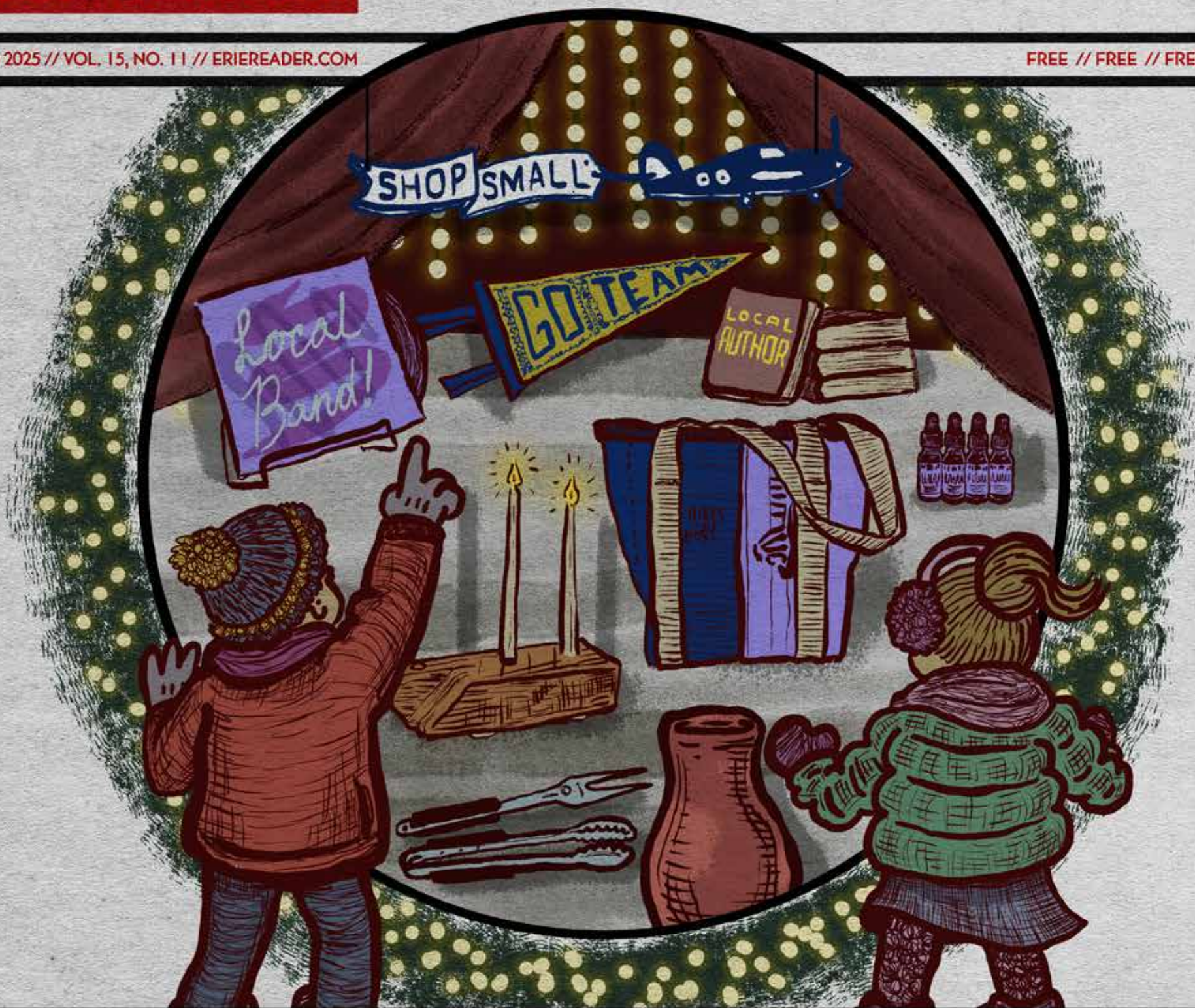




SHOP LOCAL HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

NOV. 2025 // VOL. 15, NO. 11 // ERIEREADER.COM

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From the Editors: November 2025

All I want for Christmas is you...

It's November and that means Mariah Carey is about to be officially unleashed upon the world. It's best not to try to fight it; just give in.

And it's our Shop Local issue, which comes every year just as predictably as that festive earworm, along with our titular Shop Local Gift Guide. And man, if there were ever a year to know where your money's going, it's 2025.

It's never felt great, but this year it feels downright icky to share an Amazon wishlist of the items you'd like to have under the tree. Giving more money to billionaires actively working to dismantle our democracy? Bolstering an oligarchy while food security for millions of American children is on the line? Supporting those companies who support candidates actively prohibiting the reopening of our government, keeping thousands of federal employees furloughed or working without pay during the season of giving? Feeding that insatiable capitalist monster, one that is actively destroying our environment and paying its workers so little that they come to depend on the very assistance being wrenched from them, right before the holidays? Ebenezer Scrooge looks downright wholesome in comparison.

So let's just not.

Let's not continue to build expectations for a bigger, shinier, more disposable holiday season year after year. Let's scale back, and make more with less.

Let's get cheesy and embrace the moral of all those holiday stories out there, let's listen to Mariah: all we *really* need for Christmas is each other. And here in Erie, in our community, we've got a lot to love. Just take a quick peek within.

Let's not continue to build expectations for a bigger, shinier, more disposable holiday season year after year. Let's scale back, and make more with less. Let's get cheesy and embrace the moral of all those holiday stories out there, let's listen to Mariah: all we really need for Christmas is each other.

The argument against buying local often comes down to cost. Whatever item in question usually does cost more locally than it would online. I'd retort with a suggestion that you look at the *true* cost of what you're buying from that massive corporation and what that choice *takes away* from your local economy, and really, your neighbors.

All of the small businesses, makers, and craftspeople featured in our gift guide are the people closest to us – they live in our neighborhoods, they employ our citizens, their kids go to our schools, they do-

nate to our local nonprofits, they sponsor local food drives, and they're actively invested in making Erie a community to be proud of. When you take money that would go back into their businesses, or to their employees, or into their communities, and give it to a massive billion-dollar corporate enterprises, the true cost is loss of community. And no amount of savings on some cheap plastic toy a kid is going to completely forget about after a week is worth that.

So let's think smaller. Let's act smaller. Let's get creative and more thoughtful and intentional with our festivities. Let's make some things. Let's think hard about what we're giving and where we can get those items locally – and we've made that extra easy for you with the aforementioned gift guide, as well as features within that show off our neighborhoods (the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Erie Downtown Partnership) and our makers (NWPAMade and Rustic Wolves).

Maybe, because the cost of buying locally can be ostensibly more than online, we scale it back a bit and lean into the fact that we're just not willing to pay the cost of supporting billionaires over our local community anymore. Let's collectively reset our expectations and appreciate the real and tangible *value* in shopping local. Let's listen to Mariah and focus on each other, both our local community and our loved ones, this holiday season.



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Hundreds of Constituents Gather for October No Kings Protest

Local reactions to federal actions

By: Alana Sabol

By the hundreds, members of the Erie community gathered in Perry Square on Oct. 18 for one of thousands of No Kings protests nationwide. The demonstrations across the country amassed nearly 7 million participants. The No Kings protests serve as a response to perceived authoritarian actions by the Trump administration, including deportations without due process, deploying the national guard in major cities, and making major cuts to healthcare, education, and environmental protection. The protesters declare that the United States is a democracy and has no king.

Perry Square was filled with protesters young and old, with tents along the margins of the park to provide community members with resources such as voter registration and information on activist organizations like 50501 Erie, French Creek Indivisible, and Fair Districts PA.

Local speakers discussed various topics such as healthcare cuts, food insecurity, immigrant rights, and the militarization of police and ICE. Liz Allen, a writer for both this publication and Emmaus Ministries, and a former city councilwoman, talked about how the Trump administration has contributed to growing food insecurity in America, including the USDA canceling the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement and Trump canceling 94 million pounds of food aid. “Two weeks ago the food pantry at Emmaus, which is normally open on Monday and Tuesday mornings, closed for two days because there wasn’t enough food to distribute,” said Allen, elaborating on how these cuts were affecting the Erie community. Allen argued that while millions of Americans are at risk of losing SNAP benefits, Trump dined at Mar-a-Lago for a super PAC MAGA Inc. fundraiser, with dinners going for \$1 million dollars per plate.

Cole Schenley, a member of the Erie Democratic Socialists, spoke about global issues including the ongoing conflict in Gaza, which he described as a

The No Kings protests serve as a response to perceived authoritarian actions by the Trump administration, including deportations without due process, deploying the national guard in major cities, and making major cuts to healthcare, education, and environmental protection. The protesters declare that the United States is a democracy and has no king.

genocide, and political unrest in South American countries like Venezuela. “There’s been a surge of immigration from people trying to escape the awful conditions our government has imposed on their homelands,” Schenley said. “It’s insidious how the Republican party has demonized immigration for decades, treating refugees as an invading horde, but happy to reap the financial gains from de-

An attendee of the protest named Rachel, who requested her last name to be omitted, explained that she worries for the future of her children, including her son who requires regular medical care. At the same time, activist Carlos Mora approached the stage to speak. Originally from Colombia, he explained how he witnessed the violence that breeds under a corrupt government and does not

AIDEN RICHTER



In October, Erie hosted one of thousands of No Kings protests that took place across the nation. Hundreds gathered in Perry Square to speak out about their discontent with the current administration and call for change.

stroying their countries.” Schenley went on to say that while the issues in our country can feel overwhelming, a united working class can be a powerful force for democracy and accountability.

want the same for the United States. “I simply don’t want to live again in a place where violence, corruption, and the lack of rule of law has become the norm,” Mora said. He encouraged the crowd to continue fighting for their rights and the rights of others, to get involved with mutual aid organizations, or simply register to vote. “It’s time to take control back. It’s time to organize and put ourselves in an uncomfortable situation. It’s time to have uncomfortable conversations, to talk to one another, right now,” he said.

In the crowd, there was a sense of solidarity, passion, and even joy. As the protest went on, musicians came onstage to sing, some in the crowd sang along and danced. Children got their face painted, some of the designs referencing the inflatable frog costume present at the Portland, Oregon protests. In the heart of the crowd, protester Donna Davis told me, “When you see all of these people, you’re thinking, okay I’m not alone.”

Alana Sabol can be reached at alana@eriereader.com

Shop Local Holiday Gift Guide 2025

Archetypes are anything but typical when you shop local

By: Erin Phillips

It's that time of year again – our city sidewalks are starting to be dressed in holiday style. Do you feel that in the air? It's a feeling of Christmas... And we're here, your helpful little local-loving Erie Reader elves, to bring you the always-anticipated **2025 Shop Local Holiday Gift Guide**. It is our hope that the following suggestions, grouped this year by personal interest archetypes, will give you a starting off point for creative, thoughtful, appreciated, and most importantly, LOCAL gift giving.

Whether your loved one is a reader, a gardener, an athlete, a homebody, or maybe all of those things, we've got plenty of suggestions for locally sourced goods, businesses, and makers to support this year. We've made sure to include a good amount of "experience" gifts – basically funding an opportunity for your loved one to get out, try something new, build community, and maybe come away with a new passion or hobby. Those are the kinds of gifts that truly keep on giving all year long.

We hope that this list inspires you to find something new to love about Erie. As you can see from the word count, there's a lot! Happy local shopping and happy holidays, to all of our Reader readers.

The Bookworm

The obvious direction here is to support a local bookstore, but things get tricky in terms of what to get – does your giftee enjoy mysteries, romance, historical fiction? Have they read that book al-



ready? Accessories are always a fun way to go and local bookstores like **Werner Books and Coffee** or **Pressed** carry plenty of literary-themed accessories like candles that smell like old books, reading lights, journals, bookish apparel, or handmade bookmarks.

One off-the-beaten-path shelf to stop and shop is the **Local Authors** section, for a hyper-local Erie gift experience. Taking a moment to shamelessly plug some books published by our Erie Reader contributors, we recommend ***Can I Change the World With a Doodle?*** by Anthony Carson and ***Living in the Moment*** by Tommy Link (both Erie Reader comic artists). Cover art contributor and 40 Under 40 alum **Brenna Thummler** has a fun and touching graphic novel series called ***The Sheets Collection***, a great gift for bookworms of all ages.

The Sports Fan

Licensed national sports team apparel is largely available through well-established corporate outfits but if you're looking for something a little more local



and a little more subtle – **Erie Apparel** has got your fandom covered. You can find **Erie Otters** and **Erie SeaWolves** gear and stickers at Erie Apparel, along with vintage Erie teams like the Cardinals, Sailors, or the Blades.

If you're looking for more than a t-shirt, stop by the Erie Insurance Arena or the SeaWolves clubhouse (or online at their individual websites) for merch of all sorts (including some of that elusive, collectible, perfectly purple Moon Mammoths gear).

In a more niche way, a stop into **Turn 2 Sports Cards and Collectibles** located in Village West reveals items that span the athletic world – perfect for any sports memorabilia collector's shelf.

The Gamer

While many gamers these days self-define as the "video" variety, the subculture got its start through people collectively playing physical games in rooms



together – D&D, Magic the Gathering, Warhammer, and the like. To get the gamer on your list kicking it old school, check out local spots like **Gateway Games, Books Galore**, or **Griffin's Lair** for supplies, dice, strategy games, miniatures, guidebooks, merch, and more.

If you're looking for something local to give the die-hard video gamer in your life, check out the products created by **Whitethorn Games**. Or give them a day of non-stop arcade gaming fun with friends at **Play Port**.

The History Buff

Erie has a rich and fascinating history with a strategic military spot on our Great Lake, our industry and manufacturing, our colorful tapestry of immigrant neighborhoods, and our natural resources like Presque Isle State Park. For local history buffs, the **Carriage House Visitor Center and Gift Shop** at the Hagen History Center, nestled into the former Carriage House of the Watson Curtze Mansion stocks local history books and publications (like their annual magazine, *The Triangle*), maps, flags, art, and collectibles (there are even options for the history-loving kiddo on your list). Or give a membership, so your loved one can visit the inspiring museum whenever they feel that itch for the past.

Additionally, visit the **Maritime Museum** gift shop located within the lobby area of the Maritime



Museum in the Blasco Library building for some local seafaring historical merchandise or check out **Presque Isle Gallery and Gifts** in the Tom Ridge Environmental Center for a book or art piece celebrating our natural history.

The Home Cook

Speaking as a proudly adventurous home cook, I can say with certainty that there is no greater gift for my ilk than a gift card to **A. Caplan Company**. I could stop and look in there for hours. If you'd pre-



fer to give something tangible, consider springing for some prime steaks from **Gordon's Butcher and Market** or **Urbaniak Brothers Quality Meats**. Or, for a thoughtful piece of art that doubles as a functional kitchen tool, consider a high quality, handmade spoon, scoop, or spatula from **Erie Woodcraft** or a



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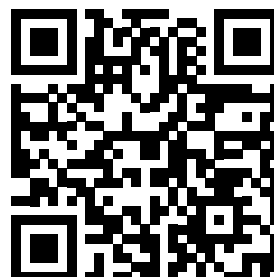
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custom made cutting board from **Lake Erie Variety**. If you know the home cook on your list is toying with the idea of getting into sourdough bread baking, there is a constant supply of sourdough starter available at **Herb and Honey Bakery**. Locally milled flours are available at the **Edinboro Market**. Those items paired with some sourdough supplies (available locally through the aforementioned A. Caplan Company), and you're likely to be gifted your own homemade loaf in the near future.

