaron Loncki has been responsible for helping move the City of Erie forward through strategic marketing efforts within Mayor Joe Schember's administration. As part of that role, he has worked to transform Celebrate Erie into an economic development tool for the region, while also making the event an inclusive and representative showcase of the community-at-large. It's serious business for someone elected class clown. "I'm most proud of the work our team did over the past three years to refresh the CelebrateErie brand and make it about Erie — our artists, our performers, our vendors, all those who come to the event."

Aaron has also worked to resurrect the Fourth of July fireworks in Downtown Erie, and has made transformational improvements to the Sounds of Summer music series that is featured in Erie's senior communities. Most recently, he was part of a group of public relations professionals that launched the #WeGotThisErie campaign to show unity and boost morale during the early months of COVID-19.

In addition to his roles supporting the city, Aaron also serves as a board member for VisitErie. And although he works most of the time, on rare occasions you can find him at Asbury Woods, skiing at the Peak, or "attempting" (his words) to make tamales. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Strategic and Visual Communication from Mercyhurst University.

As for his thoughts about our community? "It's time

to show Erie that we are more, we deserve more, and we can be more. I want to surround myself with good people and do cool shit." — RS

Jacob Marsh, 39
Industry Relations Coordinator, Penn State Behrend



If you regularly enjoy the goods or services of an entrepreneur in the Erie area, there's a chance Jacob Marsh may be at least partially to thank.

Marsh, an Edinboro native with a biochemistry degree who shifted career paths so that he could "help develop, fund, implement and lead programs and projects that help students engage further with industry and the community" at Penn State Behrend, runs Behrend's Innovation Commons Lab. In addition, Marsh works tirelessly behind the scenes to aid new entrepreneurs in this area through the NWPB Innovation Beehive Network, a collaboration between local universities to help expand business and development.

His initial career background has given him a unique and ultimately crucial perspective. "I spent a lot of time in science," Marsh explains. "It taught me a lot, especially about being wrong. Wrong is a normal step; it's most of the steps, really."

Marsh, a gamer, reader, golfer and active member at McLane Church (where he leads a young adult study group) reminds us to "care first." Why? "Your work will go further," he explains. "More and more people care about Erie. I'm one of them, and I want to help as many people as I can to succeed." — CS

RJ Messenger, 32
Owner, Iron Empire Clothing; Co-Owner, Underdog BBQ

Former bouncer turned entrepreneur RJ Messenger may look tough, but don't let that fool you. He says he's terrified of "spiders, blood, flying, and much more." One thing that he does not shy away from, however, is the dogged pursuit of his goals — and inspiring others to do the same.

"I want to make Erie a better place by proving to people that you can come from any background and lifestyle, and no matter your age, race, sex, or your past, that you can be as successful as you want to be as long as you work your ass off towards it, every single day, and not let the opinions and views of others get in your way."



As a second-degree black belt in tae kwon do, former hardcore drummer, and third-place finisher in the Junior Olympics, Messenger has fought hard for his accomplishments, which include the Disrupt Erie Awards' "People's Champion" Award in 2015, an Erie Reader's Best Of Erie award for Best Local Entrepreneur three times (2016, 2018, and 2019), and even more widespread attention by way of a Jay-Z music video appearance and his on-screen and real-life partnership with billionaire Glenn Stearns on the Discovery Channel reality series *Undercover Billionaire*, which saw Stearns betting big on a new dining venture appropriately christened Underdog BBQ.

Between all that protein and a clothing line synonymous with pumping iron, Messenger has found plenty of fuel to uplift Erie and its national profile in ways very few his age ever have, tossing aside plenty of naysayers, doubters, and second-guessers along the way. — MS

Fred Oakman, 39
Singer-Songwriter, Income Maintenance Casework Supervisor



For over 20 years, Fred Oakman has been making some of the best original music around. It's the kind of music that touches your heart in an indelible way. "In my formative years I became entirely invested in punk rock music and I fortunately discovered something early in life that I've been able to remain passionate about," he described. He founded The Twirpentes back in 1997, with the

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band dissolving in 2003 after providing countless live singalongs. Oakman then brought his Marshall guitar cabinet — with its duct-taped “Gordie” adornment (one of his many nods to *Stand By Me*) — over to his new project, Signal Home, and in 2006 the band “had a record deal that resulted in a distribution agreement with Sony. It was surreal to walk into any major music retail store and find our album next to the likes of The Smashing Pumpkins and The Silversun Pickups.”

Fast forward to 2020 and the kid from Meadville is making some of the best music of his career. His 2019 solo album *My Gasoline Heart* was the best-reviewed local release at the Reader that year, and his backing band, The Flood were there for dozens of unforgettable local shows for a perfect alt-county sound.

On top of all of this, Oakman — an Edinboro alum — works by day as an income maintenance casework supervisor for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There he makes sure those in need are represented, distributing assignments and supervising public assistance benefits.

He’s an avid runner and gardener too, having “come to appreciate the irrefutable balance of patience and reward” recently. There’s also his impressive G.I. Joe collection and *PS This is Awesome*, the Playstation podcast he’s co-hosted with (Flood bassist) Jake Peters since 2016.

He’s also one of the most sincere people you’ll ever meet, which just might be the secret ingredient that makes his music so memorable.

It’s like he says in the titular track off his latest album, “I’ll try my very best to make the most of this.” — NW

Becky Perry, 31

Director, Center for Social Concerns and Global Exploration (CSCGE), Gannon University



In 1988, Gannon founded the Center for Social Concerns, which was designed to inspire students and campus colleagues to pursue “purposeful service, exploration, and action for the common good” both locally and globally.

Today, Becky Perry serves as its director. A native of Rochester, N.Y., Perry graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Gannon University and

her Master of Arts in History from Ohio University. She began working at Gannon University in 2013 as a part-time property manager of a building serving international students as well as an adjunct in the History Department. From there, she worked as a full-time resident director, then the assistant director of global initiatives, before she moved into her current position, which she describes as her “dream job.”

“I’m grateful my work allows for many opportunities to serve and collaborate with community partners in Erie and globally through community engagement in Erie and service trips around the world,” she says. “My work and life are often integrated and blend together. I strive to find as much joy in each day as possible and to humbly learn through life’s lessons.”

Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, running, spending time with family and friends, and exploring Erie’s many breweries, businesses, and nature escapes. Her other goals outside of work include starting a family, running a marathon, and completing an Ironman Triathlon.

