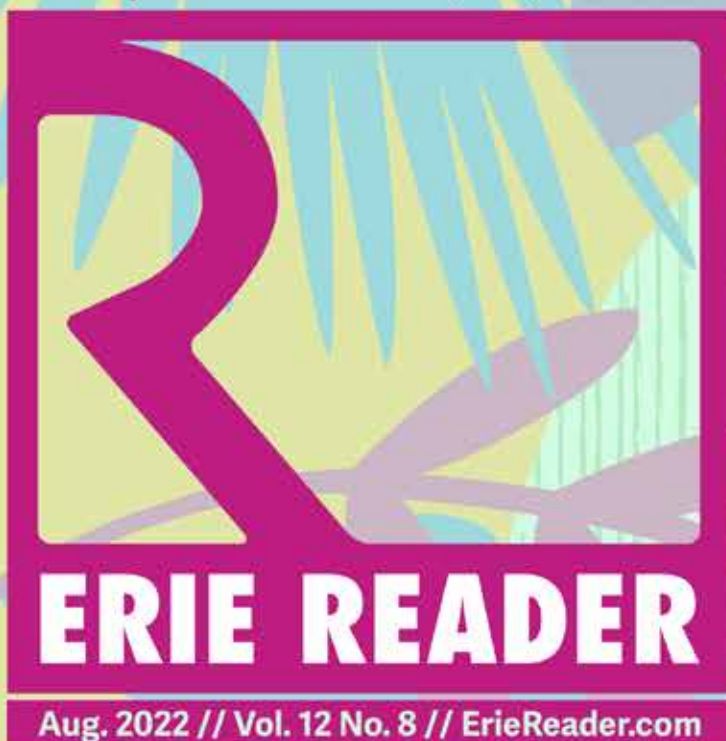


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From the Editors

What gives? A few words from your favorite ‘sidewalk drop’

To all our readers and advertisers: Thanks for continuing to stoop to our level. We apologize if we’ve caused you any undue strain over these past 12 years. It was only ever our intention to get on *your* level — to see things from your points of view, from within your neighborhoods and businesses, to understand and defend and advocate.

The fact of the matter is we look up to you. We know we’re “not a real newspaper” (U.S. Representative Mike Kelly said so, so it must be true) with “no circulation” and “no subscriptions,” so it means a lot to us that you’d still pick us up off the sidewalk regardless.

That same place, by the way, where print journalism has been making a living since the very beginning — at ground level, within the community, approachable and accessible. And where, at least as far as the City of Erie is concerned, Congressman Kelly has seldom been seen during his 12 years in office, despite it being the largest popu-

lation center in his 16th District. We are *exactly* where we should be, and so are the small, local businesses who — as Kelly so condescendingly pointed out — “foolishly” advertise within these pages. We believe that what we lack in glossy print and cologne samples we more than make up for in outreach, and a connection with our readership that as Erie’s only locally owned independent media outlet we are uniquely positioned (and duty-obligated) to maintain.

“Distractions” like Congressman Kelly’s frivolous lawsuit threats (in response to Jim Wertz’s Erie At Large opinion column, “A Congressman and a State Senator Walk Into a Bar”) only serve to take our focus away from more important matters at hand.

Like giving back. Although it’s something we should make a habit of throughout the year, Erie Gives Day is one of the best and most impactful places to start. The Erie Community Foundation’s annual online charity



drive is *the* marquee event for local philanthropy, raising millions upon millions of dollars for area nonprofits over the past 12 years and counting. Log onto eriegives.org between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 9 and support the causes you care most about.

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stores, cafes and restaurants, public marketplaces, online at eriereader.com, and perhaps even splayed open on the nearest sidewalk (if we switch to an “unlatched briefcase in a wind tunnel” distribution model, we’ll let you know) — as we continue to invest in sharing in our community’s stories and in its future.



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Erie at Large: True Patriotism

As extremism escalates, balancing state legislature of the essence

By: Jim Wertz

If you're not familiar with something called the Independent State Legislature Theory, it's time to get acquainted.