The Audiophile

For the music lover in your life, some locally sourced, collectible vinyl from **Graham's Records** or **Rick's Record Store** (located within 1020 Collective) is always a welcome sight under the tree. Taking it a step further, much like the Bookworm, for a hy-



per-local audio experience, buying local music directly from local bands is the best way to support the Erie music scene. Attend a show and grab a CD or some vinyl, maybe a shirt to go with it – you'll make a musician's day and gift a nice package of some local sonic love.

Tickets to an **Erie Philharmonic** concert or a touring band coming through the **Warner Theatre**, **Centennial Hall**, or the **Kings Rook Club** is a fun and inspiring way to honor the audiophile on your list.

If your giftee is a musician themselves, consider a set of guitar strings, sheet music, gear, cables, or a new axe from spots like **World of Music**, **Nolan School of Music**, or **Phelps Brothers Guitar**.

The Overstressed

The holidays are full of magic and wonder, and behind all that magic and wonder is someone working their ass off to make it all happen. And that's not easy. Gift the person in your family holding it all together the gift of relaxation. A locally-made co-



conut wax candle from **The Candle Box Company**, particularly from their aromatherapy collection, will help set busy minds at ease. Some handmade, all natural soap from **Lady G. Artisan Soap** company or a shower steamer or bath bomb from **Erie Bubble**

Company makes any day a spa day.

Or, of course, there's always the option of giving your stressed-out loved one an actual spa day. Our top three Best of Erie winners from 2024 are **Coventina Day and Med Spa**, **Panache Salon and Spa**, or **Rejuv MedSpa, Salon, and Wellness**.

The Grill Master

Just because summer is over, doesn't mean the grill has to go away. I have fond childhood memories of



my dad out in a blizzard, grilling us up some dinner. For that die-hard grillmaster on your list, consider some locally made, custom barbecue tools and accessories from **Bad Larry Barbecue** – like some American-made stainless steel, heavy-duty grilling tongs and double-pronged skewers – your giftee will be grilling in style and quality.

For more of a culinary twist, consider a locally made barbecue rub from **Underdog BBQ**, like their signature Rust Belt Rub, or some locally made sauces from **Urbaniak Brothers Quality Meats**.

The Weekend Warrior

If your loved one is the adventurous type, there's no shortage of local gift ideas for the active, outdoorsperson. Whether it's biking, hiking, camping, or all three, some high quality gear built to last from **Hikes and Hose** will always be welcome. Sustainably made bike bags to hold all the things for a week-end of bikepacking, water bottle holders, bags and totes – your Hikes and Hose gear will be up for any challenge.



Consider stopping by the **Erie Bike Co-Op** for some cycling supplies or a new-to-you bike. They have unique, rare, and vintage "fancy bikes" that are hard to find elsewhere. And you'll feel assured knowing that your purchase is going towards the group's mission of getting affordable bikes into the community, particularly for those folks who need them most.

If you'd like to give the adventurous spirit on your

list an actual adventure, consider showing them the ropes (and ziplines) at **Peek'n Peak Mountain Adventures** or treating them to day on the lake via **Your Sailing Adventure**. Whether it's a sunset sail or lessons, an adventure on the water is a great choice.

The Homebody

Wintertime in Erie offers something that our summers never can: coziness. For the loved one on your list who loves some serious cozy time, a gift facilitating that feeling is always welcome.

Warm bevies are the key to that hygge life – consider a relaxing, artisanal, hand blended tea from the **HopLeaf Tea Company**, which combines the brewed flavors of hops with herbs and teas. A loose leaf peppermint hops or a barrel-aged pumpkin spiced black tea sound like the perfect pairing with twinkle lights, a roaring fire, and a vintage holiday record. Sweeten that brew with some local raw honey from **Hogs and Honey**, **River Honey**, or **One**



Acre Honey and you've got yourself a cuppa cozy.

Additionally, key to a comfy night in are plenty of throw pillows and blankets. Visit one of Erie's own home decor shops like **Vintage and Soul Home**, **Trellis on 8th**, or **Grasshopper** for plenty of snugly varieties.

The Entertainer

If the loved one on your list loves to host, consider some items to make their next dinner party extra special. Locally made ceramics will create an elegant and one-of-a kind table setting. **Allen Stoneware** or **Moose Head Pottery** both carry an ample supply of drink and table wares. Check out **Gem City Mercantile** online for mix-and-match vintage china, glasses, and other tableware for a uniquely cottage-core, eclectic look.

If your giftee is an amateur (or professional) mix-



ologist, consider a gift of locally distilled spirits like **Altered State** or **Luminary**, or some spirit-free cock-

tails from **Blind Tiger**. For balloon bouquets or arrangements, consider **Balloons by Nat** to make your giftee's next event stand out.

The Crafter

Really, the best gift for anyone who loves to craft is something homemade. Nothing speaks to the heart of a crafter better than an item made with love. But if you'd like to include something more, consider the craft! If your loved one is a knitter or crocheter, a skein of locally spun or hand-dyed yarn is always a treat. Check out **Three Tulips Yarn Company** or **Slow Formations** or **Tupelo Acres** for some thoughtful, hand-produced yarns and goods.

If scrapbooking is the cut of your crafter's jib, classes and supplies are available locally through **Monkey Business Scrapbook Lounge**.

The Village Smithy Emporium, located in the Liberty Plaza, offers a fabric supply alternative for those who choose to steer away from corporate box stores. Have a look around and find some other bits and bobs for the quilter or budding fashion designer on your list.

If you'd like to make your holiday cards particu-

THREE TULIPS YARN COMPANY



larly bespoke this year, consider making them on **Grounded Print and Paper Shop** handmade paper. Proprietor Ashley Pastore (40 Under 40 Class of 2022) often incorporates unexpected materials into her paper like flowers, dried invasive plant species, or naturally-sourced, foraged dyes – making each sheet one-of-a-kind.

The Fashionista

For that person who always likes to stand out in a room, consider some unique, locally designed pieces from **Dotigan Clothing Co.**, **rabbit3**, **Produce and Protect Studios**, or **Melancholy Brand**.

Or do a little poking around in some of our expert-

JESSICA HUNTER



ly curated boutique shops like the OG Erie vintage clothier **The Dollhouse at Pointe Foure**, or **Primo** or **Bespoke** tailor shops, all conveniently located

downtown.

If jewelry floats your fashionable friend's boat, consider an heirloom piece from a local jeweler like **Lighthouse Jewelers**, **Dahlkempers**, or **Ralph Miller** or something pretty from **Relish** (specializing in beach glass jewelry for that hyper-local look). **Glass Growers Gallery** or **City Gallery** provides pieces with an artistic, unique flair. You can always go the handmade route with a piece from **Clae Handmade**, **Copper Twig**, or **Infinity Bonds**.

The Sommelier

Nestled in our spot on the Lake Erie Wine Trail, we have plenty of regionally sourced grapes and no shortage of wineries turning them into an abundance of that ancient elixir of the gods. **Local wines** from any of our local wineries are sure to excite the palate of the budding sommelier on your list.

If you'd like to gift more of an experience for your

JESSICA HUNTER



wino, **Rupp Limousine Services** provides tailored wine tours for every taste or book the **Flagship Trolley** for a larger group – what's better than a gorgeous afternoon in North East spent with friends, sipping on local wine?

The Animal Lover

Whether you're purchasing for the pet or the pet-lover on your list, locally-sourced pet products, toys, treats, grooming supplies, and more can be purchased from good old **Buzz n' Bees**. Little-known fact: the **Erie Humane Society** has a retail

GO GRAY ARTWORK/ERIN PHILLIPS



store in their lobby with gear, toys, and more – purchases from that shop directly benefit the animals in their care.

Honor or memorialize the goodest doggos or kit-

ties in your life with a custom made pet portrait. Local artist Allison Gray (of **Go Gray Artwork**) creates stunning watercolor portraits of your best loved buddies (she does require some lead time, be aware). She also offers pet-related apparel, prints, and jewelry, all while donating a portion of every item sold to local rescue organization Because You Care.

The Beer Snob

Erie sure does love a good beer. If you've been paying attention, you'll know that we all really enjoy taking a locally brewed beer for a walk (as those of us within the city limits deeply appreciate our lack of open-container law). To our minds, the best way to support the local beer snob is by giving them local beer! A six pack, mixed six, or growler full of a local microbrew from **Erie Ale Works**, **Lavery Brewing**

JESSICA HUNTER



Company, **Black Monk Brewery** (or the scads of others scattered throughout the county), will always go down easy for the hops lover on your list.

Additionally, these breweries offer merch like etched and branded mugs and glasses, koozies, apparel, and more. OR gift your regular a **Mug Club membership** (available from any of the aforementioned breweries), which gives them more of a reason to get out and try all the newest brews on tap.

The Yogi

Erie has some very beautiful, eclectic yoga spaces that offer perfect options for in-person classes at all yoga levels. Gifting a series of classes from **Infinite Love Yoga**, **YogaErie**, or **Studio Sage** (among others) will get the flexible, peaceful person on your list out and experiencing different instructors and vibes. Infinite Love also offers yoga-related classes

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like sound baths, aura photography, and options for yoga on the beach or amongst the kitties at **Purrista Cat Cafe**.



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If you're in need of some supplies, YogaErie carries yoga mats, blocks, straps, and other gear at their local studio.

For the metaphysical in general, be sure to stop in to **Cauldron and Thorne** to re-up your yogi's sage and crystal supply – they'll be thanking you all year long in their deep, meditative thoughts.

The Cinephile

During the wintertime in Erie it can be very easy to sink into that "Homebody" archetype, especially if you're the movie-watching sort. Getting the film buff on your list off the couch is the real gift. Consider scheduling them a screening of their favorite movie at the **Erie Movie House** – you can rent the space,



NICK WARREN

bring your friends, and your favorite movie. They'll screen it, provide the popcorn, and access to arcade games. Seeing *A Christmas Story* or *It's a Wonderful Life* on the big screen? That's some holiday magic!

For more of an arthouse vibe, FilmErie, the newest incarnation of the Film Society of NWPA, is offering weekly screenings of indie films locally at the 1020 Collective in their **Film1020** series. Tickets to a show or two is the perfect experience gift for the cinephile on your list.

The Gym Rat

The holidays often come followed up by New Year's resolutions – if you know your loved one has set health goals for themselves in the new year, a **gift gym membership** or gift card to their gym of choice would be a welcome boost.

If your giftee is a runner, consider some new gear



JESSICA HUNTER

or gadgets from the **Achilles Running Shop** – with quality products and experts who know all the challenges of the roads and trails, they're sure to get you set up with something that will be appreciated.

John Adams Cycling and Fitness carries top-of-the-line cycling gear, accessories, and bikes, but they also encourage fitness through cycling in all ways – and in Erie in the wintertime, that often

means the stationary variety. Keep your cyclist fit all year round with an indoor trainer or a gift card towards one.

The Green Thumb

Any real gardener will tell you that their season truly doesn't end. The winter months are spent dreaming and planning the eventual bounty of their spring and summer gardens. Facilitating their winter dreams by gifting them gardening gear will guarantee a healthy pile of homegrown zucchini on your doorstep come July. **Good Ideas Inc.** is a locally owned manufacturer of high quality lawn and garden products. Nearly all of their goods are produced right here in Erie County, at their Lake City facility. Rain barrels, composters, planters, and raised beds are sure to please any green thumb.



ERIN PHILLIPS

For more indoor greenery, there are a number of small, independent plant propagators as alternatives to a trip to the greenhouse. Consider shopping super small and supporting **Steph's Sprouts**, **Neon Plant Co.**, or **Choppy Poppy's Plants & Propagations** and bringing some of the outside in.

The Teenager

Coming from someone who has one of those newly formed teen-aged people, I can say with certainty that the best possible gift for any member of Gen Z is whatever will get them out of their rooms and experiencing the community!

Escape rooms! Erie has options like **Escape Game Erie** and **Covert Escape Game** to get your teen together with friends, working as a team, and hanging out in a wholesome way.



ERIN PHILLIPS

Consider **tickets**: a pops concert with the **Erie Philharmonic**, a cool, all-ages local show at **Centennial Hall**, or a big-name comedy act at the **Warner Theatre** or **Kellar's Comedy Club**.

For the sportier kiddos, consider a **Peek'N Peak** ski

pass or an afternoon of kayaking with **Presque Isle Boat Rental** to get them outdoors, active, and enjoying Erie's natural resources. Or for the animal-loving teen, book them a snuggle session at **Purrista Cat Cafe**. Gift that kid an hour getting whimsical with some adoptable kitties. What teen among us couldn't use a bit more whimsy?

The Impossible to Buy For

There's always that one person... that person who has everything, wants for nothing, is happy just being around loved ones during the holiday season. But to give them nothing just seems wrong, especially as these folks tend to be among the most important in our lives. Consider **donating to a local nonprofit** in their honor, one that is especially meaningful to your giftee.

Booking a session for family photos at a local photography studio or on site with a local photographer will provide another opportunity to get all of the family together, with plenty of mementos to treasure.

Make them something! As a parent myself, I can say that my children will never be too old to give me something handmade that I will love forever. Look out for workshops and classes at **Blasco Memorial Library's Idea Lab** – whether it's 3D printing, laser cutting or engraving, button making, book binding, and more – to make something unique and from the heart. Additionally, art spaces like **Erie Clayspace**, **Grounded Print and Paper Shop**, and the **Erie Art Museum** offer plenty of classes that will have you coming away with something tangible and creative to give to that hard-to-buy-for person.



ERIN PHILLIPS

And, if I may be so bold, consider **gifting a subscription** to this very publication that is enriching your life right now. **The Erie Reader** is and always will be free to read, but it is definitely not free to make. If you know your loved one enjoys our publication and would like to see local print media continue to bolster our community, consider subscribing your loved one for \$15 a month. Your giftee will then have the Reader sent to their door every month (along with other fun perks). Click the donate button at the top of our website to learn more.

Happy Holidays from all of us at the Reader to all of you! We couldn't do any of this without you!

Erin Phillips qualifies as a Bookworm, Home Cook, History Buff, Crafter, and Green Thumb, in case anyone's looking for ideas. She can be reached at erin@eriereader.com

NWPAMade Turns Creativity Into Commerce

New accelerator helps local makers craft a sustainable future

By: Chloe Forbes

Every product tells a story, and in northwestern Pennsylvania, the makers behind those products are learning to tell a new one: how to turn creativity into commerce. Through a new business accelerator called NWPAMade, makers and craftspeople are learning to make a living from making what they love.

The program, born from a partnership between PennWest Edinboro and Bridgeway Capital and funded by the Erie Community Foundation and Appalachian Regional Commission, places an emphasis on helping maker-entrepreneurs scale and sustain their businesses.