In her role with CSCGE, she oversees programming for students that includes service and community engagement opportunities, advocacy and awareness building, and cultural immersion experiences where they “come to know the gift of humbly serving, learning, and listening to our neighbors” and are “challenged to reflect on these experiences and broaden their worldview.” She has accompanied over 100 Gannon students on a dozen trips, visiting communities in Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

“I’m grateful to feel deeply called to my work and vocation at Gannon, a calling that challenges me every day to find new ways to better serve our students, Gannon family, and our local and global neighbors,” Perry adds. “I know I can do more to walk with my neighbors to bring about and fight for an Erie that is on fire for equity, justice, and community for all. After living in Erie for the majority of my adult life, it is home, and I want to see every member of our community truly thrive.” — JB

Jeremy Peterson, 39

Chief Executive Officer, Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority

“Jeremy Peterson’s dynamic leadership continues to allow for the transformation of the Erie Metro Transit Authority from a simple transit company to a tech-driven, green driven and customer-focused organization,” wrote one of several nominators of this America’s Who’s Who in 2019 recipient who’s been behind the wheel of the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority since April 2019. Driving operations, the 39-year-old manages a total of 229 employees and has steered the EMTA through two labor contracts.

This Erie native received the 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania Award for his efforts in constructing the EMTA’s capital project, a \$72 million initiative in the midtown area of the City of Erie. The McDowell High School alumnus who went on to Mercyhurst University (and played D1 hockey during this time as a Laker) has notably brought in more than \$14 million in operating grant money — in 2019 alone — while also overseeing the biggest bus purchase in the history of the authority, which has also been recognized as a model agency giv-



en his proactive safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keeping his love of hockey on solid ice, this member of the American Public Transit Association and Pennsylvania Public Transit Association serves as a board member for the 2021 Women’s Frozen Four Tournament, is an active member of the Cathedral Prep Hockey Club, and coaches youth hockey. A father of two, he enjoys watching his son play travel hockey and baseball and his daughter’s cheerleading at Clarion University with his wife Leanne. — BS

Padma Rai, 26

Truancy Prevention Manager, Multicultural Community Resource Center



As the truancy prevention manager at the Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC), Padma Rai is the bridge between the refugee community, the Erie School District, and the County Courthouse. Many refugees coming to the United States aren’t aware of what truancy is and what to do when their children become truant. Reiterating the connection between education and opportunity, Rai seeks to improve attendance rates and set New Americans on the path to becoming active and productive contributors to society, as so many have before.

Much of her duty as a social worker comes down to

40 UNDER 40

helping people understand and respect cultural and individual differences. Rai continues these efforts as the national and international outreach coordinator for the Bhutanese Kirat Rai Organization of America. The Kirat Rai are descendants of the ancient Kirata Kingdom of the Himalayas (in present-day Nepal and neighboring Bhutan), with a worldwide presence. Their twice-annual Sakela festival, highlighted by a ritual dance in tribute to nature's cycles, has helped spread awareness and respect for Nepali and Bhutanese culture wherever the Kirat Rai have settled (including right here in Erie).

Through her other various community roles, Rai helps people in need with day-to-day basics such as grocery shopping and getting kids to school events, little things that many people take for granted. Making a new home on the opposite side of the world can seem like a mountainous climb at times, but Rai is selflessly committed to making the adjustment feel a little less steep. — JW

Armando Reyes, 38

Owner, Lake Erie Woodworks & Lake Erie Drumworks

Armando Reyes is an artist, a musician, a literal Boy Scout (who now leads a Cub Scout pack in Erie), and an entrepreneur who hopes his skills can help others discover creative and economic empowerment through education, sharing ideas and resources, and art.

A Chicago native, Reyes moved to Erie to take a job as a luxury automobile technician, but his passion for woodwork and the community led him to start his own



business and to use that platform to help serve others. Through his Lake Erie Woodworks venture, Reyes began hosting what he calls the "Table Saw Supper Club," which connects woodworkers from all over Erie and of all skill levels to share ideas and resources. He's hoping that platform leads to the establishment of a woodworking school to benefit those who would like to take on DIY projects around the house, as well as those looking for career opportunities.

"I'm hoping the school can take it even further and

provide classes and workshops to really elevate the craft and artistry here in Erie," Reyes says. "I think Erie needs to focus on generational change. If we focus on long term solutions like education, housing, and sustainable well-paying jobs, we will begin to create the foundation for REAL change in our city. That is what I want to focus on, teaching people in Erie real skills that they can use to rebuild our city." — JW

Andrey Rosado, 23

Activist/Founder of Erie Equal; Sales Representative

The people of Erie need to be heard. Andrey Rosado is making sure that happens.

The founder and mouthpiece for Erie Equal, Rosado was transported virtually overnight to the forefront of Erie's conversation on civil rights. Following the death of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police, the nation saw massive tides of protests, and Erie was no exception. On Saturday, May 30, one of those protests ended in violence. Property was damaged, people were hurt. Hannah Silbaugh was kicked to the ground — in a lawsuit that names Officer Marc Nelson — in a video that was seen around the world.

The next day, Rosado, who grew up in Erie and moved back after going to high school in Middletown, Conn., started Erie Equal. Beginning as an online Facebook group, it now boasts over 3,000 members. There were growing pains along the way, but Rosado remains steadfast and committed to the Black Lives Matter movement.

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Mike Brown <i>Hertel & Brown</i>	Bob McNutt <i>Erie Insurance</i>	Jennifer See <i>Presque Isle Downs</i>



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In August, Rosado — who works as a car salesman — was featured in a USA Today collaborative article that highlighted 12 young activists from around the country in a piece titled “Justice in My Town.” Each individual received a specific moniker, and Rosado’s was appropriately “The Closer.”

Now seeking to make Erie Equal a registered non-profit, he’s been meeting with top local leaders like Mayor Joe Schember and Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper. Rosado’s job is to translate the group’s concerns into actionable items. With goals like reallocating police funding to social programs, an increase in outreach programs to move beyond minimum wage, and greater representation for people of color in education and other places of power, like Erie’s elected officials, they have a clear road ahead of them.

“I want to enhance the quality of life for those who are oppressed and underrepresented,” Rosado explained. “I will create real change to benefit my minority family, friends and neighbors to ensure we all have the tools needed to live healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous lives.” — NW

Carrie B. Sachse, 37

Farmer, Owner/Operator, French Street Farms



decided that wasn’t happening on her watch any longer, so she launched French Street Farms in 2016, with its inaugural growing season underway in 2018.