That's because the U.S. Supreme Court is poised to hear an argument from the state of North Carolina that, if affirmed by the Court, could make it easier for the Republican secessionists in the Pennsylvania General Assembly to carry out their insidious plan to overthrow elections that don't go their way.

There's only one remedy: to reduce the Republican majority that has controlled the state house for all but four years since 1995 and unseat the Republican majority that has controlled the state senate uninterrupted since 1994. They have turned on the voters of Pennsylvania and turned what was once a conservative agenda into an anti-democratic assault, right here, in the cradle of American democracy.

Independent State Legislature Theory

The Independent State Legislature Theory, in its most simple form, dictates that a state court — like the Pennsylvania Supreme Court — doesn't have the power to overturn election policy set by the legislature. According to the doctrine, that power would be reserved only for the federal courts.

It's rooted in the language of the U.S. Constitution, specifically Article 1 Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution — the Elections Clause — and Article 2 Section 1 — the Presidential Electors Clause, which in both cases assigns the "Legislature" specific duties in federal elections.

Legal scholars generally concur that the use of the term "Legislature" by the founding fathers, referred to a state's general lawmaking process, not the lawmaking body.

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed with this distinction as recently as 2015 when it ruled against the Arizona legislature and affirmed that Arizona's independent redistricting commission had the power to draw congressional and legislative maps.

But later this year, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments related to a congressional and legislative re-

districting challenge in North Carolina. Voters there sued the state legislature because, they argued, lawmakers created a partisan gerrymander that unfairly favored Republican candidates. The state supreme court agreed and ordered a lower court to oversee redrawing of the legislative maps. North Carolina legislators appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court based on the independent state legislature argument, and the Court agreed to hear the case.

Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, and Neil Gorsuch have signaled their support for this doctrine in previous decisions, making necessary just two of the three remaining conservative justices to join them in creating an electoral authority within the states with no effective checks and balances.

As you might imagine, that raises questions even bigger, and more consequential, than gerrymandering.

Let's say, for example, that a state legislature wanted to reject the outcome of a presidential election and submit its own slate of electors. (That would never happen, right?) State courts, which are essentially tasked with ensuring that state laws — including election laws — don't violate state or federal constitutions, would not be able to intervene. Any objection would be pushed to the federal courts where the justices would have to decide if the legislatures had the power to create an otherwise unconstitutional election practice.

If the conservative majority on the Supreme Court sides with North Carolina lawmakers, that's exactly the legal precedent they will have established.

Most respectable legal scholars reject this theory outright because what good could come from a group of elected officials being granted the right to violate the state constitution when it comes to the administration and outcome of federal elections — like a presidential election? But that's precisely what our Republican state legislators here in Pennsylvania would like to do.

It was the impetus behind the *amicus*, or "friend of the Court," brief signed by Senator Dan Laughlin and 24 of his cronies in the 2020 Supreme Court case, *Texas v. Pennsylvania*.



NICK WARREN / ERIE READER

Independent State Legislature Theory dictates that state courts do not have the power to overturn election policy set by the legislature. If enacted, one of the important checks and balances in the Keystone State (and others) would be effectively broken.

They argued that only the legislature — not the governor or secretary of state — has the power to set election policy.

It's the latest step on a slippery slope that would allow the Republican-controlled legislature to issue an "alternative" slate of electors to Congress the next time their candidate doesn't win the presidential election.

A Less Partisan Legislature

The only remedy for the overreach of an "independent legislature" is a balanced General Assembly, and the legislative redistricting approved earlier this year brings us closer than we've been in decades.

Republicans currently occupy 113 of 203 seats in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, according to Ballotpedia.

While the new maps still favor Republican control of the legislature, the Princeton Gerrymandering Project, in an analysis for the Philadelphia Inquirer, estimated that 101 House districts now lean-Democratic.

If the Princeton Gerrymandering Project math holds, Republicans would have a one member advantage in the House.

Redistricting in Erie County created one heavily Democratic district in the city of Erie (HD-1), two swing districts (HD-2 and HD-3), and one sprawling, heavily Republican district (HD-4). All

but the fourth house district are currently held by incumbent Democrats who are expected to win re-election in November.