“We’ve expanded upon the traditional definition of ‘maker,’” explained Christopher Lantinen, director of PennWest Edinboro’s branch of the Beehive Network. “Artists are still very much centered in our definition of maker, but we also want to help chefs and brewers and coffee roasters and small-batch manufacturers and software developers and craftspeople and all of those different categories. If you are making something by hand, that is what our program is for.”

The program collaborates with the PennWest Edinboro branch of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Beehive Network to create business cards, rack cards, websites, and other ma-

terials for each business owner.

Lisa Hansen, owner of Hikes and Hose, creates outdoor gear from recycled materials, including firehose and sailing cloth. She was in the ErieMade program – NWPAMade’s predecessor, focused on the first step of creation for Erie makers – and Lantinen used her success story to get the grant to start NWPAMade, the second step.

Hansen explained that ErieMade helped her turn her business into a reality, but there’s a point where every small business owner faces a make-or-break moment.

“You either grow or stay stagnant, and that’s kind of where we were at the beginning of this, and the program helped me and our business take a step forward as far as understanding our path and where our growth needed to happen,” she said.

The program engages business owners in Crawford and Erie counties who have been in business for at least a year and have an annual profit of \$20,000 or more. Over nine months, it covers all aspects of owning a business, from legal advice to finances, marketing, and more.

Each business works with Amanda Duncan of Chiara Consulting to set goals for the program, and along the way, the businesses meet with experts in the various topic areas.

JACOB SUKHENKO



Having just opened her first storefront thanks to NWPAMade, Anush Dulgarian Bruno’s business Sealed by Nature creates beautiful soaps, balms, and hair and skin care.

Adam Kennedy, chief programs officer at Bridgeway Capital, explained that although Bridgeway Capital is a social impact investor focused on nonprofits, it decided to help people and projects that might not otherwise be bankable but would bring great prosperity to the region if they were. NWPAMade is a way for Bridgeway Capital to tap into those businesses and ensure all operations are in working order so they can prosper and be an investable opportunity.

For Casey Brown, co-owner of Willow Creek Barn Wood Furniture, NWPAMade has helped him get his finances in order, revamp his branding, and focus on what matters – creating.

He and his father, Chris, have a storefront in Edinboro with a workshop nearby. They began their business about eight years ago after Casey pushed his father to turn his hobby of making things into a full-time job. Chris had worked in construction and always enjoyed woodworking on the side.

Casey was studying for a degree in physical therapy at the time and agreed to take a year off to help. “I’ll take a year off of school and do this with you, and then I’ll go back to grad school,” Casey said during a launch

event for NWPAMade. “One year went by, and I was like, ‘Well, I’ll take two years off.’ By the time two years had passed, I realized that I really liked doing this, and growing up around construction, I always knew I really liked working with my hands, so then I had not only the opportunity to work with my hands and start a business but also to work with my father.”

Now, the duo finds old reclaimed lumber in the area from barns that would otherwise head to the landfill, and uses it to create custom furniture.

“As hard as it is to acquire the lumber and build it, it’s something that we didn’t want to lose,” Casey explained. “We wanted to preserve the history of that.”

They make everything from dining room tables to conference tables, kitchen cabinets, bookcases, and even cutting boards.

“Our motto is ‘You dream it, we build it,’ so we have a lot of customers come to us with crazy ideas and we figure out how to make it happen for them,” he said.

His father was old-school in how he kept books, so NWPAMade set them up with QuickBooks and is helping them make the change from sole proprietorship to a limited liability com-



Chris and Casey Brown created the business Willow Creek, and with financial planning and branding assistance from NWPAMade, they’ve been able to focus on making the reclaimed woodworking projects that define their business.

pany (LLC).

Down the road, Anush Dulgarian Bruno just opened her own storefront thanks to NWPAMade's support. Sealed by Nature (318 W. Plum St. in Edinboro) goes beyond soap and skincare, making it into a canvas for artistic expression. Bruno creates everything from bath bombs to lip balm, specialty soaps, and hair and skin care, harnessing the medicinal properties of nature.

Her venture began in 2020 when she was a new stay-at-home mom with two kids and turned to creativity as professional work. She started selling her products in Edinboro shops and on Etsy, then joined the ErieMade program's first cohort.

She said that for makers and small business owners, these business accelerators create a priceless network of support that has given her the confidence to make her dreams a reality.

"A small business is something that very often it's one person or two people," she said. "You know, you're so small you're trying to do it all yourself, and sometimes you lose that faith that what you're doing is the right thing and that you can get through the difficulties. Having a program that sort of holds your hand and says, 'You can do it, this is the way to go,' that's such an important support."

In her new storefront, she offers more than just products. People can come in and learn about the ingredients, then make their own soap or lip balm. Even children can enjoy painting bath bombs or playing with moldable soap, a clay-like substance that

can be shaped and then hardens into soap.

She's already thinking of collaborations with her fellow small business owners, whether it's hosting painting classes in her shop or visiting Tia Maria Wigs to speak about scalp and skin care. She's hoping to create a hub of creativity in Edinboro, boosting the economic benefits across the county.

This program and her business, she explained, "can give that opportunity for development in the city and the outskirts" to ensure equal development.

What began as a network of makers learning the business side of their craft is becoming a connected web of creators building a stronger economy. NWPAMade's impact reaches beyond individual shops and studios, nurturing a culture of creativity that's close to home.

This year's cohort includes: Sealed by Nature, graphic artist Alex Strasser, Blissful Meads, Nancy Asmus' Nancy Under the Steps, Borgia Artistry Studios, jewelry maker and metalsmith Gideon Hermann, Hikes and Hose, live wedding painter Izzy Does Art, Millie's Morsels, Poverty Knob Farmhouse Ales, ProDome Seal, mural painter Raeann the Artist, Rhoxon Productions, She Vintage, Tia Maria Wigs, and Willow Creek Barn Wood Furniture.

Learn more at nwpamade.org

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



Lisa Hansen, owner of Hikes and Hose, a company that creates outdoor gear from recycled materials, found success through the ErieMade program, a predecessor to NWPAMade.



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True Community Theater: A History of the Erie Playhouse

The dramatic evolution of Erie's local theater scene

By: Jonathan Burdick

In 1819, when Erie was still a rugged settlement of less than a thousand, an Irishman named William Hughes opened a hotel at the old Bell House on the corner of French and Sixth streets. He reminisced fondly about his younger years as an actor and soon organized a “dramatic company” for Erie's young men. Before long, they were putting on performances in a nearby building a few blocks north. It wasn't for fortune or glory. It wasn't to pay their bills. The creative process and community were the point.

Over two centuries later, that creative spirit remains in Erie. There is no shortage of live performances around the city. One can find musicians performing on stage nightly, stories interpreted through dance by numerous ensembles, interactive dinner theaters at The Station and Peek'n Peak, and explorations of life expressed through humor at events organized by Flagship City Comedy and Kellar's, A Modern Magic and Comedy Club.

There is something for everyone on the city's stages. You can find theaters performing everything from Rodgers and Hammerstein classics to the more gritty and quirky to the locally written and experimental. Want to watch professionally performed Broadway favorites like *Music Man*, *Kinky Boots*, *Clue*, and *The Book of Mormon*? Warner Theatre's Broadway Series has you covered in 2026.

On the local level, though, is where one truly discovers the depth of Erie's theater scene. Many beloved institutions have come and gone over the years. Some, like the beloved All An Act Theatre Productions, have recently dealt with challenges beyond their control, leaving them without a home – but with a hope to return soon. Still, the local theater scene remains thriving and ambitious.

The Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA), formed in 2012 and operating out of the iconic Mayer Building at 1505 State St., is a prime example of this ambition with over a dozen productions scheduled for their 2026 season (pro tip: check out their FlexPass punchcard, which will get you into any eight of your choosing and save you 50 bucks). First though,

KIDDER ARCHITECTS



The building in which the Erie Playhouse resides on West 10th Street may have been built in 1948, but the concept of the Erie Playhouse truly began much earlier – with community theater troupes like 1880s People's Theatre, the Community Playhouse in 1919, and by 1923, the Erie Playhouse.

beginning on Nov. 13 to close out their 2025 season, PACA will stage *Journey to the Poles of Inaccessibility*, described as a “fantastical rom-com” that is “*Indiana Jones* meets *Around the World in 80 Days*.” They will then close out their year with their *Holiday Extravaganza* Dec. 18-20.

Footlights Theatre, wrapping up its 50th year of youth shows and programming, put on outstanding productions of *Beetlejuice Jr.* and *Madagascar Jr.* over the summer at Strong Vincent Middle School, followed up by sold-out shows of the teen edition of *Hadestown* at the PACA building in October. In May 2026, their youth production of *Puffs* will debut at PACA, a Rosencrantz and Guildenstern-style Harry Potter parody that is a “tale for anyone who has never been destined to save the world.” Meanwhile, Corella Productions, which offers children tui-

tion-based after school programs and summer camps, just staged an early-November production of *Matilda Jr.* at Cathedral Prep.

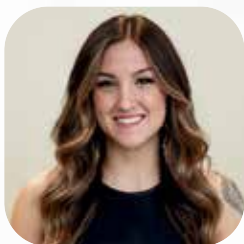
Then there is Dramashop. Their mission is to “provide entertaining and provocative theatrical experiences designed to challenge and engage the Erie community.” They have produced countless shows over the past decade including their annual Originals Festival which highlights locally written, directed, and performed one-act shows. For those who like to go deep into the weeds, they also hold their monthly dramatic works discussion club called SCRIPTED at Werner Books and Coffee.

Newest to the local scene is the Tethered immersive theater company, founded in 2023 by award-winning filmmaker John C. Lyons. They just wrapped up their second production, which transformed the Erie

Maennerchor Club into a walkthrough set piece, exploring the fragmented nature of trauma and memory.

If your theatrical thirst still isn't quenched, you can travel south to Meadville where they have the historic Academy Theatre, the Meadville Community Theatre, and the youth-centered French Creek Community Theatre, which has productions of *Newsies*, *Moana Jr.*, and *Grease* on the slate for 2026. One also cannot discuss local theater without mentioning the many college and high school productions throughout the region.

Then, of course, there is the Erie Playhouse, a cultural staple and one of the oldest community theaters in the United States. Before the Playhouse, there were many troupes and companies performing throughout Erie at venues such as Farrar Hall and Shea's Theater. Perhaps the best-known of



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Laura

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Sandy B

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Jess

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Sandy D

A special friend & caring part of our team.



Bree

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“As the leaves turn and November arrives, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the extraordinary people who make our work possible. More than any seasonal blessing, I'm truly thankful to share a heartfelt word about each incredible teammate who brings their unique dedication and bright spirit to our mission every single day.”

-Edna Siegel

**Owner & Artistic Director
Panache Salon and Spa**

these predecessors was the People's Theatre, which was organized in the 1880s as "friendly competition" but, the founders stressed, *not* a rival to the already established Erie Opera House.

In the mid-1880s, renovations for the People's Theatre were initially planned within a skating rink. They would build a stage, install electric lights, and construct a movable floor to cover the rink when needed. Plans shifted though when in 1888, proprietor H.V. Claus secured a "handsome little hall" on State Street between 10th and 11th streets for their productions. Its soft opening was that September with a performance of the drama *The Railroad of Life*. Other shows performed that opening week included *The Silver King*, which brought the crowd to tears, and *Davy Crockett*, which resulted in a lot of fear. The production used *living* wolves.

"Quite an exciting scene took place at the People's Theatre last evening," reported the Erie Daily Times. "One of [the wolves] escaped, and bounding over the foot lights, ran down the aisle." An actor shouted to the audience not to be afraid and simply grab him. Instead, there was a stampede towards the door and a "small sized panic" before the wolf was caught a few minutes later. The play proceeded and, besides the whole wolf incident, was well-received. The Erie Daily Times called the opening week "a prosperous one" that "demonstrated beyond a doubt that the city can support two places of amusement."

Shortly after this, an out-of-town-er named Mark Ferrell arrived in Erie. Described as a "pleasant gentleman" with a gray beard and jolly temperament, he offered to lease the building from Claus and take over management duties of the People's Theatre. Ferrell explained that he was a "veteran thespian" of over 50 years whose father had managed Her Majesty's Theatre in London, England. Ferrell himself made his stage debut there at age 12, he said. He recounted how after arriving in the United States at 18, he then spent decades traveling the New England circuit as an actor and manager, only taking a brief hiatus to serve in the Civil War under General Judson Kilpatrick.

"[T]here is not a professional man in the country who has not heard of me," Ferrell told the Erie Daily Times after closing the deal. His motto? Good shows at popular prices. Extensive construction continued under his watch over the next two weeks, transforming the theater into a "very cozy temple of amusement." He hired an orchestra and announced their October show as the romantic military drama *Last Roll Call*. In the cast of 30, two were professionals while the rest were local amateurs. Tickets ranged from 10 to 30 cents.

The morning of the show's opening arrived. Ferrell though was nowhere to be found. Rumors spread quickly. Some said he had skipped town. One business owner claimed to have met Ferrell while he was using another name. Whatever the case, besides



The original Strand Theater built in 1948 would eventually become the home of the Erie Playhouse, when it was purchased by the group in 1983 – it has been producing local performances there ever since. Coming up in November and December, catch the Youtheatre show *Emma! A Pop Musical* and the Mainstage modern classic *Frozen: The Broadway Musical*.

the upcoming show, he also owed on his rent, owed tabs at nearby restaurants, and had about \$25 of the theater's cash (the equivalent of about \$850 today). Claus was baffled. He postponed the show.

"Duped," the Erie Daily Times wrote. "Ring down the curtain." A former Opera House manager said he had witnessed similar con artists come into Erie for a few days and split, but never one who brazenly duped the

entire community for weeks. Still, the shows had to go on. A few days later, with Claus temporarily taking on managing duties, they continued their planned productions.

"Old man Ferrell may have been a swindler and all that, but he had the right idea of what a theatre should be," the newspaper noted following a nearly sold-out performance of *A Wife's Peril*. They followed this up with equally successful productions of

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Erin-Go-Braugh and *Lost in London*. The Erie Daily Times called it “an assured fact” that the People’s Theatre would be successful, and for many years it was.

Decades later in Jan. 1916, a communal theater organization called the Little Playhouse opened at North Park Row’s Reed Hotel. Many of those involved had ties to the old People’s Theatre. “Erie will have one of the first of the genuine community theaters in America,” reported the newspaper. This was part of the experimental Little Theatre Movement, described by an Erie reporter as a theatrical crusade where “no storeroom, no big barn, no abandoned church was safe from invasion by an earnest group of neophytes who knew little of the theater and yearned to do something to improve it.”

Henry B. Vincent, already a well-known composer and pianist in Erie, was managing director. He remarked that the Little Playhouse would be dedicated to the “encouragement and development of whatever latent talent there may be in the city” with the “entire absence of commercial considerations.” There would be, he stressed, “no element of private gain.”

“It will belong to the people and to no one person or group of persons,” the organization stressed. Ticket prices would be affordable, local talent would be nurtured, and it would, with time, be entirely self-supporting. They desired to build a community where “Erie painters, authors, players, and musicians” could “always find an op-

portunity to be heard or seen.” It was all about the community, the *people*.