“From day one the farm’s mission has been to give people in Erie more and better access to fresh, locally grown food,” Sachse said. “The most obvious way I am working to achieve that is by farming, of course, but I know that I will never be able to single-handedly feed the entire city.”

Not for lack of trying. Sachse, who is currently pursuing her Master of Urban Planning degree from the University of Buffalo and who has been proudly sober for two years, is a common presence at local farmer’s markets and sold out her 2020 CSA program. But she has always recognized the need to do more.

“So the other big way that I hope to achieve the farm’s mission is by inspiring others to grow food,” she said. Enter Victory Garden packs, giftable ready-to-plant kits intended to teach and encourage home gardening.

“We can eat better...and take enormous satisfaction in knowing where our food is coming from,” said Sachse. — CS

Erin Quinn Sekerak, 38

Executive Director, Northwest Region, Junior Achievement of Western PA



In her professional role, Erin is responsible for fulfilling the mission of the Junior Achievement by implementing education programs and fundraising activities in Crawford, Erie, Lawrence, Mercer, Warren, Forest, and Venango counties. And although this in its own right is no small feat, Erin continues to be actively involved in many community initiatives.

She serves as TEDx Erie co-curator, on the Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services board as interim president, as a Career Street advisory board member, and as a board member of Northwest PA Job Connect. In addition, she serves as part of ATHENA Erie Powerlink, as advisory panelist and committee leader of ATHENA Erie, and as a member of the Circles of Trust cohort and Young Erie Professionals. And that’s not even the complete list.

“I live for being out in the community and making connections for others, both personally and professionally. Entertaining is my passion project. As a secret cater-

er, I make elaborate spreads for my own events and for friends.”

Erin holds two master’s degrees (public administration and higher education administration) and a bachelor of science (advertising). Because of her background, she has also worked for the University of Notre Dame and at Disney World.

Her secret to success? “Be annoyingly persistent.”

And even though she has lived elsewhere, she doesn’t understand why so many people say “there’s nothing to do in Erie.” She offers, “If you want ideas on what to do in Erie to make it your happiest place on earth, come talk to me, I’ll help you find it. — RS

Cam Spaeder, 28

Baker, Majestic Baking Company



Fairview native Cam Spaeder says he “tried to be a plumber for a while.” We’re glad that didn’t work out. That’s because Spaeder is now a partner in the Majestic Baking Company and helped revitalize this staple of Erie’s Little Italy following its closing in 2019 after nearly 100 years in operation. In doing so, Spaeder rebooted a business that is a part of the history and fabric of the neighborhood, and he used his business to help those in need through bread donations to community shelter services and the Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network.

“I like making radical bread,” Spaeder says. “I want to provide nutritious bread for Erie, and show that straying from the beaten path is a viable option for those who are growing up here.”

Majestic breads are available at the Whole Foods Co-Op and Oasis Market in addition to the bakery itself. Earlier this year, they teamed up with Erie’s French Street Farms to provide the bread for a farm-to-table, plant-based meal served up in the kitchen at Oasis Market, and are looking forward to more collaborations with other local businesses.

That sounds remarkable and delicious. — JW

Angelica Joyelle Spraggins, 32

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services; Co-Founder / Admin and Head of Creative, Erie’s Black Wall Street

Since graduating from Edinboro University with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and master’s in re-



habilitation counseling, Rochester, N.Y. native Angelica Spraggins has made Erie her home.

"Once I realized Erie would be my home, my goal has been to make it feel that way," Spraggins says. "My goal in making Erie a better place is to make sure people of color and members of the queer community feel at home."

If that has been her goal, one she shares with her wife (and 40 Under 40 alum) Davona Pacley, she is clearly succeeding: she currently works as a therapist for a minority-owned business providing therapeutic services for black, queer youth as well as co-founding Erie's

Black Wall Street (EBWS), a local nonprofit meant to empower and promote black entrepreneurship through promotion, networking, and cultivation. On Erie Gives Day, EBWS met their goal of raising \$10,000 and already have plans for moving the organization forward.

"Angel works without need or desire of acknowledgment which makes her even more deserving of the recognition," friend and also 40 Under 40 alum Tyler Titus says. "I cannot iterate in a way that accurately captures all that Angel does for our community or the powerful force of change that she has brought to Erie."

Spraggins cites the love and guidance of her parents for creating a fire in her to help others.

"My mother and father are completely responsible for my drive and ambitions," she says. "My mother is retired from the school district of Rochester, New York and my father served in the Air Force and then worked for the post office. Their hard work and persistence is what drives me. My father made sure that I was a strong competitor, not raising me within gender norms but allowing me to find my own path and passions. My mother taught me Black history almost every day to remind me of where I came from and to be proud." — JB

Kyra Taylor, 32
Social Worker, Co-Founder, Erie's Black Wall Street

Kyra Taylor is bearing down to create a bull market for Erie's African American-owned businesses.

Together with fellow 40 Under 40s Davona Pacley (2019) and Angelica Spraggins (2020), Taylor founded the nonprofit Erie's Black Wall Street, whose mission



is "be a vehicle for change and empowerment of Erie's Black Community through cultivating meaningful relationships, education of members, the creation of social networks, and the promotion of black entrepreneurship." Through these initiatives, Erie's Black Wall Street hopes to "create a culture of Black excellence and wealth that serves as an inspiration for generations to come. We like to call it Erie's Black Renaissance!"

The Edinboro University and New Castle Senior High graduate's community investment portfolio stretches from middle school to her membership in the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority to her current caseworker role with Erie County, making her an ideal partner in executing Erie Black Wall Street's vision, according to Pacley.



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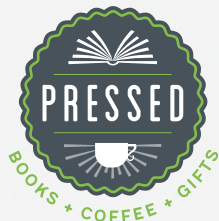
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Over those nearly two decades, Taylor has successfully planned events, recruited volunteers, and implemented fundraisers toward a number of causes — predominantly right here in Erie.

Nominators bought high on Taylor's "big heart" and work ethic, which had occurred predominantly under-the-radar. Now that she is registering on Erie's major indices, we hope her family-oriented, no-nonsense mentality (she cites a deep admiration for Judge Judy's human lie detector abilities) guides a historically underserved and underestimated population to great dividends. — BS

Cesar Westbrook, 32

Art Teacher, Erie School District; Freelance / Teaching Artist



Even if you don't know Cesar Westbrook's name, it's likely you know his work. If you have been to Dobbins Landing in the past year, you've likely seen the

stunning massive public art mural on the second-floor observation deck, which German artist Rafael Gerlach designed with Westbrook's assistance. A few days after finishing that mural, he went on to win the Chalk Walk at Celebrate Erie.