Despite the Republican advantage in HD-4 — it's 49.5 percent Republican, 36.5 percent Democrat, and 14 percent Other — this district represents an opportunity for Democrats to pick up an additional seat in the legislature, with the potential for shifting control of the House if they do. As important, if not more so, the race for HD-4 also represents an opportunity to stop another extremist Republican candidate from being seated in the Pennsylvania legislature.

The Democratic candidate is a 33-year-old woman from Corry whose long list of civic accomplishments include being named the volunteer of the year by the Corry Chamber of Commerce and founding the Corry Young Professionals (she was also named to this year's class of Erie's 40 Under 40).

Chelsea Oliver's candidacy is forward-facing, like her experience. She helped design Corry's strategic plan and served as an appointed member of the Corry City Council from August 2020 through December 2021, when she was the city's director of parks and public properties.

She's an ideal candidate in an unsure time.

Her opponent, on the other hand, is

a retired mercenary and aging blues musician who built a political following by perpetuating the Big Lie and denying the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic on social media.

It's a sad story, really. Jake Banta was a Navy Seal and later a military contractor, who could've cut his political teeth in either or any political party with those credentials alone. Then, he built a loyal musical following throughout the region, with his band, playing local bars and music festivals. How Americana.

But since Trump took office in 2016, and subsequently lost the election in 2020, Banta's rhetoric has grown increasingly more extreme, embracing the two plus two equals eight logic of QAnon conspirators.

His greatest hits include stream-of-consciousness rants against COVID vaccines, calls for people to remove their children from schools to protect them from the injustice of masking, and telling his followers to pull their money from the banks because Facebook “hacked billions of accounts.”

He once claimed that “COVID was

invented and patented in America and released in Wuhan tactically” and surmised “after reading months of research” that “[Bill] Gates funded it, [Anthony] Fauci patented it with China, and sent it to Wuhan to be released.”

It didn't take long for the global pandemic to become the scapegoat for the outcomes of the 2020 election.

"The PLAN was to release the virus

The only remedy for the overreach of an “independent legislature” is a balanced General Assembly, and the legislative redistricting approved earlier this year brings us closer than we’ve been in decades.

and implement mail in ballots,” he declared. “THAT is why WE SAW Greg Hayes win his election in traditional voting at the polls, yet later on lose when the ‘mail in ballots’ were counted.” The emphasis is from the original posts.

It's this kind of bastardized logic and arithmetic, perpetuated by millions of self-proclaimed patriots, that led thousands of insurrectionists to

storm the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 in an effort to stop the certification of the 2020 election.

"I don't feel a bit of remorse for Patriots showing up in DC," Banta wrote in a Jan. 11, 2021 Facebook post. "It was a response to aggression on our nation and a stolen election. WE WILL NOT STAND FOR IT."

Banta, with little regard for the mil-

itary veterans who served as Capitol and D.C. police that day, justifies the assault as a necessary result of Trump's loss in the 2020 election, and he punctuates most of his posts with the phrase, "I AM AMERICA."

I assure you, he is not.

Bellwether Battleground

Erie County is often viewed as a bellwether for politics in Pennsylvania. Its

voters are, indeed, divided, but historically pragmatic, voting Democratic at the local level while often splitting their regional and statewide tickets.

But the stakes have become too great to sit idly by as once perceived moderate Republicans embrace extremists at all levels of our local and state government.

Ridge Republicans, who once supported candidates like former Governor Tom Ridge and retired State Senator Jane Earl, should find it increasingly more difficult to vote for the unconscionable and, increasingly, seditious tendencies of their party and its candidates.

The voters of Erie County have an opportunity this year to protect and defend both the Commonwealth and the Constitution.

It is, perhaps, a fleeting opportunity to remind America what patriotism looks like in the cradle of American democracy.

Jim Wertz is a contributing editor and Chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party. He can be reached at jWertz@ErieReader.com and you can follow him on Twitter [@jim_wertz](#).

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, lying on a white bed and smiling down at a baby who is also lying on the bed. The baby is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window or doorway.