Opening night was set for Jan. 18 with three plays performed: *I’m Going* by Tristan Bernard, *Galatea of Toy-Shop* by Evelyn Sutherland, and *Sunset* by Jerome K. Jerome. It was described as a “brilliant first night” with the “excellent acting of amateurs whose work approached the professional” and “a director of such ability and of such artistic taste.”

By April, they achieved one of Vincent’s goals: putting on an entirely original Erie play. Written by Carrie Hulse-Petriollo, it was titled *In Capri* and set in Italy. A local artist, Edgar Kowalski, painted the scenery and the top-billed cast included locals Iona Phipps, Bertha Liebel, and Katherine Scott. The “charming little play” was very well received. After closing for the season that May, the local press had deemed them a success.

In 1919, they rebranded as the Community Playhouse after reopening following World War I. They moved to the Keystone Brass Foundry (the current YMCA building) and, described as “rich in ideas, but poor in purse,” they shifted focus to more commercial productions. They never intended to do more than break even, but they *did* need to keep the lights on. It paid off. By 1923, now being referred to as the Erie Playhouse, they were described as “unusually capable and experienced players” and considered by many to be one of the premier community theater groups in the country.

Much to their surprise though, their

building was sold a few years later, so they spent about a year performing out of the Columbia Theatre on West Eighth Street while Vincent raised funds for a permanent home. In July 1928, work began on their new theater on West Seventh Street. It opened the following year to high praise and being “worthy of the highest ideals of the most ardent Playhouse enthusiast.”

In 1940, Vincent created the youth theater branch of the Playhouse. The following year, though, he died unexpectedly of a heart attack. “[Perhaps] we do like to believe in a Heaven where everyone does what he or she loved best to do on earth,” the Erie Daily Times eulogized, noting he was “the personality behind the success of The Playhouse.” Soon after, they put up his portrait in the Playhouse, inscribed beneath it: “This theatre is devoted to the making of happiness.”

Jack “David” Lewis, one of the leading players, then took over for two years. When he left to pursue acting opportunities elsewhere (including Hollywood), the Playhouse ceased operations for the next few years due to World War II. According to accounts from the time, supplies and gas rationing contributed to this closure, but also the lack of male actors. This temporarily left Erie without any live theater.

In Sept. 1946, it reopened under the direction of L. Newell Tarrant. During the Tarrant years, there was a shift towards recruiting professional actors from around the country. Some

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The history of community theater in Erie is a dramatic tale, from its scrappy beginnings as the People’s Theatre through many changes, scandals, and triumphs into the rich landscape of performance groups like PACA, Dramashop, and the Erie Playhouse.

future big names came through the Erie Playhouse.

In 1948, a fresh-out-of-college Anne B. Davis joined as an apprentice where she learned “every aspect of production.” In the 1950s, Jerry Stiller spent two years as a player. He’d learn his lines on Presque Isle’s beaches. Stiller recalled the Erie Playhouse as a “cultural oasis” and, from his own recollection, he *really* learned to act for the first time alongside Henderson Forsythe – future Tony-winning stage actor and a decades-long soap opera star – who taught him the meaning of trust on-stage (and how to drink boilermak-

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FEATURE

ers downtown). Other names from this era included Rue McClanahan, Walter Matthau, Eli Wallach, Frank Langella, Ned Beatty, Dom DeLuise, and Monique van Vooren as well as retired boxer Rocky Graziano and future author Robert Ludlum.

In 1962, it was announced that Tarrant had accepted a one-year "special professional assignment" in Hawaii. Following Tarrant's departure was a brief hiatus, followed by a little over a year where Lenny Edelstein called the shots, a decade under Bill Cohen, and then over three decades under David Matthews. During these years, Matthews, the board, and staff all worked diligently to restore their shared vision of the Playhouse being a *community* theater. The Youtheatre was introduced while classes, workshops, and camps were offered as educational outreach.

In 1983, they purchased the old Strand Theatre on West 10th Street, its current home. After a Pittsburgh Press reporter watched a performance of *The Rainmaker* there following renovations, he argued that the Playhouse was "competing for the title of best community theater in the country."

"There's something the community theater has [that] the professional theater doesn't have," Matthews told United Press International. "They do it out of love." The professionals, he felt, were often more concerned about how much they were being paid and how long the show ran. "For a town that they say is beer and bowling ... the Playhouse is doing real well," he added.

Following the departure of Matthews, executive leadership has included Almitra Clerkin, Kate Neubert-Lechner, and, since 2023, Zach Flock with long-time playhouse legend Richard Davis

as artistic director. Needless to say, you could, quite literally, fill an entire *book* covering the long and spellbinding history of the Erie Playhouse.

The Erie Playhouse remains more active than ever. For youth, they offer Showstoppers show choir and continue to offer summer camps along with acting, voice, and improv workshops. In 2024, they even offered a workshop on stage combat. On the mainstage, the Playhouse just finished a successful run of *The Elephant Man*. From Nov. 7-16, they will be putting on a youth production of *Emma! A Pop Musical*, a contemporary adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel, directed by Youtheatre director Ahnika Lexvold. They will then close out the season in December with *Frozen: The Broadway Musical*.

The 110th Season in 2026 promises to be an exciting year, too, with productions of *Mean Girls*, *Junie B.'s Essential Survival Guide to School*, *A Doll's House*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, *1776*, *Hairspray*, *Come Far Away*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Over the Tavern*.

So, as winter approaches and the days shorten and some of those seasonal blues begin to set in, find the stage where the stories and people speak to *you*. As my own father Doug Burdick, who oversaw the French Creek Community Theatre for decades, always said, that's truly what it's all about: the *people*.

Frozen runs weekends from Dec. 5 through Dec. 28 // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // For tickets and info, visit: erie-playhouse.org

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



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The Importance of Shopping Local

How the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network supports Small Business Saturday

By: Cassandra Gripp

The holidays are right around the corner, and this year, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) has introduced a new way for people to get out into the community and support local businesses.

The Shop Local initiative runs from Nov. 22 to 29, offering a “passport” that shoppers can fill out by visiting at least four participating local businesses. By showing the passport, customers will receive a stamp and be entered to win unique prizes provided by the businesses themselves. QR codes will also be made available for those wishing to participate digitally.

For over 160 years, the Sisters of St. Joseph have been following their mission of helping our community through the foundation of schools, hospitals, adult and youth ministries, and more. Twenty-five years ago, the Neighborhood Network was formed to continue their mission through leadership, advocacy, and partnerships to further “develop opportunities for both personal growth and neighborhood revitalization.”

Patrice Swick is SSJNN’s Neighborhood Engagement Specialist and part of the 40 Under 40 Class of 2025. After years of working in faith-based social justice and community development, joining the SSJNN felt like a “natural” next step.

She shares: “Our work has grown from meeting immediate neighborhood needs to strengthening long-term community leadership. We’ve expanded our focus on economic empowerment, small business support, and inclusive spaces where everyone feels they belong.”

In an age where it is more convenient to shop online and have things delivered to your front door, the SSJNN emphasizes the importance of shopping local this upcoming Small Business Saturday. “It’s a celebration of the people behind the storefronts — the dreamers, doers, and risk-takers who give our neighborhoods character,” Swick continues. “It’s also a reminder that our spending choices directly shape the local economy and the sense of place we all share.”

Swick highlighted several such businesses within the network that stood out to her, including Kayla’s Sweet Treats, Verity Herbs and Wellness, and Serafin’s Market.

Kayla’s Sweet Treats is a small bakery located within the Urbaniak Brothers Quality Meats. Inside the market, shoppers are met with the mouthwatering scents of smoked meats across the building, and upon reaching the bakery, a display case full of delicious, homemade baked goods. Oftentimes, when the store is less busy, customers can even watch as the dough is rolled out right in front of them.

The owner, Kayla Gelletta, used to work at Urbaniak’s when she was a teenager and grew up in the neighborhood. She dreamed that she would own a bakery one day – and when the opportunity

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



This holiday season, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) is encouraging Erieites to shop small, specifically within the SSJNN footprint – highlighting three businesses including Serafin’s Market, Verity Herbs and Wellness, and Kayla’s Sweet Treats.

arose earlier this year, she jumped in and secured her place in the former Herb and Honey location.

To Gelletta, Small Business Saturday is a chance for others to familiarize themselves with the businesses around them. “When you come in here, our products are as fresh as they can be. We have nothing from a box or tin and no preservatives,” she said. “Our doughs, our fillings, everything is made from scratch.” For those tasked with bringing dessert to their family’s Thanksgiving feast this year, consider Kayla’s pastries over the boxed and processed options.

Another business highlighted within the SSJNN, Verity Herbs and Wellness offers various workshops, tastings, and other services to the community. Located next door to Grasshopper on Peach Street, owner Kristy Baird is one of few clinically licensed herbalists in the area.

“At a time when people are really dissatisfied with our modern healthcare system, I wanted to make it my mission to spread awareness of the benefits of herbal medicine in Erie,” Baird said.

In addition to seeing her clients once a week, Baird provides many other services to the community and frequently collaborates with other businesses. From April to September, she offers medicinal plant walks in Asbury Woods and the Erie Bluffs State Park. On the second Thursday of each month, she hosts herbalist nights to “get plants on people’s minds” and have them try different teas. She also offers workshops such as incense-making and mushroom identification classes.

Baird is committed to sustainability, ethical sourcing, and is passionate about accessibility within herbalism. “Plants have evolved with us,” she said. “And there is a lot to offer us as far as preventative

measures go, instead of being forced to pursue the more expensive route. Herbal medicine is still out there and still valid.”

Serafin’s Market is Erie’s oldest food market, located at 601 E. 24th St. For almost 100 years, Serafin’s has provided our city with high-quality groceries and other various services, including catering, money orders, bill-paying, and a coin laundromat next door.

Throughout the year, owner Daniel Serafin and his team work tirelessly to host food drives, home health supply drives, and family-oriented events around the holidays. Their social media expresses pride in their employees and to loyal customers alike, often giving shoutouts to returning friendly faces.

When asked why Swick chose to showcase these businesses specifically, she commented, “Each one brings something unique – creativity, culture, and heart. These business owners care deeply about their customers and neighborhoods. Their spaces tell stories of resilience, pride, and community spirit.”

“[Small Business Saturday is] a celebration of the people behind the storefronts — the dreamers, doers, and risk-takers who give our neighborhoods character. It’s also a reminder that our spending choices directly shape the local economy and the sense of place we all share.”
– Partice Swick, SSJNN neighborhood engagement specialist

The holiday season reminds us of the importance of community, which we can then practice throughout the rest of the year. To Swick, “It is about belonging and mutual care. It’s neighbors knowing each other’s names, showing up for one another, and believing that when one of us succeeds, we all do.”

By supporting smaller businesses, we are further establishing that sense of unity and togetherness in spite of our differences. We are able to form meaningful connections with those who run the places we frequent, consume healthier and fresher foods, buy higher-quality products and become a part of something much bigger.

“Erie’s small businesses are the heartbeat of our neighborhoods,” Swick said. “When we shop local, we’re not just buying a product – we’re investing in people and strengthening the spirit of the community that makes our city home.”

For more information on the SSJNN Shop Local Passport, visit ssjnn.org or email info@ssjnn.org

Cassandra Gripp is a freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at cassie.gripp@gmail.com.



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Bird of the Month: Yellow-rumped Warbler

Butter butts

By: Mary Birdsong

Yes, their nickname is butter butts. Why? Because there is a small patch of yellow on their rumps that is obvious as they flit around in the mid-story of trees (above the ground but below the larger canopy). Go ahead and giggle. We do.

Within the Yellow-rumped Warbler species there are two subspecies: Audubon’s, which occur in western North America and Myrtle, which occur in the east. They used to be separate species but were lumped together as one back in the 1970s. Although they look similar, they have enough plumage variation to be identified as one or the other. But no matter which “outfit” they’re wearing, there is always that distinct yellow patch on the rump.

The subspecies Myrtle is the one typically found in our area. And it’s the only warbler that can be found here in winter, much to the amazement of new birders. A warbler in winter? But how? Although they nest in the northern boreal forest, they come “south” for the winter and what makes our climate acceptable to them is the native shrub northern bayberry

(Myrica pensylvanica), which grows in abundance at Presque Isle State Park.

Like other warblers, Yellow-rumps feed primarily on insects in the breeding season, but their winter diet includes a substantial amount of fruit. The species’ ability to digest the waxes in bayberries make it unique among warblers and allows them to winter in our area (and as far north as Nova Scotia).

To find them, look for bayberry stands on the park and then use your eyes, since Yellow-rumps are not known for singing on the wintering grounds (although you may hear a few low, flat “chep” calls).

A winter bird walk at Presque Isle is often dominated by waterfowl species, but butter butts are the bright yellow spots in an otherwise dull winter landscape. And when you find one, point and say “butter butt!” It’s a good way to dispel any seasonal gloom.

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



Charming little butter butts, the Yellow-rumped Warbler is the rare warbler type to hang around our region in the colder months – their signature yellow patch standing out in an otherwise colorless landscape.

The Reader Beat Monthly Recap

Summary of October 2025 council meetings

By: Alana Sabol

The Reader Beat aims to cover city and county council meetings as well as other important government and community-related meetings. The following is a summary of each meeting for the month of October:

County Council Oct. 7: During the first county council meeting of the month, a resolution regarding the death of Marchello Woodard was set to be voted on during the meeting. Some constituents addressed this matter. Constituent Deonte Cooley argued that the resolution split up the Democratic and Republican members of council and encouraged the council members to come to the community as individuals. In his report, Andre Horton addressed this: “However the vote goes, we’ve tried to work with our colleagues,” Horton said. “Read the resolution and see if there’s anything you don’t like in there, because I think it’s a doggone good resolution.” The Resolution of Council regarding the death of Marchello Woodard passed 5-2 with Bayle and Schauerman voting no. Schauerman explained that her vote did not diminish her empathy for the friends and family of Woodard, but had difficulty voting yes due to the recommendation made by County Council Solicitor Tom Talarico to refrain from making a resolution on the matter. In the resolution, council acknowledges the pain that Woodard’s death has caused his family, friends, and community. They also recommend actions such as funding for body cameras and reviewing and updating deescalation tactics.

City Council Oct. 15: Ed Brzezinski presented an honor to Bobby Sulecki, a local historian whose exhibit “The Story of Us, Erie Polonia: Churches and Neighborhoods,” is on display at the Hagen History Center’s Erie campus. City council acknowledged Sulecki’s research and dedication to Erie’s Polish American community.

Some public comments advocated for a community advisory board in light of the death of Marchello Woodard. “It breeds open dialogue and discussion. It gives people the opportunity not only to build trust with the law enforcement officers in their community, but their elected city officials as well,” constituent Tina Hiotis said.