A Lancaster native, IUP graduate, and current art teacher in the Erie School District, Westbrook has become a recognizable figure in the local art community in recent years. From designing the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration uniform for the Erie Bayhawks, to leading weekly classes at the downtown Erie YMCA's Teen Center, to selling his own custom art and apparel, to teaching art in Erie's public schools, Westbrook shows no signs of slowing down.

"With my work, my objective is to create something that moves people," he told Erie Arts & Culture, which recently commissioned a mural downtown to be painted by Westbrook and Antonio Howard to honor Luther Manus Jr., a retired Erie school teacher. "I like to create very bright, poppy images that grab the viewer's attention ... [and] are thought-provoking pieces."

"With a wide-ranging style, Westbrook creates bold, invigorating work," Nick Warren wrote in the Erie Reader earlier this year. "Combining skilled draftsmanship and rendering with a lush, intense color palette, he is able to blend both worlds in art that leaves an indelible impression."

One thing is clear: Westbrook will continue to leave an impression on Erie for the foreseeable future. — JB

Tom Widdowson a.k.a. Rebecca Mae, 36 Drag Artist/Female Impersonator, Rebecca Mae Entertainment

A few years ago, during what is typically the most stark and depressing season, Erie started to sparkle and shine a whole lot brighter on Sundays.

That was thanks to Tom Widdowson, an Erie native and Iroquois High School alum, the tenacious spirit behind Rebecca Mae (his fabulous drag queen alter ego) and the founder of Erie's very first drag brunch series.



From the first, Widdowson's aim has been "to make Erie a place that offers everything a 'big city' would have."

Says Widdowson, "I believe that ... LGBTQIA+ events are essential to help build a well-rounded and safe community for everyone." He is happy to be the face of this movement, having been the first drag performer ever at CelebrateErie, and through his skillfully managed social media presence.

The entertainer and gifted make-up artist, who traveled the world as a featured singer for the Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines for over a decade, and who bartends at The Zone Dance Club, determinedly willed his brunches into reality and has expanded this offerings to include dinners, bingos, and especially fundraisers.

To foster a more inclusive and welcoming city, Widdowson's events have "worked closely with local nonprofits to ... help give back to the community" — and that's his fiercest look of all. — CS



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MOVIE REVIEWS

Every Day's the Same: *Palm Springs* Is Charming but Is Over Too Soon

★★★★

It's interesting to see that *Groundhog Day* has become a genre in itself with films as varied as *50 First Dates*, *Edge of Tomorrow*, and *Happy Death Day* running with that simple but ingenious premise. But while those films use the device as a mere plot point, only *Palm Springs* deals with that first film's depiction of the pure existential horror that an eternity can bring about. The result is a sci-fi/romantic comedy/drama/character study that is too short to do all of those ideas justice, but the charisma of its lead actors still makes it a wonderfully entertaining experience.

Sarah (Cristin Milioti) is a reluctant maid of honor at her sister's wedding who meets Nyles (Andy Samberg), a carefree man who seems to have a supernatural ability to predict things before they happen. After their encounter, Sarah learns that Nyles has fallen into a time loop and is repeating the same day forever: a time loop that she has now fallen into as well.

The concept of repeating a wedding for an eternity is already a terrifying concept for a lonely person, but *Palm Springs* has the added benefit of coming out when the entire world seems to be forced to live the same day over and over again. Samberg and Milioti react to their situation in ways that are both funny and painfully relatable. When the film dives into the nuts and bolts of why they're stuck in the loop things become a little muddled, but the chemistry between the two leads is more than enough to make the rest of the film a charming and sweet romantic comedy. Exactly what we need in our own time loop. *Palm Springs* is currently available exclusively on Hulu. — Forest Taylor

Directed by: Max Barbakow // Written by: Andy Siara // Starring: Andy Samberg, Cristin Milioti, Meredith Hagner, Camila Mendes, Tyler Hoechlin, Chris Pang, Jacqueline Obradors, June Squibb, Peter Gallagher, and J.K. Simmons // 90 minutes // Rated R



NEON/HULU

"Is This How it Ends?": *She Dies Tomorrow* Is a Bleak and Dryly Funny Nightmare

★★★★★

The real tragedy of being human is our awareness of our own eventual death coupled with our inability to do anything about it. Most of our day-to-day lives are spent with activities and distractions that the thought never really comes up, but every now and then the foreknowledge of inevitable obliteration comes creeping back. That thought is over every frame of Amy Seimetz's (*Sun Don't Shine*) film *She Dies Tomorrow*. The result is a visually dazzling, strangely funny spiral into despair.

The film (based on Seimetz's own nightmares) begins with Amy (Kate Lyn Sheil) returning to her new home in some kind of fugue state. She calls her friend Jane (Jane Adams) to tell her that this will be her (Amy's) last day alive. Jane dismisses this as a drunken outburst (Amy is a recovering alcoholic) but we soon learn that her feelings are contagious, as friends and neighbors in the quiet suburb also become struck with the belief that they will die tomorrow.

The drab, minimal production design combined with rich cinematography and an oppressive score turn this simple neighborhood into a surreal dreamscape. The characters' mundane conversations can suddenly turn foreboding with a simple change of lighting or emotions can go into overdrive with a flickering, almost psychedelic light show. This gives the film an overall sense of nihilism mixed with bizarre, deadpan humor. The image of people sitting at home anxiously dreading the inevitable is a pertinent one at the moment, but Seimetz is after something deeper. She seems to suggest that the fear of tomorrow isn't unique to our time. It is the natural human state. *She Dies Tomorrow* is currently available on Amazon Prime, iTunes, and Google Play. — Forest Taylor

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Written and Directed by: Amy Seimetz // Starring: Kate Lyn Sheil, Jane Adams, Kentucker Audley, Katie Aselton, Chris Messina, Tunde Adebimpe, Jennifer Kim, Josh Lucas, Michelle Rodriguez, Olivia Taylor Dudley, and Adam Wingard // 86 minutes // Rated R



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HBO's *Perry Mason* Puts a Strong Cast to Good Use

Familiar faces do enough to transcend film noir clichés



HBO

I have to confess something — I've never seen a single episode of the classic *Perry Mason*, nor have I ever read a novel by Erle Stanley Gardner. And I'm not big on courtroom procedurals either. I de-

cidated to check out HBO's reboot of the franchise on the strength of the cast. And it's primarily the cast that makes the show worth watching.