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Erie is Cooking Up Something New

Erie's Inclusive Growth: A Playbook for Action provides menu for \$1.1 billion of investment strategies and projects

By Ben Speggen

To better know what something is, sometimes it is best to first understand what it is not. In the case of *Erie's Inclusive Growth: A Playbook for Action*, it is important to recognize it is not another plan.

Bruce Katz and Kim Thomas are each quick to make that point to me on separate Zoom call interviews. Both are well-positioned to know what Erie's "Playbook" both is and can be. And knowing the *who* behind it and in front of it helps to comprehend both the *what* and the *what-comes-next*.

Katz is the founding director of The New Localism Advisors. He is the playbook's architect, along with Florian Schalliol.

Thomas has been hired to direct the investment playbook's "Nerve Center" — a distinctive feature of both the present and future of the playbook, which will provide, as the playbook notes, "day-to-day support to the entities implementing the projects of the Playbook." That is, moving forward from its announcement, there is already infrastructure in place to get identified projects moving along.

Neither Katz nor Thomas are strangers to Erie or this work.

Thomas has worked in media, government, and economic development in Erie. Before heading up the Nerve Center, she served as the director of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's northwest region office, which includes Erie and 12 other counties, for over seven years.

Katz first arrived in Erie to present at the Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit in 2014, discussing his widely praised book "The Metropolitan Revolution," which showcased cities and their successes and the people there driving progress. Katz has remained engaged with Erie over the years, consulting on various projects and ideas, and appearing at additional Global Summits.

For years, a Katzian mantra had been: The federal government is not coming to save you. Or, in other words, towns and cities control their own destinies, and progress happens — or does not —

at the local level.

But then, COVID-19.

At the onset of the global pandemic, Katz asked me to help write an early response to the U.S. federal government's early actions — or inactions — in the wake of a once-in-a-century global crisis. First and foremost, COVID-19 was a global public health crisis. But it was also crippling businesses and creating an economic crisis. In late March 2020, we made the case for why we believed Erie's downtown was "a Proxy for the Nation," arguing that a renaissance a decade in the making ran the risk of being stunted, or, worse, undone, without purposeful immediate government intervention at the federal level — and that many other towns and cities now faced similar situations to Erie's.

The pandemic has, indeed, prompted an unprecedented flow of federal dollars. Beginning during the Trump administration and continuing into the Biden White House, the federal government is deploying trillions of dollars to communities nationwide.

Katz commonly likens the dispersing of funds to a fire hose.

But you don't flood your whole house if only the kitchen and dining room are on fire. This new playbook positions Erie to turn talk — ideas, dreams, wishes, plans — more quickly to action, and action to revitalizing results — a renaissance restored, a better Erie for all by directing the stream of dollars at specific projects.

Erie, like many places, has an archive of plans. Some drill down at the municipal level. Others are scaled to countywide and regional levels. Some are just a few years old. Others drafted decades ago still have relevance today.

Unlike other cities and towns, Erie now has a playbook. The list of those that do is short.

The New Localism Associates and the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University, so far, have created investment playbook toolkits for the downtown of Dayton, Ohio; a health innovation corridor in El Paso; and disadvantaged commercial corridors in Buffalo, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Greensboro, N.C. Next up: the downtown of San Bernardino in the Inland Empire region in Southern California.



CHRIS CARROLL



CHRIS CARROLL

Bruce Katz [top] and Kim Thomas [bottom] are spearheading "Erie's Inclusive Growth: A Playbook for Action," which aims to accelerate Erie's pandemic-disrupted renaissance by directing federal funding to the right projects.

"What we have in Erie is a portfolio of real projects," Katz told me. "It is tangible projects that are costed out, that can raise capital from federal programs, from the state, and from banks, from CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions), and from investors."

Those projects came from studying and reviewing 12 of Erie's past and current plans, and from interviewing some 50 community stakeholders. What's emerged is Erie's playbook, which serves as a "living document."

Think of this as a restaurant with a menu. Thanks to the internet and social media, most restaurants have the ability to advertise their menus to prospective diners before they decide whether to sit down. The menu lists what is served — and by extension, what is not. Diners might be able to modify some dishes — Hold the tomatoes! Add some relish! — while others might come out as-is (you can't take the chocolate out of chocolate

ice cream).