A resolution following a public hearing at the request of the Planning Department for the construction of multiple-family dwellings consisting of fourplex and townhouse buildings totaling 61 units located on vacant parcels in a Waterfront residential zoning district was approved, passing 5-2 with Flores and Titus voting no. Flores explained that during the public hearing, the investors said they only went to the local church and neighborhood watch to discuss the construction. “Unless you’re going door to door with the neighbors that are there, I have a hard time believing everybody is in favor,” Flores said. City Clerk Laurie Watson mentioned that the zoning office posts the property (in public records and on the Zoning Department website) prior to the public

hearing. Flores responded saying that the community opinion forum comes before the zoning process. “If we’re going to be trying to come into neighborhoods, can we please do our part and make sure those neighbors are going to be welcoming?” Flores said.

County Council Oct. 21: During public comments, constituents raised concerns about federal policy and funding. “In news story after news story I see county after county across Pennsylvania trying to get ahead of critical budget shortfalls as federal dollars dry up due to Trump’s Project 2025 budget cuts,” said constituent Matt Texter. “Since the Davis administration is unable to see the writing on the wall, we need all hands on deck in this body.” Constituent Heidi Shadeck called for the end of the DHS contract to hold ICE detainees in Erie County Prison: “I don’t want my local government profiting from a contract with the agency committing daily acts of violence, cruelty, lawlessness, and abuse of power.” An ordinance stopping payments made in excess of budgeted appropriations was unanimously moved to a second reading and passed by council.

What’s coming up this month?:

- City Council:** Nov. 5 at 9 a.m.
- County Council:** Nov. 6 at 6 p.m.
- City Council:** Nov. 19 at 6:30 p.m.
- County Council:** Nov. 20 at 6 p.m.

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Edwina Tries...Presque Isle Fish and Farm

Commercial fishery bringing local Lake Erie fish (and more) to market

By: Edwina Capozziello

I grew up in Florida, taking the availability of fresh seafood for granted, and love a good fried fish sandwich as much as the next gal. When local fishmonger Kirsten Loesel reached out to tell me more about Presque Isle Fish and Farm, I knew it would be the perfect place to try for this Shop Local issue.

Right down the street from the Colony Plaza sits Presque Isle Fish and Farm's retail space within a repurposed Arby's restaurant. It has a fun, welcom-

ing exterior that leads into a tidy shop with brightly colored signage and an impressive variety of fresh, refrigerated, and frozen selections. In addition to things you can take home to prepare, there are several prepared deli type items made in house as well as an impressive menu of cooked-to-order, take-out items.

We stopped in on a Friday evening and Loesel was there with a welcoming smile, working on signage at the large table in the middle of the shop that also serves as seating for cooking classes. She introduced Anthony Acs, who helped educate me about the fishing season, local catch, food preparation, and more as he prepared our dinners to go. Loesel and Acs explained that until the lake gets too cold to fish, owner Jim Shaffer (who they refer to as "The Captain") would be out on the boat bringing in fresh local catch for the shop. Once it gets colder, the shop will host their cooking and tasting classes that, at \$40 per person, always sell out.

I chose the weekly special: a fried perch sandwich, as well as a container of smoked white fish dip. There were boxes of crackers available for purchase so I didn't have to make another stop on the

way home and could get right into the delicious dinner. The fish was so fresh-tasting, plentiful, and not at all greasy. I made it a meal and added french fries (which were especially good) and coleslaw for a very reasonable price.

There's a framed photo of Captain Shaffer's commercial fishing boat on display right inside the front door that says "From Our Boat To Your Table." I think that's pretty cool. The staff knowledge, the cleanliness of the shop, the impressive stock, and the seriously yummy, well-priced food make Presque Isle Fish and Farm a must try. I'm already planning my next visit.

Presque Isle Fish and Farm is located at 2769 W. 8th St. Their hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with extended hours until 6 p.m. on Fish Fry Fridays. Information on menus and future cooking classes on their Facebook page at Presque Isle Fish & Farm.

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

CONTRIBUTED



Edwina harkens back to her childhood in Florida by enjoying a freshly caught and prepared fish dinner, right here in Erie. Tag along as she gets to know the folks behind Presque Isle Fish and Farm.

Take Your Beer For a Walk: November 2025

The West Eighth Street corridor and beyond

By: Jeff McCullor

Friends, welcome to November. We're speeding headfirst toward the largest shopping season of the year and we're going to mix in some local shopping and dining with some on-the-street drinking, because it's Erie and it's totally cool to walk around responsibly with an open container. Ready? Let's roll!

We're going to start this trip at the Six Pack House of Beer located at 847 Pittsburgh Ave. and just a hair inside the city limits. The Sixer is the absolute perfect spot on this side of town to grab a brewski and take a walkski. Snag a quick Club Sub with double meat and dressing on the side before you roll out. Cheers to you, Six Pack House of Beer!

With your recently purchased beer from the Sixer, we'll head out the door and turn right toward West Eighth Street. This should be about a 30-minute walk (if my mathing is accurate) as we plod eastward along the north side of the street. Have you ever noticed how many small businesses in various healthcare fields are on West Eighth? It's like wellness row over here. The long, blue Manor Plaza at 2105 W. Eighth St. houses about 13 local businesses there! Cheers to you guys; keep it up!

From this spot we'll continue east about a block where you'll see the old Lager Cafe, a legit dive bar

that will one day be home to Taco Distro where we can all gather for tacos and margaritas. Next door is Stefanelli's Candies, a great sponge candy stop while on your walk if you need some added carbs. Cheers to you, Stefanelli's!

Next we'll stop into Country Fair (Store Number 1 – cheers to you, Country Fair!) to pick up another walking beer if you're in need. They offer a decent beer selection to get you through the second leg of

JEFF MCCULLOR



Local brewer Jeff McCullor takes his beer along for a walk as he goes from the City's westernmost limit eastward and finds a number of spots to shop local, including The 6 Pack House of Beer, Stefanelli's Candies, the Greengarden Place businesses, and more.

this trip. Next we're going to head all the way down to the corner of West Eighth and Greengarden, about a 10-minute jaunt.

Greengarden Place is home to a slew of great local businesses like Pop Luck, Trellis, Altered State Distillery, Buona Cucina Oils, and Pressed. You can basically just do laps around the plaza and get all your holiday shopping done in one fell swoop. Cheers to you, Greengarden Place folks!

Finally, we're going to end this beer walk with my favorite restaurant in town, Pineapple Eddie Southern Bistro. Exit Greengarden Place and yep, you guessed it, head east. Travel two blocks and hang a right on Weschler where we'll land at 1402 W. 10th St. This used to be a Red & White grocery store back in the day when grocers were practically on every corner. Now it's an absolute delight of a dining experience worthy of special occasions or just a great dinner with your bud. Get the chicken 'n waffles, trust me. Cheers, Pineapple Eddie!

Thanks once again for coming on a walk with me. Keep drinking, and walking, local.

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

Gem City Style: Shop Local 2025

An interview with Tiffany Wolfe of Rustic Wolves

By: Jessica Hunter

Stepping into a conversation with Tiffany Wolfe is like stepping into a well-loved antique shop: every piece has a story, a history, and a touch of deeply personal charm. As the creative force behind Rustic Wolves, Wolfe transforms antique silverware and keepsakes into ruggedly beautiful, wearable jewelry, bridging the gap between cherished memory and modern style. Her work is more than just accessories; it is an act of heirloom revival, built on her commitment to quality and storytelling.

Wolfe describes the aesthetic of her brand as having a rustic feel that is deeply connected to her personal history. “Every part of the brand and the business has a little piece of my heart, my soul, and my roots in it,” she shares. Growing up in a very small town centered around family and nature, her pieces pull in that love for the outdoors. However, the distinct look of Rustic Wolves is also rooted in the history of her materials – she uses all antique utensils, ensuring a piece of the past is built within every design.

Her love for the craft started when she was just 10 years old. Having spent countless hours with her grandparents, Wolfe developed a love for items that tell a story. She once persuaded her grandmother to part with a piece of her silverware collection, which her grandfather then helped her transform into jewelry in the garage. This moment solidified her passion for taking cherished, historical items and giving them a second, wearable life.

As the creative force behind Rustic Wolves, Tiffany Wolfe transforms antique silverware and keepsakes into ruggedly beautiful, wearable jewelry, bridging the gap between cherished memory and modern style. Her work is more than just accessories; it is an act of heirloom revival, built on her commitment to quality and storytelling.

Wolfe’s creative process begins with “the hunt.” She is meticulous about sourcing her materials – spending time at thrift stores, estate sales, and flea markets. Beyond commercial sourcing, she often works with local families who trust her to turn their own generational pieces into new accessories.

“A lot of people think silverware making is very

JESSICA HUNTER



Local artist Tiffany Wolfe created her business Rustic Wolves as a way of reusing antique flatware while honoring and preserving the items’ history by turning them into one-of-a-kind pieces of jewelry.

easy,” she explains, “but it’s a long, personal process.” After the sourcing, she dedicates significant time to the painstaking, detailed work of cleaning, soaking, and sanding away years of wear. She stresses that she will never mass-produce: “I always value quality over quantity,” she asserts. This dedication to slow, intentional forming and polishing is what sets her work apart and gives her pieces their signature depth.

The most meaningful part of her business, she says, is the heirloom revival collection – a service that allows clients to bring their own family silverware to be transformed into new pieces. Wolfe recalls turning a single antique fork that a client’s husband brought back from Italy into six unique pieces for their family, preserving not just the metal, but the memories tied to it.

Blending “rustic charm with modern wearability” is a deliberate choice for Wolfe. Now based in the city, she carries the simplicity of her upbringing into her contemporary designs. “I want it to be an easy transition,” she says, “from being out in the woods or in nature to going out to an elegant dinner with my friends.”

That balance is perfectly captured in her own favorite piece – a pair of earrings made from her grandmother’s fork tines paired with spent bullet primers she collected with her grandpa. It’s a beau-

tiful fusion of family history, nature, and personal style.

Ultimately, Wolfe hopes her customers feel strong, courageous, and independent when wearing her designs. She draws inspiration from the spirit of her namesake, the wolf, symbolic of strength and the free spirit. Looking ahead, Rustic Wolves is focused on growth with purpose, specifically expanding the heirloom revival collection and incorporating more repurposed materials like leather, all while building strong relationships with other local makers in the Erie area.

Wolfe reminds us that for her, the jewelry is “deeper than just a piece of accessory.” It’s about the connection and the memories set around the dinner table. When you wear a piece from Rustic Wolves, you are not just wearing metal; you are bringing a tangible piece of family history with you.

To learn more about Tiffany Wolfe and to view the Rustic Wolves collection, visit them on rusticwolves.com. You can also find her pieces in local antique stores, like the Copper Carriage downtown.

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



ERIE OTTERS

HOME SCHEDULE

MONTH OF NOVEMBER



NOVEMBER 7

7PM



NOVEMBER 8

MILITARY APPRECIATION NIGHT

7PM

PRESENTED BY TOYOTA



NOVEMBER 21

CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS & FAMILY GAME NIGHT

7PM

PRESENTED BY HIGHMARK CARING PLACE



NOVEMBER 22

SMALL BUSINESS NIGHT

7PM



NOVEMBER 26

BEARS AND BEERS

7PM

PRESENTED BY REBICH INVESTMENTS



NOVEMBER 29

BETWEEN THE BENCHES - FEATURING A KRIS MALLETTE BOBBLEHEAD

7PM

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11.26

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Making a Small City Smaller: Small Business Saturday

How small businesses make a big impact on small city economies

By: Dave Tamulonis

This year, Small Business Saturday will be very important to our local economy in Erie. As damaging tariffs drive up domestic prices and the looming cessation of SNAP benefits reduces the purchasing power of everyday people, it has almost become our duty to our neighbors to ensure as much of our money remains within the local economy as possible. Luckily, data shows this can easily be done. Approximately 67 to 68 cents of every dollar spent at a small business stays within our local community. This money is recirculated through local wages, purchases from other local suppliers, and the owner's reinvestment, creating a significant positive ripple effect in the local economy.

It starts with direct spending, which is the initial purchase of a good or service from a locally owned small business. When you spend money at a small business, a large portion stays local through wages and other local operating costs. Next comes a round of indirect spending, which is the money spent by the small business itself on local suppliers that creates a secondary round of spending within the community. This multiplier effect means that for every dollar spent at a small business, an additional amount is generated in local economic activity. That boost in the local economic ecosystem means our neighbors see the benefit more quickly and more impactfully.

By comparison, studies show that for every dollar spent at a large chain store, only about 43 cents remains in the local community. The remaining percentage of each dollar that is left on the table when buying from a large corporation may be spent on any number of things. In the case of Walmart, it might be spent on their political action committee, Walmart Inc PAC, which favored conservative candidates in the 2023-24 election cycle. In Target's case, that amount may go toward funding vehemently anti-LGBTQIA+ political candidates like 2010 Minnesota gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer, who is now the Majority Whip of the United States House of Representatives. Emmer received \$150,000 in support from Target Corp. That portion of your dollar may be used to empower large corporations to fight environmental regulations and continue to ravage our natural resources, lobby for favorable tax cuts for the super-rich, and generally perpetuate the downward spiral toward the economic ruin of the working class in favor of the ultra-wealthy, widening the wealth gap in an already historically inequitable American economy. The point is: it is much easier to know where your money is going if you choose to support local businesses.

We take Small Business Saturday pretty seriously in Downtown Erie each year with an event focused on driving foot traffic to the urban core to support our brick-and-mortar shops and local craft vendors and micro-businesses through our Miracle on State Street event with Copper Carriage, the Dollhouse

DAVE TAMULONIS



The Erie Downtown Partnership is hoping to rebound better than ever for Small Business Saturday on Nov. 29, after the massive snowstorm of 2024 shut down activities last year. Downtown Dave Tamulonis examines all the reasons why supporting local is so important and hopes Small Business Saturday will reflect a shift towards shopping smaller in general.

at Pointe Fourre, and Glass Growers Gallery. This year's event is on **Saturday, Nov. 29 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** with vendors in the historic Boston Store Lobby, Erie Art Museum, and 1020 Collective plus dozens of brick-and-mortar shops open throughout Downtown Erie with specials, sales, and promotions. Last year, we saw how important this single weekend can be for local businesses when not one, but two major holiday shopping weekends were wiped off the calendar due to the snow emergency. Many locals probably opted for online shopping out of convenience and tons of local Erie shops lost an enormous amount of expected holiday revenue. This affected many shops' business decisions heading into the new year like reducing employees' hours, decreasing stock orders, and cutting back on charitable giving. The multiplier effect can therefore also go in the opposite direction, having wide-ranging negative consequences for many others within the sphere of these businesses.

While Small Business Saturday is a nice reminder to shop local as a fun holiday outing, I encour-

age you to keep the shop local spirit throughout the season. If we are cursed with another snowpocalypse, make an extra effort to patronize local businesses online. Shop early, shop late, ask friends to shop with you, and build community through your local support. We often bemoan the commercialization of the Christian Winter Holiday, but community can also be built through shopping if we make careful decisions. If social norms and societal expectations force you to embrace a season of capitalist excess, make sure that abundance flows to your neighbors. As you plan your holiday spending this year, consider supporting locally owned shops in Erie and keeping more of your dollar within our community. The decision to support local is also a decision to make sure we can all survive whatever is thrown our direction next.