In the underwhelming first episode,

we're introduced to pre-law-degree Perry as a very stereotypical film noir anti-hero. He's living with PTSD from the first World War, he drinks too much, he's estranged from his family, and he may just have a heart of gold. Sound familiar? It is. But the clichés become peripheral once the central mystery takes center stage in later episodes.

Perry Mason reminds me a bit of HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*, not only because they're both delicately staged during a similar time period (*Mason* opens at the tail end of Prohibition, in 1932). Both are entertaining and fun to look at, and both occasionally succumb to predictable characterizations and awkward attempts at social significance. There are promising elements in *Mason*'s first season, especially the twisting and turning of its central legal battle. But it's the impressive cast of familiar faces that really brings it to life.

Our hero is Matthew Rhys of FX's underrated *The Americans*, and he's as good in the down-and-out '30s as he was in the Cold-War '80s. A *Boardwalk*

Empire alum, Shea Whigham, shows up as his partner, looking and acting like he just stepped away from a breadline during the Depression. *Orphan Black*'s wonderful Tatiana Maslany portrays an eccentric Christian evangelist, and '90s art-movie icon Lili Taylor is cast as her mother. You'll also recognize the bad guy from *Terminator 2*, the "stapler guy" from *Office Space*, Sheila the She-Wolf from *GLOW*, and the main guy from *Max Headroom*. They're all doing great work here.

Perry Mason isn't going to change the media landscape. And it's occasionally bogged down by "gritty" origin story clichés. But it's mostly engrossing as a mystery and it gets better as it cooks along. Maybe by next season it'll transform into something great. — Dan Schank

Season One currently streaming on HBO Max and HBO // Created by: Ron Fitzgerald and Rolin Jones // Starring: Matthew Rhys, Juliet Rylance, Chris Chalk, Shea Whigham, Tatiana Maslany, John Lithgow, Gayle Rankin, Andrew Honard // Eight episodes

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TV REVIEWS

***I'll Be Gone in the Dark* Shines a Light**

Posthumous docuseries retells Michelle McNamara's hunt for the Golden State Killer



HBO

You may have never heard about The Golden State Killer were it not for late writer Michelle McNamara. Originally known as the East Area Rapist/Original Night Stalker (EAR/ONS) — McNamara was largely responsible for generating more widespread interest in the crimes of one of the most prolific serial rapists and killers Southern California has ever seen.

In *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*, director Liz Garbus brings McNamara's book of the same name to the screen in the form of a six-episode docuseries airing on HBO, four years after the author's death.

While the series' focus is on The Golden State Killer — now known to be former police officer Joseph DeAngelo — McNamara herself plays a starring role. The depths to which McNamara investigates these crimes makes it difficult to separate her own life from that of the killer's, something the series doesn't try to do. McNamara's own personal stories are intertwined seamlessly throughout each episode, making this series unique and adding some lighthearted — although at times bittersweet — breaks between retellings of the severe and often monstrous crimes committed.

McNamara's deep interest in the case began around 2013, at which time she wrote an article for *Los Angeles Magazine* detailing The Golden State Killer's reign of terror in Southern California from 1973 to 1986. From there she signed a book deal with HarperCollins to write in-depth about the case, which would ultimately become *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*.

McNamara died of an accidental overdose in 2016 prior to the completion of her book. Her husband, comedian Patton Oswalt, teamed up with McNamara's researcher Paul Haynes and true crime writer Billy Jensen to finish the book for a 2018 release, utilizing the many files, documents, and writings on McNamara's hard drive.

The series culminates with the beginning of DeAngelo's trial, a bittersweet moment for viewers due to McNamara not living to see the mysterious killer finally caught.

For viewers, this series perfectly encapsulates what it means to be obsessed with true crime and the lengths one person will go to in order to catch a killer. — Ally Kutz

Season One currently streaming on HBO Max and HBO // Based on the book by: Michelle McNamara // Directed by: Liz Garbus, Elizabeth Wolff, Myles Kane, Josh Koury // Narrated by: Amy Ryan // Six episodes

Love In the Time of Corona a Fascinating Gamble

Resourceful filmmaking in quarantine asks if traditional TV can still be made



A lot has been said about the pandemic, and much, much more will be said. For one of the countless industries irrevocably changed by COVID-19 — that of film and television production — some things ground to a halt. Many aspects of the job can be done remotely, like special effects and editing. A con-

tinuous stream of post-production work goes on, letting previously-filmed works steadily trickle out. This also makes releases feasible for things like a documentary series or animation. Traditional shows though? Not so much.

Enter the too-on-the-nose *Love In the Time of Corona*, a fascinating time cap-

sule of a miniseries from Joanna Johnson (*Good Trouble, Hope & Faith*). The four-episode series follows four different storylines (think *Love Actually*) concurrently set in the early days of quarantine life. The show casts actors that specifically had been sheltering together. It follows, then, that these groups are families and real-life couples. Filmed on location in the actors' houses, the cast wore their own clothes and did their own makeup. Crew members posted in individual tents and the director communicated via walkie-talkie.

[Spoiler alerts ahead] There's Leslie Odom Jr. and Nicolette Robinson, who rethink having another child amidst Black Lives Matter protests. L. Scott Caldwell plays Odom's mother, who is planning an anniversary party for her husband suffering from dementia while her other son moves back in after being laid off. Rya Kihlstedt and Gil Bellows try to hide their impending divorce from their real-life daughter Ava, back from college. And then there are star-crossed roommates Rainey Qualley and Tommy

Dorfman, their handyman neighbor, and virtual dates.