With the menu comes the ability to say more than just "we serve food." Erie, through its playbook, expresses: Here is where we will invest money, how much it will cost, why it matters, and how it stands to improve our community.

To unpack and review the entire menu/playbook is an important thing to do, but not something we will do in-depth here. The living document lives on the Nonprofit Partnership's website, and should be something anyone who cares about Erie's present circumstances and wants a say in its future should review.

Briefly reviewing Erie's menu — err, its playbook — you will find 35 projects that build on identified strengths to address identified weaknesses, focusing on specific types of investments at a total cost of \$1.1 billion. They are both cross-cutting and place-based.

Cross-cutting projects focus on county and regional investment strategies.



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They focus on how to accelerate local infrastructure and quality of life investments; build new clusters of industries in plastics, recycling, advanced manufacturing, and the blue economy; and grow Erie's entrepreneurship through new businesses, especially minority-owned ones.

The place-based projects emphasize investment strategies in the downtown, the bayfront, the 12th Street corridor, and various neighborhoods in Erie's "Greater Core." The argument for targeting Erie's Greater Core is that despite accounting for just 21 percent of the land area of the city of Erie and less than 1 percent of Erie County, the "Greater Core" accounts for one-third of all income earned countywide.

To those who might say that Erie's 35 projects read like a Cheesecake Factory "everything but the kitchen sink" menu, if we're pushing the restaurant analogy as far as it might go, Katz told me "35 projects may not be enough."

To Katz, the magnitude of the moment matters. It is not every day, or every year, or even every 25 years that the federal government does what it is doing.

What it is doing: Making funds available to places. What it is not doing: Making specific plans for places that will use these funds.

"Here's the moment to rise to the occasion, build the capacity in the public and private sectors, the civic community, and get these projects done if you want your community to really have a leapfrog effect," Katz said. "So, this is really your choice."

Choice can be seen in Erie's playbook being a "living document." This is where Kim Thomas, and others, come in.

"This is a living document, because it is not every project that there currently is, or that there will be, as we continue to implement this moving forward," Thomas told me. "This was created with a bias toward action."

That action means having projects now fit to investments the federal government has already identified. But it also means, in restaurant-speak, being able to update the menu as the seasons change, and as the public has time to offer more input (maybe don't hold the tomatoes! In addition to chocolate ice cream, can we add pie?).

With Thomas directing the Nerve Center, a steering committee is overseeing the execution of the playbook

and providing guidance and oversight to local organizations implementing projects. The committee includes local government (both the county executive, Brenton Davis, and Joe Schember, the mayor of the city of Erie), the Erie Community Foundation (Karen Bilowith), the Jefferson Educational Society (Ferki Ferati), the Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership (James Grunke), Erie County DEI Commission (Gary Lee), Erie Insurance (Chris Marsh), and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (Perry Wood).

The steering committee and Thomas are developing the third element in the playbook's structure: Delivery Teams. These teams will conduct additional research and planning for exploratory projects from the playbook. Because the work is ongoing, the community's input will breathe life into the playbook's future.

"This playbook is Erie organizing for success, it's organizing for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring a disproportionate amount of investment to the people who live and work here," Thomas said. "It's our time. I've asked people along the way, as we've been launching this, to believe that Erie can be successful in this, to believe that Erie can be a poster child for a positive movement. This is our opportunity. The federal government is releasing trillions of dollars. Why can't we bring a significant amount of that here like we never have before?"

If not now, when? And if not in Erie, why not?

Those questions — and which projects move forward, which new ones are added — are already playing out, and will continue to play out, in Erie. How they are answered, and when, depend on who sits down at the table. Right now, reservations are open.

And with Erie being among the first places to organize such a document, and to take action on it, other people in other places will likely look to Northwestern Pennsylvania to see that this is the model for the day. Will the Erie recipe for success be franchised? All of the key ingredients are there.

Ben Speggen can be reached at bSpeggen@ErieReader.com and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpeggen. For the record, the author was among the stakeholders interviewed by The New Localism Associates.