David Tamulonis is a musician and educator who works at Erie Downtown Partnership managing community events and activities in Downtown Erie. He can be reached at davidtamulonis@gmail.com.



SACRED PATHWAYS

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EVENTS

Kings Rook Club Fall Features

A stacked November schedule brings eclectic events all month long

BEGINNING THURSDAY, NOV. 6

The leaves are changing, the temperature is dropping, and the days are getting shorter, but the King's Rook Club is giving us plenty of reasons to leave our houses. This November a cornucopia of music hits their stage with several local acts and events, along with some national touring acts including Emery, The Niche, Punchline, and Jimkata.

Thursday, Nov. 6 Emery with '68 and Wolves at the Gate will take the downstairs stage. Early 2000s post-hardcore band Emery first found success with the song "Walls" in 2004. They are known for their ability to blend the post-hardcore sound with emo and metalcore, and were representative of the Christian music scene. Opening the show is '68, a noise rock duo from Atlanta and Wolves At The Gate, a Christian Metalcore band from Cedarville, Ohio. There will be an upstairs after party featuring Heart of Atlantic and Stellar Motus following the Emery performance. This event is in collaboration with Idlestar Productions.

Doors at 6 p.m., show at 7 p.m. // 21+ (ID Required) // Pre-sale \$28.29, \$5 more for non-members at the door // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Friday, Nov. 7 is a night of indie bands with Rochester, New York's Blue Envy, along with local alternative bands Halfpace, Velvet Waves, and Elle Taylor.

Music at 9:30 p.m. // \$10 members, \$15 non-members // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

On Saturday, Nov. 8, Masheen (Ben Childers, Sage Bishop, James Yolo) is bringing their Hard Launch tour to town with local acts Time Mind and Phunkademic opening the show.

Doors at 9 p.m., music at 10 p.m. // 21+ (ID required) // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Friday, Nov. 14 The Niche (featuring Rob Compa of Dopapod) hailing from Rochester, New York, draws comparisons to Phish and Ween. The group is celebrating their 25th year together and will be joined by Gantzer Jam Squad, which features members of Aqueous and The Niche.

CONTRIBUTED



The Kings Rook Club has a veritable cornucopia of events scheduled in November, including but not limited to nationally touring acts like Emery, '68, The Niche, and Punchline.

Doors at 9 p.m., music at 10 p.m. // 21+ (ID Required) // Pre-sale \$12.24, \$5 more for non-members at the door // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Friday, Nov. 21 features Puppy Presents Uncaged: A 360 EDM Experience. This event is billed as a "boiler room style" 360 stage design where DJs and decks will be up close and personal. Also performing will be Puppy and Stim City (lonesav and Mooneyes).

9 p.m. // \$7 in advance, \$10 at the door // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Friday, Nov. 28 brings Punchline with Eternal Boy, Fastfall, and Mallory Run. Punchline is a Pittsburgh-based pop-punk band who have been coming to Erie since their formation in 1998. They are currently on the road celebrating the 20th anniversary of their indie label release *Action*. Joining them will be fellow yinzers Eternal Boy, along with local talent from Fastfall and Mallory Run. This event is in collaboration with Heel Heat Production.

Doors at 7 p.m., music at 8 p.m. // 21+ (ID Required) // Pre-sale \$20.80, \$5 more for

non-members at the door // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Saturday, Nov. 29 November wraps up with Jimkata with Shapes and Weazildust. Jimkata is a Ithaca, New York-based jamtronica band. They are currently on the road supporting their 2024 album *Running In Place*. Supporting acts include the Toronto band Shapes, known for their afro-funk infused rhythms, and Weazildust, an electronic project from the drummer of Jimkata, bringing together beats, loops, samples, and sequences in a unique way.

9 p.m. // 21+ (ID required) // \$22.94 in advance, \$5 more for non-members at the door // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

The King's Rook club is a private club that is easy to join and is always open for members, while many events have an extra charge for non-members. The kitchen operates with a rotating chef, so check their events page for more information on available food or any additional vendors at all events.
– Larry Wheaton

Saturday, December 13 | 10 AM - 5 PM & Sunday, December 14 | 1 - 5 PM

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Thu 11/06

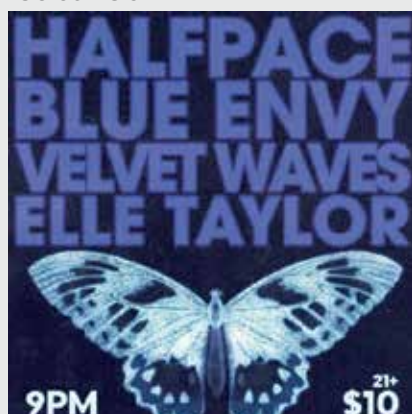
Emery 20th Anniversary of the Question
@ 6pm / \$25
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

Psychometry Workshop with Tami Holbury-Ferraro
@ 6:30pm / \$27-\$37
The Hippie Space, 211 Main Street West, Girard

Fri 11/07

Disco Heat
@ 5pm / \$5-\$10
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Featured



Halfpace/ Blue Envy/ Elle Taylor Band/ Velvet Waves
@ 9pm / \$7
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Wed 11/12

Featured



Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk | Amygdal short film
[FILM 10|20]
@ 7pm / \$10
The 1020 Collective, 1020 Holland Street



Thu 11/13

Featured



Headliner Erik Bergstrom at The Brewerrie at Union Station
@ 7pm / \$20
The Brewerrie at Union Station, 123 West 14th Street



Featured



Journey to the Poles of Inaccessibility
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street



Fri 11/14

Journey to the Poles of Inaccessibility
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street

The Niche Live at King's Rook Club
@ 9pm / \$10
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

STIM CITY: CLUB909
@ 10pm / \$10
Nov 14th - Nov 15th
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Calendar information is provided by event organizers. All events are subject to change or cancellation. This publication is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in this calendar.

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11/5* CLOUD

With **WAR**, an Erie-made short film by Lyons Den Productions and Seiche Dance Collective.

OSCAR NOMINEE BEST SOUND - Four men on the run from the law are offered \$10K and legal citizenship if they transport a shipment of dangerously unstable nitroglycerin to an oil well 200 miles away in the jungles of Latin America. Buckle up for ambitious sequences of insane white-knuckle tenion from director William Friedkin (*The French Connection*, *The Exorcist*). 1977. Survival/Thriller. Rated PG. Universal Pictures/Paramount Pictures.

11/12* PUT YOUR SOUL ON YOUR HAND AND WALK

An intimate, first-hand perspective on life under siege in Gaza, captured through video calls between Iranian director Sepideh Farsi and 25-year-old Palestinian photojournalist Fatma Hassona. Combining raw intimacy with deep humanity, the film portrays daily life through the eyes of a generation caught in an endless cycle of war and living under siege. 2025. Documentary. Not Rated. New Story.

NOVEMBER
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PRESENTS

FILM
10 | 20

SUPERMAN 11/19*

With **CONCRETE CANVAS**, an Erie-made short film by Jackie George and Zlex "Lone" Sav" Staley at 6:00 PM

When Superman gets drawn into conflicts at home and abroad, his actions are questioned, giving tech billionaire Lex Luthor the opportunity to get the Man of Steel out of the way for good. A singular blend of epic action, humor, and heart, director James Gunn delivers a Superman who's driven by compassion and an inherent belief in the goodness of humankind. 2025. Action/Adventure. Rated PG-13. Warner Bros. Pictures

10/20 Collective at 1020 Holland St., Erie PA
5 PM Doors 7 PM Feature Presentation
*Includes 5 PM Secret Film Screening

Food & Drink Available for Purchase
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tickets.eriereader.com



MIAC Live Musical Hat Trick to Close Out 2025

Trombone Shorty, Darren Criss, and Melissa Errico to perform

BEGINNING TUESDAY, NOV. 11

Can you believe it's almost time for the cold-weather holidays and the end of 2025? While the temperatures have already begun to dip, the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) will be keeping things hot on its campus stages with a trio of performances to round out the first half of its Live series: Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue and Darren Criss this month, then Melissa Errico: The Secret Diary of Mrs. Santa in December.

Dr. Brett D. Johnson, the artistic director for MIAC, told us he's "excited for audiences to experience the incredible range these three artists represent." Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue, who perform Tuesday, Nov. 11 on the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center stage, "will bring their signature New Orleans brass-funk energy to Erie," Johnson said. The ensemble is headed by the eponymous Grammy-nominated Trombone Shorty (née Troy Andrews).

A few nights later on Nov. 13, Darren Criss, perhaps best recognized for his turn on Fox's *Glee*

television series, will take the Mary D'Angelo stage. The Emmy and Golden Globe winner is currently starring on Broadway in the hit show *Maybe Happy Ending* (for which he won the 2025 Tony Award for Lead Actor in a Musical). Both Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue and Darren Criss are first-timers to the Mercyhurst campus.

Finally, Melissa Errico will perform in the Walker Recital Hall on Dec. 10, a night that will surely get audience members into a holiday frame of mind. She will, according to Johnson, "bring her elegant, emotionally rich interpretations of beloved American Songbook classics, with fresh takes on holiday favorites."

All told, the MIAC Live series is closing out 2025 by celebrating what Johnson called "the joy of being together in the same room when the lights go down and the music begins" and the series will be back in 2026 to continue the season with even more to enjoy. – Cara Suppa

Each performance begins at 7:30 p.m. //
Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. //
For info and tickets: miac.mercyhurst.edu



The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture is pulling a hat trick in the coming month featuring three star-studded performances from Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue, Darren Criss, and Melissa Errico.

a comic fantasy by Craig Pospisil

get tickets at paca1505.org

JOURNEY to the Poles of INACCESSIBILITY

DIRECTED BY: ZACHERY HOFFMAN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: ALEXANDRIA COLES

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JASSE CAMACHO VERA SOPHIA SANTIAGO
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EVENTS

Journey to the Poles of Inaccessibility

PACA stages world traveling, comic fantasy rom-com

BEGINNING THURSDAY, NOV. 13

Director Zachery Hoffman describes PACA's next production as a "traveling comedy about... an enthusiastic world explorer... and a neurotic and germa-phobic insurance agent... on a dangerous journey." There's more to the

description, but it definitely sounds like a show that will need to be seen to be completely understood – with a plot as interesting, funny, and cryptic as its title.

Hoffman explains that each person in the cast is playing two to five roles in this show. "This is a heavy lift. They are all so funny and intuitive and bring such thoughtfulness to every role that they play." Hoffman promises a show filled with laughs and invites the audience to "sit back, relax and have a fun time."

The lead roles of neurotic Dylan (played by Mitchell King) and explorer Chris (Kerrylee Hinkson) are brought to you "with incredible wit, comedic timing, and heart," says Hoffman. The ensemble cast also includes Jasse Camacho Vera, AJ Holman, Marnie Foss, and Sophia Santiago.

Ryan Dawley (40 Under 40 Class of 2024), PACA's new artistic director, describes the show as "sharp, absurd, and somehow... way too relatable" as it explores themes of "ego, friendship, and why humans just can't resist do-

CONTRIBUTED



The ensemble cast in the upcoming production of *Journey to the Poles of Inaccessibility* performed at PACA will bring the quirky, neurotic, and hilariously cryptic play to life.

ing the dumbest things possible in the name of discovery."

As we hurtle toward the end of the year, PACA has its 2026 season set and is continuing its Rise With PACA campaign to install a new elevator, and build a new theater/events space on the fifth floor. The final fundraiser for 2025, The PACA Holiday Extravaganza, is a variety show directed by Diane Hardner and hosted by PACA's own Mark Tanenbaum. The one-night-only event will feature local talent, and hints Dawley "maybe some mulled cider," adding, "I love this theater and want it to be used to its full potential." – Edwina Capozziello

Journey to the Poles of Inaccessibility:
Nov. 13-23 // Thursdays, Friday,
Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m.
// PACA, 1505 State St. // \$20 // For tick-
ets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

PACA Holiday Extravaganza: Friday, Dec.
19 // 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. // PACA, 1505
State St. // \$20 // For tickets and info:
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A Holly, Jolly, Holiday Market

Copper Carriage celebrates third annual holiday market

BEGINNING SATURDAY, NOV. 15

In 2017, antique-loving, self-proclaimed "treasure hunters" Joe and Stephanie Hunt took a chance and opened a small business called Copper Carriage to sell their vintage and refurbished finds. In 2024, the opportunity arose for them to expand into a much larger space within the Flagship City District. Now, they are excited to announce their third annual holiday market at the historic Masonic Temple of Erie.

The holiday market spans two floors of the temple, carefully curated to celebrate the wide range of local talent among the art scene of Erie. The larger space allows for 70 vendors to sell their wares, providing a mixture of antiques, jewelry, pottery, and other handmade goods.

Hosting markets isn't anything new for the Hunts. Stephanie notes, "We were doing outdoor Spring, Summer, and Fall markets at our shop dating back to 2021. People asked if we'd

ever consider doing a Holiday Market, and I said 'absolutely,' but we'd need an indoor venue for that."

In 2023, they secured the perfect venue.

ERIN PHILLIPS



The third annual Copper Carriage Holiday Market is set to take over the Masonic Temple building, providing a weekend-long opportunity to support local small businesses and makers this holiday season.

"The most rewarding thing is to be able to put a spotlight on so many talented people in and around Erie, and give them a platform and space for them to showcase their talents," Stephanie said. "We were once a vendor just like them, setting up at shows, and we know what it's like to be in their shoes."

Last year, the headcount surpassed 1,000 attendees. This year, Copper Carriage is hoping to reach even further into the community. In addition to the various artwork and crafts, hot food and beverages will be available for purchase.

This event is intended to be family-friendly, with a festive backdrop to accompany your photo opportunities. And for the children, rumor has it that Mr. and Mrs. Claus will be in attendance. – Cassandra Gripp

Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 15 and 16 at 10 a.m. // The Masonic Temple of Erie, 32 W. 8th St. // For more information: coppercarriage.com

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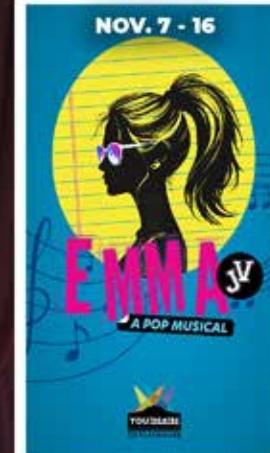
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Followed by holiday tradition *Come Home for the Holidays*

SATURDAY, NOV. 15 AND SATURDAY, DEC. 5

The Erie Philharmonic is closing out 2025 with dual concerts within the Symphonic and Pops series, starting with Gustav Mahler's Sixth Symphony, featuring renowned pianist Orli Shaham interpreting Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20. December follows with the annual *Come Home for the Holidays* concert, featuring the Mercyhurst University Department of Dance with the Erie Philharmonic Chorus and the youth ensemble choirs. Broadway star Blaine Krauss will be performing alongside the groups to welcome in the season.

"This is the crunch time of the fall season," Erie Philharmonic Music Director Daniel Meyer explains. "Most orchestras start their seasons around September, and they have quite a few opportunities to pack in [concerts] between that time and the new year."