While the threat of COVID-19 remains very real, we're not in the same mindset we were in March and April. Places like Los Angeles have eased filming restrictions. As one of the first real efforts post COVID-19, does *Love in the Time of Corona* live up to its position? Again, not so much. *Love In the Time of Corona* might be groundbreaking work, but it's far from groundbreaking content. Sociological context aside, it's not without its touching moments, like the ending, underpinned with a song from Qualley. While the behind the scenes story is surely more interesting than its actual plot, its rom-com-dram schmaltz is ultimately successful, and with a runtime shorter than some studio films, it doesn't ask much of the viewer. — Nick Warren

Currently streaming on Hulu and Freeform
// Created by: Joanna Johnson // Starring: Ava Bellows, Gil Bellows, L. Scott Caldwell, Tommy Dorfman, Rya Kihlstedt, Leslie Odom Jr., Rainey Qualley, and Nicolette Robinson // Four episodes

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PODCASTS

In Our Ears: Podcasts We've Been Loving

Our monthly picks for enthralling audio

U Talkin' Talking Heads 2 My Talking Head

Earwolf / Comedy, Pop Culture

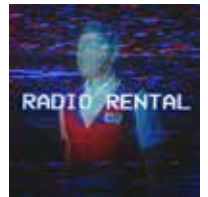
In their latest comprehensive and encyclopedic compendium, Scott [Aukerman] and [Adam] Scott talk Talking Heads. Keen-eared listeners will know this podcast feed by a few other names, going by the intentionally labyrinthine titles *U Talkin' U2 To Me?* And *R U Talkin' R.E.M. RE: ME?* There, the lads from Los Angeles discussed the bands U2 and R.E.M., answering such important questions like: "Who are the members of the band?" And "When did you first hear of the band?" Fans of modern alt-comedy (Aukerman is the host of the iconic *Comedy Bang Bang*) will find an utter treasure trove in nearly every episode of this feed. Beginning in 2014, the series has taken some lengthy breaks, but is bursting with regular episodes while the hosts — like everyone else — are stuck at home. Originally intended to be a miniseries on The Red Hot Chili Peppers, that topic was quickly abandoned mid-episode to focus on a much better band, Talking Heads. They stick with the band (misremembered as a quartet consisting of Mr. Burns, Chris Fartz, Tina Verymouth, and the Beatles' George Harrison) from album to album, with all of the '80s left to go. Now let's see if they can get those t-shirts. — Nick Warren



Radio Rental

Tenderfoot / Mystery, Horror, Suspense, Comedy

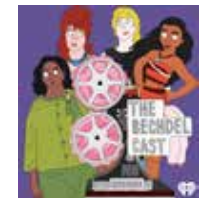
If you've gone "radio rental," it means you've gone crazy, which you might think has happened to these storytellers. In the semi-scripted podcast series *Radio Rental*, Rainn Wilson (*The Office*) in-character as Terry Carnation hosts from a fictional video rental store. The show shares stories that are 100 percent real, but seem stranger than fiction. Eerie interactions with strangers, coming face to face with serial killers, and brushes with death are themes that just scratch the surface of what *Radio Rental* offers. Terry Carnation welcomes you to each episode, introducing the next batch of special tapes he has in store, with series creator Payne Lindsey (behind the true crime podcasts *Up and Vanished* and *Atlanta Monster*) providing the set-up for each storyteller's strange or peculiar experiences. The stories are told by those who lived them, taking the bizarre and unusual to the next level and adding an extra factor of creepiness. After a more than six-month hiatus, the second season started its weekly schedule up again in June, with the same impressive production values. If the unexplainable and mysterious intrigue you, be sure to stop by *Radio Rental*. — Ally Kutz



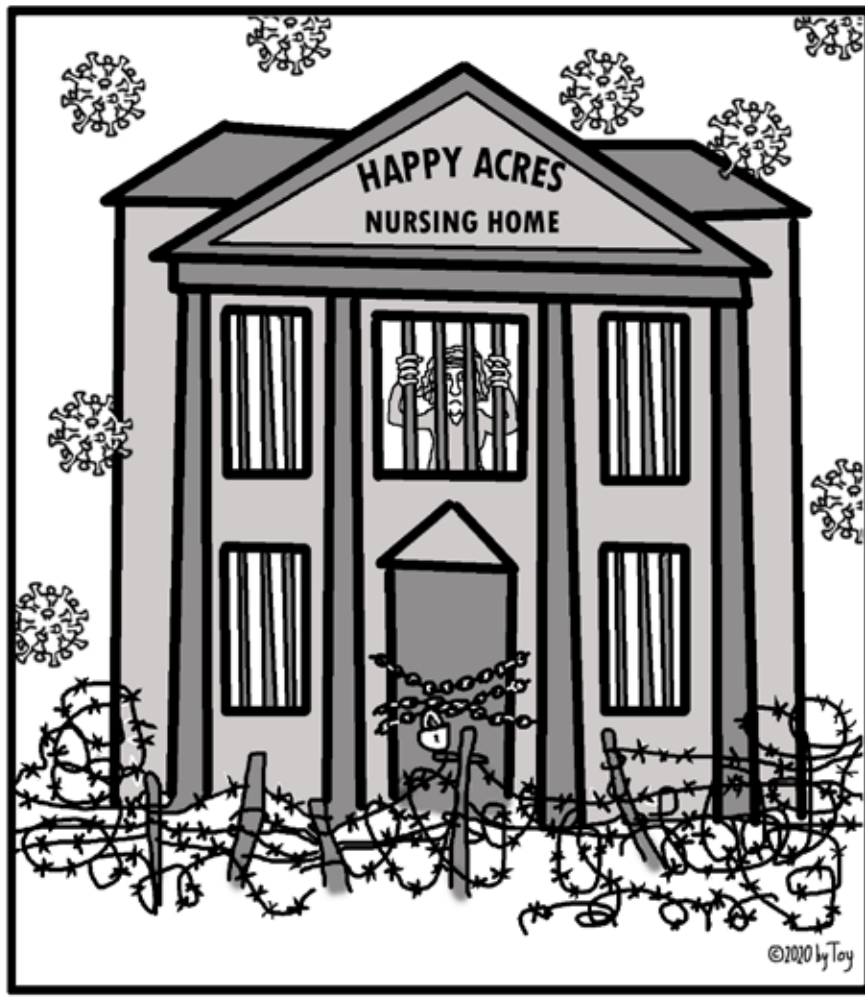
The Bechdel Cast

HowStuffWorks Network / Comedy, Film

"On *The Bechdel Cast*, the questions asked are: Do movies have women in them? Are all their discussions just boyfriends and husbands, or do they have individualism?" The show's charming theme explains the premise of "the Bechdel Test" simply. Realistic representation of women in movies isn't too much to ask, is it? As comedians Caitlin and Jamie Loftus have found, apparently, it is. Using the test as a jumping-off point for discussion, Caitlin and Jamie invite guests to put their favorite movies through the wringer. While a seemingly simple test, many cult classics and fan favorites don't pass, opening a larger conversation about the depiction of women in film. Launched in 2016, this weekly podcast has covered movies ranging from *Lady Bird* to *Kill Bill* to, most recently, *Frozen 2*, and no movie is safe. Mainly comedic and informal in format, the show starts with the introduction of the guest followed by a summary of the film given by Caitlin. Most of the episode is dedicated to the analysis of the representation of women through an intersectional lens. And while funny with references to running jokes, such as Jamie's obsession with Alfred Molina, this doesn't stop the podcast from being both serious and nuanced. Why do current movies still not pass the Bechdel Test, and what it will take to achieve accurate representation? As the theme song states, "the patriarchy's effing vast, start changing it with *The Bechdel Cast*." — Hannah Wyman



JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY



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ALBUM REVIEWS

Orville Peck

Show Pony
Columbia Records



Orville Peck made waves in 2019 with *Pony*, a debut LP showcasing the songwriter's distinct, LGBTQ+ friendly brand of classic country crooning. *Show Pony* is a six-track EP meant to bridge *Pony* with whatever's next, and while it may play a bit broader and safer than its predecessor, it doubles down on a lot of the qualities that make Peck appealing. At first, *Show Pony* is mostly standard. "Summertime" apes its guitar work from the *Pony* single "Hope to Die," while "No Glory in the West" is a simple, subdued, and pleasant ballad — in other words, right up Peck's alley. But things heat up with "Drive Me, Crazy," detailing the relationship between two truckers in an 18-wheeler (complete with faux radio chatter). Of course, *Show Pony* strategically goes out with a bang, closing with not only a stunning cover of the Bobbie Gentry (and later Reba McEntire) hit, "Fancy," but also an uncharacteristically radio-friendly duet with Shania Twain titled "Legends Never Die." *Show Pony* may not tell us much about where Orville Peck is headed, but regardless, he remains on a path to success. — Aaron Mook



Fantastic Negrito

Have You Lost Your Mind Yet?
Cooking Vinyl



An energetic blend of funk, blues, soul, rock, and just about everything you want to hear right now, Fantastic Negrito lives up to his boastful sobriquet. Hearing the Stevie Wonder-esque rhythms of the opening track "Chocolate Samurai" is refreshing and enlivening. It's such a welcome sound, and one that really cooks. Fantastic Negrito is the stage name of Xavier Amin Dphrepaullezz, a 52-year-old Massachusetts native who released his first album in 1996 and wouldn't do so again for another 18 years. After a devastating car crash, Dphrepaullezz was released from his contract with Interscope and quit making music. He returned with a vengeance in 2014, releasing the first music under the name Fantastic Negrito. His 2016 album *The Last Days of Oakland* and its follow-up *Please Don't Be Dead* both won Grammy awards for Best Contemporary Blues Album. Will the nicely front-loaded *Have You Lost Your Mind?* give him the hat-trick? It certainly deserves to. Each of its 11 tracks (even the shorter song sketches) is filled with a raw, riveting sense of self. Listen to it, and "get free tonight." — Nick Warren



Busty and the Bass

Eddie
Arts & Crafts



It's a bit of a gamble to start off your album with a guest vocalist, let alone an incredibly recognizable one, but it pays off for Busty and the Bass. With *Spider-Man*'s own Macy Gray providing her signature gravel on the opening track "Out of Love," it surprisingly works. Somehow, dual vocalists Nick Ferraro and Evan Crofton (a.k.a. Alistair Blu) transition so seamlessly from Gray's track that you forget about her until the next guest, though that next guest *does* happen to be George Clinton himself. Iconic guest spots aside, Busty and the Bass deliver, proving that a group of (mostly-white) Canadians can have tons of soul. There are the smooth, floating tracks like "Clouds" with Amber Navran, and "Go So Far" with Illa J and Jon Conner, and soaring ballads like "Summer," along with Rex Orange County-esque standouts like "Figure It Out." The eight-piece band features a full horn section (including Ferraro on alto sax) that it employs perfectly. There are remarkable moments filled with grace, constantly backed by expert musicianship — and a fair amount of cheesiness — in every one of the album's dozen tracks. — Nick Warren