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Some of our kids here have never had a bicycle of their own. No one ever taught them to ride when they were younger. For Erie Gives this year, our goal is to give these kids the chance to soar across pavement, on miles of improved trails, and in treatment. Your Erie Gives donation makes a direct, immediate difference to the work we can do.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



CREATE. EXPLORE. IMAGINE. PLAY!

The expERIENCE Children's Museum is a place where children and families can race a boat, create a portrait, plant a seed, explore a cave, build a rocket, and imagine a career. The Children's Museum has a record of serving Erie and surrounding communities through its engaging exhibits and highly interactive hands-on learning for 26 years and counting.



Since opening in 1995, the Children's Museum has grown into a significant community asset annually receiving 64,000 visits and reaching 12,000 children and families through the Mobile Museum with focus on underserved communities – and we're growing!

The Children's Museum is emerging towards a larger facility which will expand the accessibility of STEAM knowledge and experience to all Erie children and beyond, contribute to the growing downtown as a city core, and serve as a community hub where children and their families from diverse backgrounds interact, share, and get to know each other.

Please consider a donation to the Children's Museum during Erie Gives 2022 and help the Children's Museum build a new space to further provide family-centered and inclusive learning experiences where children, families, and their schools come together to create, imagine, and explore!

With 125+ new exhibits inspiring interest in STEAM learning, as well as expansion of the exhibits that are known and loved in the current museum, donations made during Erie Gives 2022 will go towards the exciting growth of the Museum!

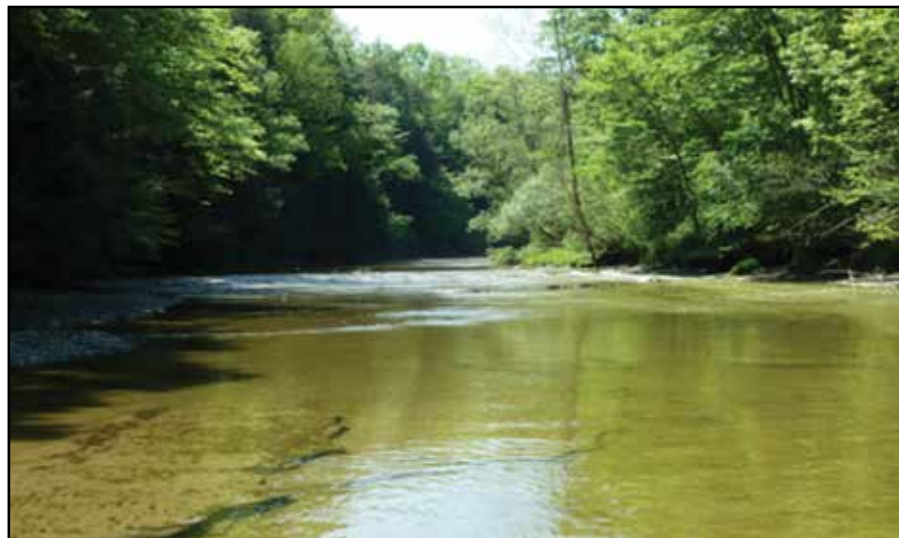
Supporting the Children's Museum through Erie Gives this year is supporting the facility that enables budding friendships. Plus, be named as a contributor to the new museum if you donate \$50 or more!

Support the Friends of the Erie County Library on Erie Gives Day!

AUGUST 9, 2022



Help the Friends fund programs and services for children, teens and adults that enable innovative and engaging opportunities for lifelong learning.



Since the creation of our land trust 21 years ago, the Lake Erie Region Conservancy — with a board of 14 local volunteers — has conserved 26 properties totaling 1,720 acres within Pennsylvania's Lake Erie watershed (roughly the northern half of Erie County). Over 95% of the land and waters we've conserved is open to the general public for hiking, fishing and limited hunting, as well as for the simple pleasure of just enjoying the great outdoors.



Help us continue these efforts through your contribution on Erie Gives Day, August 9th.

Your dollars will go toward permanently conserving our area's woodlands, wetlands and meadows. Help us keep our Lake Erie watershed clean and green. Thank you.



www.lakeerieregionconservancy.org

For the Love of the Game

Baseball in Erie has worldly flavor



LIZ ALLEN

By: Liz Allen

A retired Scotland Yard investigator, a county medical examiner, a forensic lab expert, and a couple of charades players all wind up in the same place, although not at the same time, because baseball (or for the British, cricket) is in their blood.