At the centerpiece of the upcoming concerts is Mahler's Sixth Symphony, an intense work that came at the height of Mahler's career as the principal conductor of the Vienna State Opera. The symphony, commonly referred to as *Tragedy*, premiered on May 17, 1906, at the Saalbau Concert Hall in Essen, Germany.

"Mahler doesn't pull any punches," Meyer said. "He isn't interested in overly idealizing life. He's much more raw in terms of presenting emotional states and musical ideas that truly reflect life, whether it's in the elation of being in love with his new wife Alma

within the first movement or the incessant pummeling he's receiving from the press as the most important figure in Viennese musical life at the time. He's wrestling with things in front of the audience. He's revealing his intense pain, but also the joys of life as fodder for this intense creativity he brought to this particular symphony."

The orchestration for Mahler's Sixth Symphony is unique in its use of unorthodox instruments, with the centerpiece being Mahler's hammer. Within the fourth movement, the booming sound of a giant wooden sledgehammer being slammed against a box on the ground has been compared to the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in its intensity and themes of life, as Meyer said. "We're talking about fate. The hammer blows represent you and these major life events that can either completely destroy and derail us. Or we can fall from them and find a way to pick ourselves back up."

Giving Mahler's hammer the flagship touch, the Philharmonic had it custom-made by Nova Cabinets, Countertops, and Flooring in Erie. "Every orchestra tries to find a way to envision and bring to life this incredible 'boom' that Mahler was looking for. It has to be striking from an auditory perspective to scare everyone, but has to be impressive visually," Meyers said. "It is a beautifully crafted hammer. It requires a bit of strength and muscle to even hoist it. But then if you hit it squarely, it makes that ear-splitting crack, but it also has that sonic boom we're looking for to shake ev-



The Erie Philharmonic provides an opportunity to enjoy both a symphonic and a pops series performance in the coming month – their impressive undertaking of Mahler's Sixth, followed up by the ever-popular *Take Me Home for the Holidays*.

everyone out of their seats."

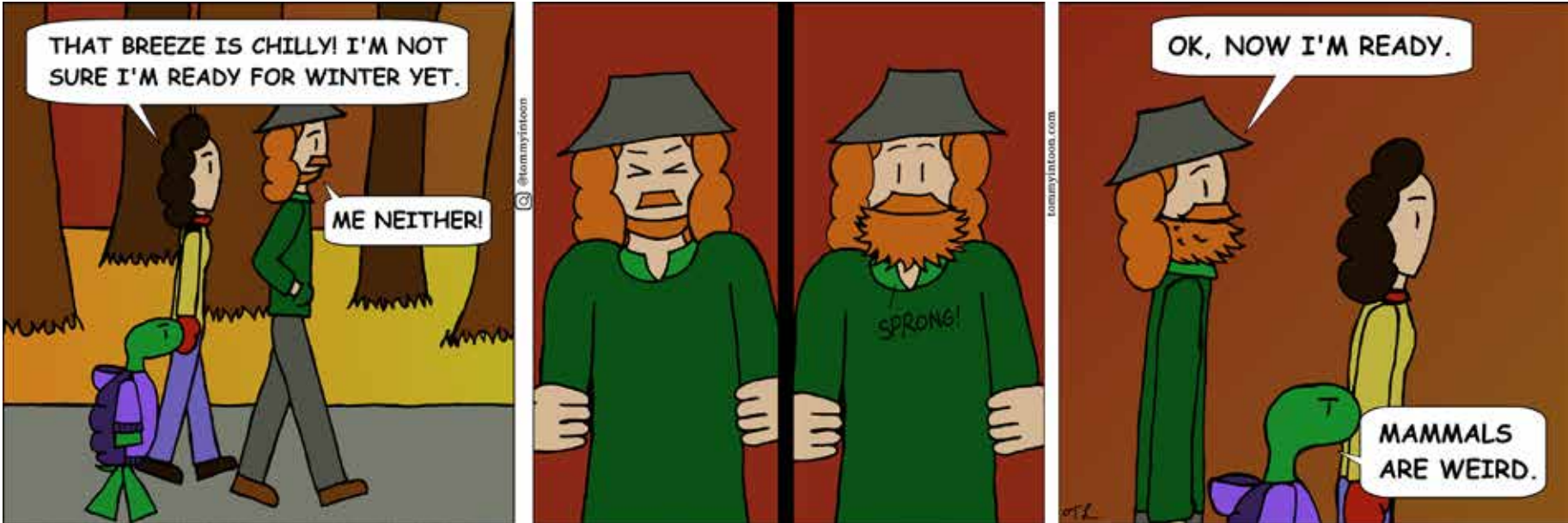
With the return of *Come Home for the Holidays* following Mahler's Sixth, Meyer seeks tradition, with rich arrangements of carols and classics that bring all musicians, dancers, and even Santa Claus himself together to close out the year. "I want everybody to leave the Warner Theatre with a kind of glow from enjoying the music, decorations, and special traditions. People want to hear the music that will get them into the joy of the season, and with different combinations of soloists, such as Blaine Krauss, and choirs, that will put a

nice twist on those traditions. I'm ready to take on everything this season means to help people and their families celebrate the holiday." – Thomas Taylor

Mahler's Sixth: Saturday, Nov. 15 at 7:30 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$17-\$63

Come Home for the Holidays: Dec. 6 at 7:30, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$17-\$68

For tickets and info for either event, visit: eriephil.org



We Need a Little Christmas

AHN Saint Vincent’s 41st Festival of Trees and Festival After Dark

BEGINNING FRIDAY, NOV. 28

Last year, Emily Vommaro, director of Children’s Miracle Network at AHN Saint Vincent, was setting up for the 40th annual Festival of Trees in a real-life snow globe, but due to the now-famous 2024 Snowmageddon, the event could only stay open six hours.

The 41st edition will continue their tradition of close to 100 decorated trees sponsored by corporations, non-profits, schools, and even the elves at the Erie Reader.

Festival of Trees benefits the Children’s Miracle Network and AHN Saint Vincent Talent Attraction Program. “It’s a great program we have at the hospital where community members can apply to get into the medical field and eventually work at

AHN Saint Vincent,” said Vommaro. In addition to other highlights such as visits with Santa, live reindeer, live entertainment, vendors, the Kringle Academy, and Mrs. Claus’ Kitchen, “the community will vote on their favorite tree – they’ll be given a ticket at the door and then the tree with the most votes will be announced on social media and the news the following week,” she added.

While Vommaro expects more than 10,000 to attend this tree-mendous family-friendly affair, there’s another option Saturday evening: the Festival After Dark, which is open to adults only and benefits the Nursing Education Program of AHN Saint Vincent. This event will feature music by the Cleveland Keys, hors d’oeuvres, tastings of local brews and spirits, vendors, dancing in the gallery of the

trees, and more. Vommaro says, “I really can compare it to a Hallmark movie – it is so much fun and it is magical.” All of that holiday magic couldn’t be possible without volunteers or sponsors, so those interested in fulfilling either need can reach out to svdevelopment@ahn.org – Gretchen Gallagher Durney

Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier // \$10 adults, \$8 for children (children under 2 are free) // For more info: supportahn.org/festival

Festival After Dark: Saturday, Nov. 29 from 7 to 11 p.m. // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier // \$80 (purchase tickets before Nov. 14) // For more info: supportahn.org/festival



The annual AAN Festival of the Trees will light up the Bayfront Convention Center – hoping to make this year’s celebration bigger and better than ever.

Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre Brings Holiday Magic with The Nutcracker

Yuletide tradition continues at Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center

PREMIERING SATURDAY, NOV. 29

From the iconic Sugar Plum Fairy score to toddlers in cheese hats, *The Nutcracker* performed by the Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre has become a cherished Erie holiday tradition.

The Nutcracker is one of the most well-known ballets, filled with holiday whimsy and nostalgic wonder. Artistic Director Sarah Purvis, who has led the show since its 2015 debut, guides 106 dancers in a performance she calls a “Christmas card for the community.”

This year’s production holds special meaning for the Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre. Last year, *The Nutcracker* opened on Thanksgiving, as the historic snowmageddon storm swept into Erie, burying the city under a week-long blanket of snow.

“We were able to have the show go on in a modified version, but we didn’t have our sets or our live orchestra. That’s why this year feels so special,” Purvis recalled. For her, the performance is a true labor of love: every costume is handmade by a team of local seamstresses, supported by a devoted crew, and volun-

teers who bring the production to life. For Traci Teudhope (Erie News Now morning anchor and 40 Under 40 Class of 2021), *The Nutcracker* is a family tradition. All four of her children, ages three to 13, are in this year’s production. She’ll share the stage with her oldest son, performing the role of the Favorite Aunt. “We’ve been involved for years, and it’s truly something special,” she said.

This year, the ballet is partnering with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Erie County. Purvis connected with NAMI after witnessing the impact of last winter’s challenges on her company. During intermission, a representative from NAMI will share information about mental health awareness.

“It’s a wonderful tradition to give back to the community. It’s also a time for everyone to pause, support our local dance company, and enjoy the beauty of the season,” Teudhope said. – Julia Carden

Saturday, Nov. 29 at 7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 30 at 2 p.m. // \$20-\$50 // Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // For more info visit: miac.universitytickets.com



The Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre is planning their annual performance of *The Nutcracker*, a holiday tradition for many local families to either attend or perform in, at Mercyhurst University’s Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center.

Erie Reader Book Club: November 2025

Home for the Bewildered by Michelle Tobin

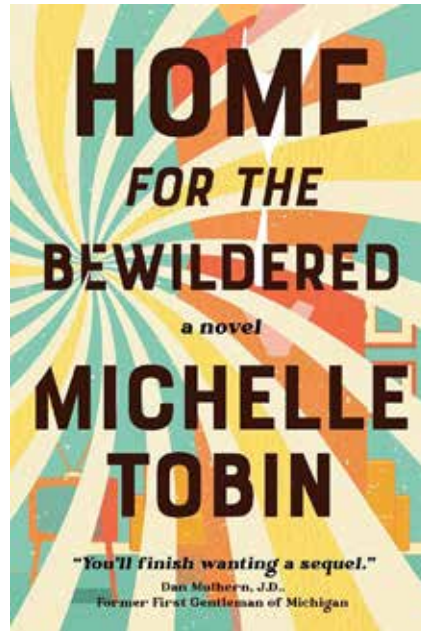
SUNDAY, NOV. 30

The Erie Reader Book Club will be reading and discussing the novel *Home for the Bewildered* by local author Michelle Tobin in correspondence with the Shop Local Erie Reader issue.

Our city is incredibly lucky to be home to many talented writers who offer unique perspectives and narratives. In choosing a book to correspond with the Shop Local issue, Michelle Tobin's novel stood out as a clear winner, as voted upon by members in attendance at our last meeting.

Taking place in 1974, amidst changing public attitudes about caring for those with mental illness which results in the closure of asylums nationwide, Dr. Dorothy Morrissey becomes the first female psychologist at St. Lawrence Asylum in Lansing, Michigan.

Dorothy finds that her patients mirror her emotional issues as she's drawn into their lives – from a man with bipolar disorder that leads to impulsiveness and attention-seeking behavior to a woman's postpartum psychiatric break to those suffering other traumas, Dorothy focuses on helping her patients to avoid her own past traumas. A competent and thoughtful doctor, Dorothy has no issues addressing her patients' traumas – but will she be able to face her own?



"As a mental health professional, I know the world doesn't need yet another novel about mental illness that portrays therapists as ineffective or out of touch," says Tobin, who has practiced as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for more than 20 years. "That's why I felt the need to write about a flawed yet effective therapist – therapy is complex, which is exactly what you'll see in *Home for the Bewildered*." –Ally Kutz

1 p.m. // Werner Books and Coffee, 2608 Liberty St. // Free to join, cost of book not included // For more info: wernerbooks.com

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Teenage Warhead

Fascists, Go Home!

Self-released



If you've missed the latest from Erie's Teenage Warhead, we don't blame you. Since the project's debut on Bandcamp in October of 2023, there have been 160 other tracks released by the artist, and that's *not* counting this new full-length album. Chaotic, intellectual, and often strangely beautiful, this latest collection is a perfect starting point for newcomers. Envisioned as a fundraiser for the ACLU by local musician and business owner Elliot Smith (not to be confused with the late legendary songwriter), *Fascists, Go Home!* showcases a new breed of protest music. Drenched in absurdity while still being rooted in honesty and urgency, this record parallels our current reality of inflatable, costumed frogs de-escalating demonstrations. As iconoclastic as one can possibly be, Smith is telling his story the way he wants to, willing to experiment with electronic sounds and literate lyrics and obscure reference points. Playing with jaunty sequenced synths, vocoders, and midtempo programmed percussion, Smith combines those with his off-the-cuff vocal delivery for a sound that's refreshingly difficult to pin down. Perhaps the closest point of musical comparison would be 1990s Beck – which in itself feels ludicrous. Fans of smart weirdness will be able to relish this upcoming release fervently. With songs rarely reaching two minutes the 13 tracks go by fast, a welcome fever dream with a mission. – Nick Warren



Brian the Fly

Messengers

Self-released



Sometimes great art is made during the tough times of life, and thankfully, sometimes it's not. By his own estimation, Brian the Fly (aka Erie County's Brian Kinney) is doing pretty darn well. "I knew I wanted some more earthy, natural tones compared to my previous albums," he said. Focusing on the acoustic guitar as the base for most songs, he "wanted to write less about personal things because I was in a really good place in life and was sick of writing woe-is-me type songs – my specialty." He joked that "of course a couple self-pity songs made it on, but what are ya gonna do?" Recorded right on the heels of *Night Light* (released in April of 2025), Kinney found the bones of this album during a flurry of inspiration this year. While its predecessor found success in dark grooves, this effort is much brighter by design – the veritable "good twin" of the pair. Perfect for fans of Beach Fossils or early Wild Nothing, *Messengers* crafts lovely tones full of guitar chimes layered below Kinney's wafting vocals. Thematically tied together, the album centers around "messages you receive from the unknown," Kinney explained, clarifying that they could "be the afterlife, the universe, or from within. At the time, it seemed like I was getting a lot of helpful answers at the exact moment I needed them." Seeing the album as a way to send messages to his own younger self, Kinney baked them into the album. Gorgeous and accessible, those messages ring loud and true. – Nick Warren



The Last Dinner Party

From the Pyre

Island Records



The second offering from The Last Dinner Party showcases subtle improvements from their debut. If you followed rock acts at all in 2024, you likely encountered the British five-piece, who released their James Ford-produced debut album *Prelude to Ecstasy* that February to both commercial and critical acclaim. That project's refreshing blend of baroque instrumentation with modern art rock sensibilities, along with the group's Victorian-inspired aesthetics, made the quintet one to watch. This October, the band returned with their sophomore effort *From the Pyre*. Produced by Markus Dravs, the album is another helping of The Last Dinner Party's stylized art rock – however, there are notable alternations to the band's sound. Outside of the producer change, *From the Pyre* offers greater bombast, reflecting a theatrical quality that felt subdued on their prior effort. Songs such as "This Is the Killer Speaking," "Agnus Dei," and "I Hold Your Anger" guide the listener on these multi-phased musical journeys, showcasing the further development of the band's storytelling capabilities – full pictures instead of brief glimpses. However, there is still need for further refinement. Album closers "The Scythe" and "Inferno" both overstay their sonic welcome, building toward a directionless conclusion and ultimately an unsatisfying ending. While not as cohesive as their debut, The Last Dinner Party still leaves an impression on *From the Pyre*. If they continue honing their approach, the group could be on track for even more acclaim on their next effort. –Nathaniel Clark