The Front Bottoms

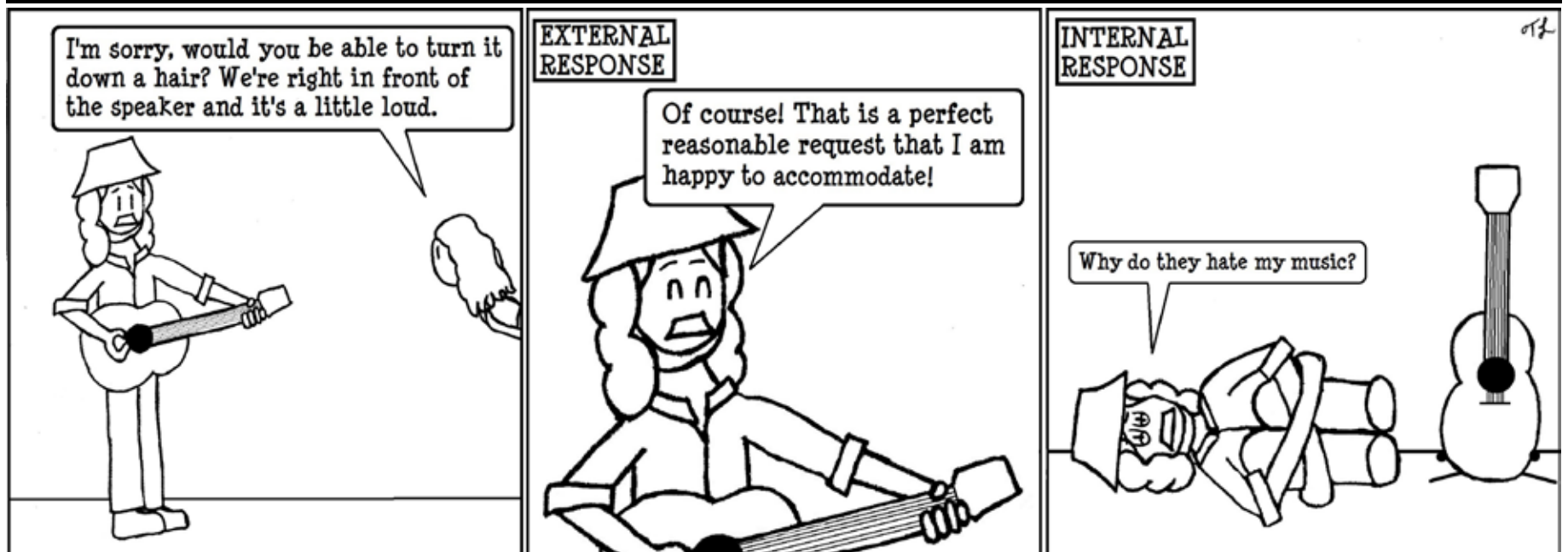
In Sickness & In Flames
Fueled By Ramen



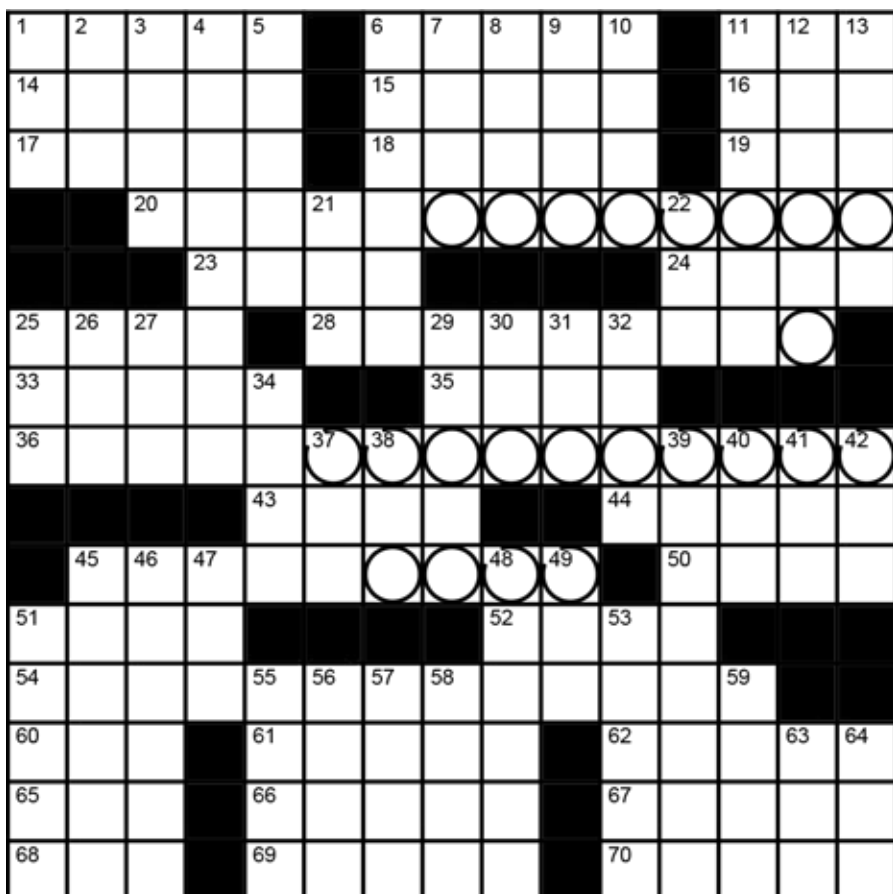
If you asked me about The Front Bottoms back in 2011, "longevity" would not be the first word to come to mind. Brian Sella's unique voice and storytelling abilities juxtaposed with raw, acoustic recordings would go on to inspire numerous imitators, both good (Modern Baseball) and bad (Hobo Johnson). The Front Bottoms later transitioned into more full-bodied, "electric" arrangements with 2015's *Back on Top*, an album that boasted glossy production and the band's biggest hooks to date. While 2017's understated *Going Grey* left some fans wanting more, *In Sickness & In Flames* sounds like the career records some bands can only make after a decade of playing together. The studio is used as an instrument here, altering (but not stifling) acoustic guitars on songs like "camouflage." Field recordings and narration from Sella connect songs as they bounce between influences, channeling Motion City Soundtrack one moment ("montgomery forever") and Built to Spill the next ("the hard part"). But more apparent than ever is the emotional depth of Sella's songwriting, no longer telling the wackiest stories that come to mind, but the ones that matter. — Aaron Mook



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CROSSWORD



Across

- 1. Audibly appalled
- 6. Horizontal lines on graphs
- 11. Part of a sci-fi film's budget
- 14. Black Sea getaway
- 15. Japanese dog breed
- 16. Pioneer in email and 61-Across
- 17. New York's Memorial ____-Kettering hospital
- 18. Singer Simone and actress Dobrev, for two
- 19. Cattle call?
- 20. It helps you get the big picture
- 23. Promised ____
- 24. Native American tribe with a namesake lake
- 25. ____ duck
- 28. Type of geometry
- 33. Pickle juice
- 35. River to the Seine
- 36. Baseball's Dan Quisenberry and Kent Tekulve, famously
- 43. Someone may run for it
- 44. Little buddy
- 45. 2014 Ice Cube/Kevin Hart comedy
- 50. Blast of wind
- 51. Greek known for paradoxes
- 52. Solemn pledge

- 54. They may occur to you later ... or where this puzzle's circled letters are all located
- 60. "Breaking Bad" org.
- 61. Cyberchatting
- 62. ____ and aahed
- 65. Vex
- 66. Father-daughter activity
- 67. ____ whale
- 68. Suffix with Brooklyn
- 69. Initial stage
- 70. Neighbor of Hertfordshire

Down

- 1. Things blockers block
- 2. ____ pal
- 3. "Don't have ____, man!"
- 4. "Divergent" star Woodley
- 5. Black-and-white animal in the World Wildlife Fund logo
- 6. 1980 film with the #1 hit "Magic"
- 7. Related (to)
- 8. Ped ____ (street sign)
- 9. List-ending abbr.
- 10. Postpaid encl.
- 11. Smartphone feature
- 12. "Don't wait out here"
- 13. Conceder's comment
- 21. Opposite of WSW
- 22. "BlackKlansman" director
- 25. Dumbbell abbr.
- 26. The NFL's Cardinals, on

- scoreboards
- 27. Prefix with air or afternoon
- 29. Acknowledge as true
- 30. Number of weeks per annum?
- 31. Suffix with violin or novel
- 32. You can deal with it
- 34. Lighten, as a burden
- 37. "The Crying Game" actor Stephen
- 38. Opposite of "bon"
- 39. Certain sneakers
- 40. College URL suffix
- 41. Hwys.
- 42. Drunkard
- 45. Alludes (to)
- 46. Dietician's concern
- 47. A deer, a female deer
- 48. "If thou must love me, let it be for ____ / Except for love's sake only": Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- 49. Funny thing
- 51. "White Teeth" author Smith
- 53. "All ____ in favor ..."
- 55. Puerto ____
- 56. Eliot Ness, notably
- 57. Online search metric
- 58. In years past
- 59. Hens and heifers
- 63. 'Fore
- 64. "Party Up (Up in Here)" rapper

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Answers to last puzzle



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