If I could weave these characters into a book, it would be a tale of mystery and mayhem.

But I'm not a fiction writer, although in my current retiree role as an Erie SeaWolves' usher, I still seek out slice-of-life stories from the kind of "ordinary people" I used to write about in my Sunday newspaper column. Their stories strike happy notes and are always wrapped up with special connections — sometimes fleeting — to Erie.

When I want to read something that uses baseball as a literary device,

I turn to writers like William "Billy" Walsh. Born in nearby Jamestown, N.Y., he spent four years in Fairview as a kid, playing Tri-Boro Baseball and dreaming about making it to the major leagues before his family moved to Dallas and then to Georgia.

Instead of playing professional ball, Walsh became an award-winning poet, the director of Reinhardt University's undergraduate creative writing and MFA programs and now, nearly 40 years after writing the first draft for his book in college, a published novelist.

Lakewood, his novel, is narrated by 19-year-old Robert English, who keeps a journal during the summer of 1973 as he housesits for his history professor at fictional Chautauqua University.

Critics describe *Lakewood* as a poignant coming-of-age novel about young love, simmering grief, and self-discovery, and some compare

Walsh's style to J.D. Salinger's.

Local readers will enjoy Walsh's descriptions of Chautauqua County's environs and the occasional references to Erie.

Baseball fans will delight in Robert's devotion to the Pittsburgh Pirates — a passion shared by Walsh, who still savors his delirious joy when the Bucs won the 1971 World Series.

And bookworms will be impressed that one of Walsh's book-tour stops was at the Pat Conroy Literary Center in Beaufort, S.C., about two months before he visited Erie to speak at the Lincoln Community Center Branch Library in Fairview on July 25.

At the Fairview library, Walsh, 61, read excerpts from *Lakewood* and from *Fly Fishing in Times Square*, one of his seven poetry books.

He also reminisced with former baseball teammate Dan Wingerter and

(left) William Walsh, who lived in Fairview as a youngster, reads from his new novel, *Lakewood*, during a talk at the Lincoln Community Center Branch Library on July 25. The book is set in Chautauqua County. Walsh, a college writing teacher and poet, has a sequel to the novel in the works. (top right) Ron Geer wanted to introduce Henry Stapley, 12, the son of family friends Emma and Neil Stapley, to the American sport of baseball at an Erie SeaWolves' game during the Stapley family's visit to the U.S. from England. (bottom right) Jeff Scarpitti proposed to Donna McGivern, his girlfriend of four years, at a rain-shortened Erie SeaWolves game on July 17. Afterwards, they celebrated their engagement at the Stadium Club, where McGivern showed off her new ring.

Dan's sister, Judy. She reconnected the two friends with her May 2020 Facebook post announcing that Dan, who has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease), was isolated in a rehab hospital during COVID and would welcome the gifts of "prayers, good memories, and bad jokes" from friends.

Indeed, there were grace-filled moments at Walsh's talk as he and the Wingerter family reminisced about old teachers, former neighbors, boyhood pranks, the Bookmobile, their baseball card collections, and pickup games, as Walsh also explained his painstaking writing process, which begins daily at 5:30 a.m. in a comfy chair, coffee in hand.

Walsh started the novel that became *Lakewood* when he was a Georgia State freshman. "This has to be really, really easy," he thought then, until he realized that "I wasn't a mature thinker. I didn't understand human nature." He stuck his 1,500-page manuscript in a drawer, then rediscovered it in the bottom of a cabinet when he was "purging" his personal library during COVID.

"The first 40 pages were just terrible," he said. He rewrote those pages, got positive feedback from a friend, cut about 90 percent of his original story, renamed it, reworked it, edited it, and proofread his work until it became "a poet's novel," he said.

As for why baseball is part of his book and integral to the plot of his life, Walsh explained: "It's magical. It's our American pastime."