Tame Impala

Deadbeat

Columbia Records



Australian musician Kevin Parker, who records as Tame Impala, released his fifth studio album, titled *Deadbeat*. The album features 12 tracks that move fluidly between psychedelic rock and electronica. The record opens with "My Old Ways," an immediate standout with a warm, hypnotic beat. "Dracula" is instantly catchy, with Parker singing, "Run from the sun like Dracula," a nod to Bram Stoker's Gothic novel. The single quickly sank its teeth into listeners, becoming Tame Impala's first entry on the Billboard Hot 100. "See You on Monday (You're Lost)" slows the tempo and strips everything back. Guided by soft piano, it's a moment of calm amid the album's shifting textures. It's the kind of song you could fall asleep to, not from boredom, but peace. Calm doesn't define the entire album, though. A handful of tracks turn from quiet introspection, as Parker experiments with electronic soundscapes. "Ethereal Connection" is a seven-minute techno track that pulses like something you might stumble upon in Creative Commons, or, as one YouTuber put it, "something you'd hear on BBC Radio when another duke dies at Buckingham Palace." Even when Parker explores new territory, the music still sounds unmistakably like Tame Impala. There's a familiar sense of introspection and mix of melancholy that's uniquely his. – Julia Carden



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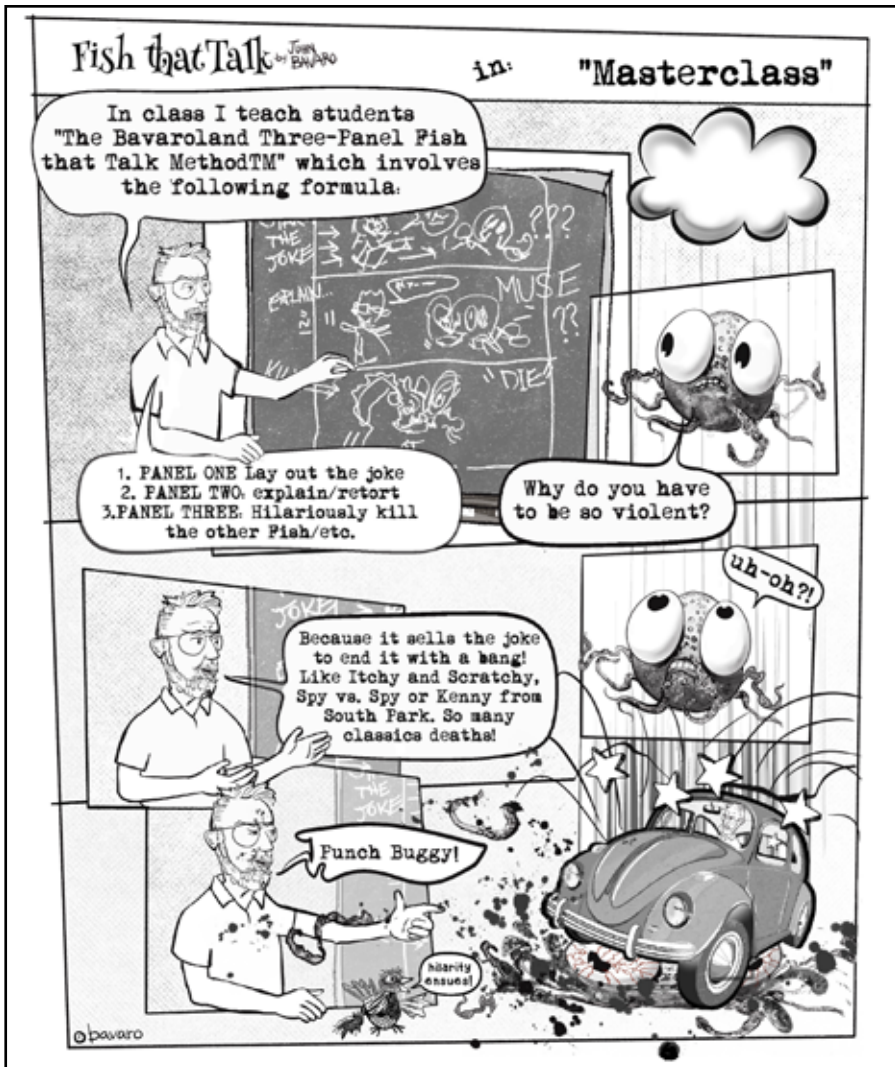
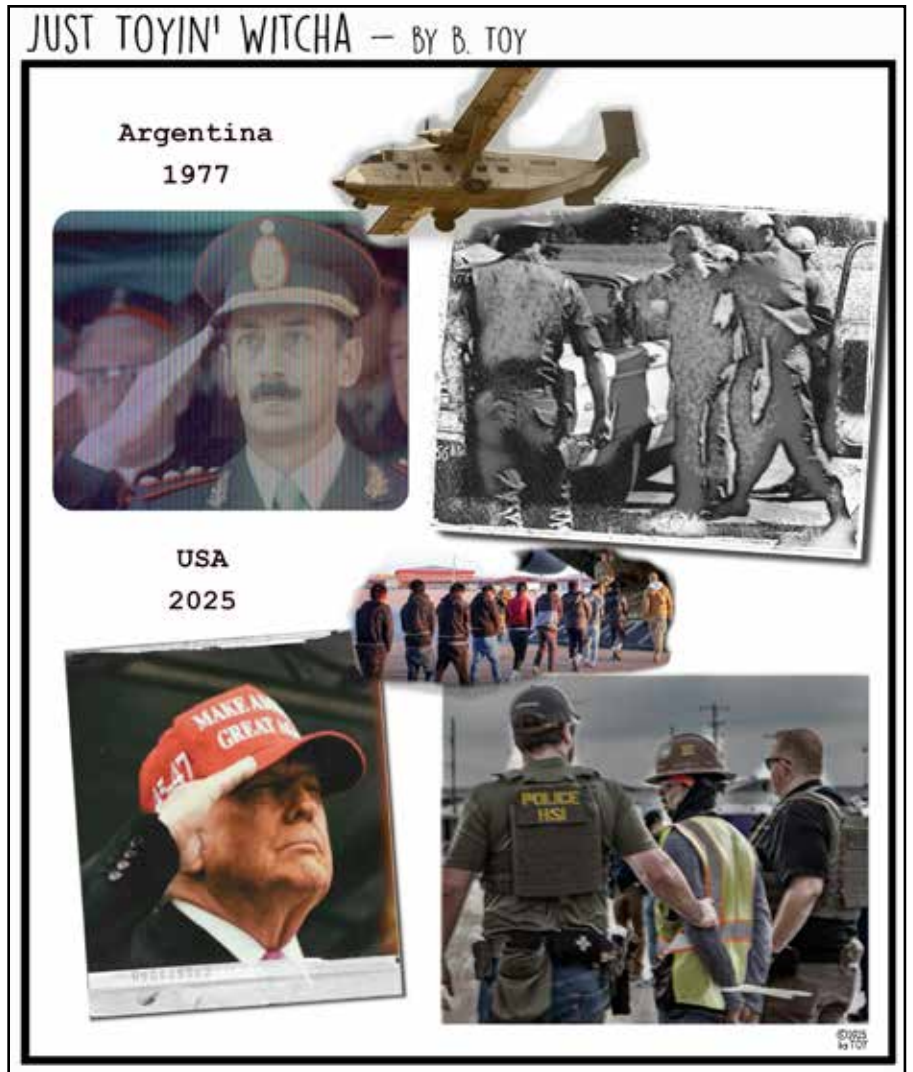


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Bugonia Gets a Little Lost in Translation

Save the Green Planet!



By this point, Yorgos Lanthimos has established himself as one of the strangest mainstream filmmakers working today. The former student of the Greek Weird Wave is famous for absurd storylines and off-kilter directorial flourishes. With that, his newest film *Bugonia* is easily his most straightforward. This English-language remake of a Korean film spends most of its time as a three-character chamber drama with none of the fisheye lenses or unconventional camerawork that have become the director's trademark. The change leaves the story a little underwhelming until it closes with all the bizarre, fantastical elements of its source material.

Teddy (Jess Plemons) and his cousin Don (Aidan Delbis) are in a desperate situation. Teddy's mother is dying after being a test subject for experimental drugs, corporate greed is killing the planet, and the bees are dying at an alarming rate. They blame all of



this on pharmaceutical CEO Michelle Fuller (Emma Stone), whom they kidnap and force to confess that she's an alien being and urge her to make contact with her planet's emperor in the days leading up to a lunar eclipse. While based Jang Joon-hwan's original film *Save the Green Planet!*, Lanthimos' take is much more restrained. That makes the story easier to digest, but it does lose some of the chaotic absurdity of the original. That is, until the climax, when he finally takes the story over the cliff into pure madness. Without spoiling any-

thing, it's a gutsy choice to end the film the way he does, and the snappy dialogue and fantastic performances do much to get us there. *Bugonia* wasn't as weird as I hoped, but that may be perfect for some viewers. – Forest Taylor

Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos // Written by Will Tracy // Based on an original screenplay by Jang Joon-hwan // Starring Emma Stone, Jesse Plemons, Aidan Delbis, Stavros Halkias, and Alicia Silverstone // 118 minutes // Focus Features // Rated R

The Dreadful Place Does So Much on a Micro Budget

A dream within a dream



Films about dreams are always a difficult challenge. Dreams are often chaotic and incomprehensible, so films about them should match that tone while still maintaining enough plot and character to hold audience interest. This is exactly the task that befell local filmmaker Cole Daniel Hills with his psychological horror film *The Dreadful Place*, which was screened at 1020 Collective on Oct. 15. Hills has crafted a film that is surreal and unnerving while carrying the horror with a compelling story and characters. The result combines the best of David Lynch and Charlie Kaufman, and the fact that it was achieved with such a low budget is doubly impressive.

On the anniversary of her father's tragic death, 22-year-old Willow (Keaton McLachlan) finds herself lost in her own life. While her best friend is about to be married, Willow feels stuck in a kind of purgatory. These feelings manifest themselves literal-



ly when Willow becomes trapped in a nightmarish version of her own life, filled with monstrous caricatures of her friends and family who seem to want to take over her body. Willow must now put the pieces together to find a way out before this nightmare consumes her mind. Filmed entirely in Erie, Hills takes familiar places like dinors and theaters and turns them into twisted inversions. He does this with creepy camerawork, ingenious use of sound, and committed performances from his actors. McLachlan does particularly great work as the lone

voice of sanity in this insane world. Like many surrealist films, the story slips a little the more it tries to explain itself, but *The Dreadful Place* contains enough scares and drama to keep audiences intrigued. *The Dreadful Place* is currently available on Amazon Prime and Tubi. – Forest Taylor

Written and directed by Cole Daniel Hills // Starring Keaton McLachlan, Matt Fling, Abigail Fawn, David Olivencia, James Scott Charles Howells, Brittany Hills, Cole Daniel Hills, Ash Carr, Kalli Oberlander, and Erik Brown // 96 Minutes // Unrated

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CROSSWORD

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61					62						63			

- Across
1. Hand-craft?

5. "Get outta here"

10. Burt's Bees target, sometimes

14. A head

15. Justice Kagan

16. Red-wrapped cheese

17. Wee

18. Used an e-cig

19. "Could ___ ... Satan?" (mid-1980s "SNL" catchphrase)

20. "First, a favorable lottery ticket would be nice ..."

23. Organ with a hammer

24. Words before "the world on a string," in a song

25. "Next, I'd like something hand-written ..."

31. ___ Sophia (Istanbul landmark)

32. Secret competitor

33. Tennis feat

36. Measure of land

37. Kenneth ___, theater critic and co-writer of "Oh! Calcutta!"

38. Shortstop great Vizquel

39. Boot point

40. Media attention

41. Best Picture of 2024

42. "A little later, I'd like my own aviary ..."

44. Lunar stages

47. Highway warning sign, for short

48. "And further down my list, a beautiful panoramic view"

55. Gillette razor option

56. Dentist's directive

57. "Banana Boat Song" refrain

58. Arena level

59. HBO series set in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

60. "___ three ships ..."

61. Staircase part

62. More offbeat

63. Calligrapher's supply
- Down

1. Free version

2. Pour down

3. Dermatology concern

4. Some formal wear

5. ___ tire damage (warning sign topic)

6. Acknowledge the performers

7. Defaulter's risk

8. Over again

9. Arrived, but barely

10. Songwriting partner of Stoller

11. Suitcase label

12. Literature Nobel

13. Refine, as ore

21. Funny response

22. Road-tripped, in a way

25. "Um, [points to an item out of range]"

26. Site of Baylor University

27. Fiend of fairy tales

28. Blanket

29. Physicist Mach

30. Litter

33. Love, in Lima

34. King or queen

35. Times for Swifties?

37. Gives for safekeeping

38. Bowlful at a party

40. Frost or Pound, e.g.

41. Not just ready and willing?

42. Musical neighbor of G

43. Artist known for tessellations

44. Fuel sources

45. "Now play!"

46. Say "My sentiments exactly!"

49. Like some water or time

50. Looked over

51. "My sentiments exactly!"

52. Facility

53. Director Coogler

54. Cries of pain



Answers to last puzzle

C	R	A	B		J	U	D	D		R	I	P	U	P
M	I	L	A		O	R	E	O		O	N	E	T	O
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I	N	U			S	P	I	E	L		J	O	H	N
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E	L	E	C	T		D	I	V	E		I	N	A	N
D	A	L	E	Y		S	T	A	R		X	E	N	A



Welcome to the brand new Best of Erie 2025! We want to hear from you, our Reader readers, about what is the latest and greatest in Erie. Whether it's Best Restaurant, Best Doctor, or even Best Dog Groomer, we want to hear what people, places, and businesses make Erie so unique to YOU.

We're completely revamping and relaunching our Best of Erie voting for 2025! We've streamlined and updated the process to make it easier to vote and make your business more visible to the community.

IMPORTANT DATES: Best of Erie will be taking write-in Nominations from **Monday, Oct. 20** to **Friday, Nov. 14**. After that, we'll tally the top five nominees and move into the final voting phase!

PLEASE NOTE: Only the top FIVE nominees will make the final voting ballot! This is different from the way Best of Erie voting has been in previous years.

Best of Erie FINAL voting will start on **Monday, Nov. 17**. Voters will choose their favorite from the maximum of FIVE multiple choice options before voting closes **Monday, Dec. 15**. We'll tabulate the results and announce the winners on **Thursday, Jan. 15**.

PLEASE NOTE: There is a 24-48 hour moderating period before any nomination appears on the public list.

Best of Erie will be taking write-in Nominations until Friday, November 14