Carol Terry, M.D., and Tina Miller share that passion. They and two other friends drove to Erie when they were vacationing in Niagara Falls, to see Erie

play the Akron Rubber Ducks on July 1. Unfortunately, they came into the Stadium Club, where I'm assigned as an usher, just as the game had been rained out. But they were here long enough for me to learn that Terry is the chief medical examiner for Gwinnett County, Ga., where Miller is the county's forensic laboratory manager.

The only investigative service I could provide to them was to recommend some downtown restaurants before their sodden drive back to Niagara Falls.

After a Niagara Falls visit, an Erie baseball game was also on the schedule for Ron and Sheila Geer and their British friends, Neil and Emma Stapley, and their 12-year-old son, Henry Stapley. The English accents charmed me, and during the game and then in a phone interview, Ron explained why they decided to attend a SeaWolves' game on their way to Southern Ohio.

The two families met almost 20 years ago in London when Ron worked for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, Sheila worked for the U.S. Treasury, and Neil worked for Scotland Yard.

During the Geers' nearly 40 years in law enforcement, "We've traveled a lot, certainly to every state and dozens and dozens of countries," he said. But he and Neil often make the same observation: "There's so much in our backyard that we don't always appreciate. We can look at it as special, too."

The friends have vacationed together in St. Pete's Beach, Fla., where the Geers live, and have visited the Western U.S. but this time, they started their "destination holiday" at the Thousand Islands on the St. Lawrence River, north of Sheila's hometown of Syracuse, N.Y.

Their itinerary included Niagara Falls and because they wanted to take Hen-

ry, a cricket player, to a baseball game, they decided to visit Erie on July 15 to see the SeaWolves play the Binghamton Rumble Ponies. "We didn't want to take him to a Major League game. I feel like it doesn't have the same atmosphere as the minors, where kids are playing for their dreams and (fans are) closer to the action," he said. "We started looking for minor league games; we thought, 'We've never been to Erie, we're going to book tickets.'"

Ron, 66, grew up on an Ohio farm, south of Dayton and north of Cincinnati, and rooted for the Reds teams with Frank Robinson and Pete Rose. "The real magic was Crosley Field. You were close to the action and the (uniform) colors were just so sharp and vivid," he said. "For our generation, we were the last to see baseball in its purest form, when players stayed with the same team for their entire career."

There's that word again, magic, to describe baseball's appeal. What could be more magical than making a big romantic gesture at a baseball game?

Donna McGivern, 52, and Jeff Scarpitti, 58, met four years ago when Jeff was cleaning his boat, *My Way*, at Beach 11. Donna, who lives about 100 miles away from Erie in Ohio, sought solace at Presque Isle after putting down her dog Max, a black lab-Cane Corso mix.

"I took a couple of days off to get away," she said.

Jeff, a self-described "car guy," was throwing away garbage when he spotted Donna's car, a two-door black Honda coupe. "Then I saw the girl and I thought, that's a nice girl," he recalled.

Donna continued: "He saw me and asked, 'What are you doing here by yourself?' I gave him my number and we went out a month later."

The director of the health commu-

nications division for Vantage Health Care, Jeff, the father of three, runs three Millcreek Youth Athletic Association baseball programs and remains grateful that Erie SeaWolves President Greg Coleman helped him to arrange a travel team tournament at UPMC Park.

"He let me rent the ballpark out, we stayed in touch, I'd see him at the ballgame and say hello," Jeff said. "I fired off a crazy email one day. 'Greg, I've got this idea. I want to propose (at a game).'"

SeaWolves' staffers arranged for Jeff to pop the question at the July 17 game vs. Binghamton. Then Mother Nature messed things up with a fierce rainstorm in the forecast for early afternoon. The SeaWolves called Jeff: "Hey, we're moving the game up by an hour and 45 minutes," he was told. Now he had to nudge Donna to get ready early.

"Well, we'll go a couple of innings late," said Donna, unaware of the proposal plan. "You know how I am. Baseball is in my blood," Jeff replied. "I really want to be on time for the first pitch."

At the game, the ruse was that the couple would participate in an on-field promotion, a game of charades, between innings. "No, honey, I don't like being the center of attention," she protested. But Jeff prevailed, and she guessed the charades clue, "Will you marry me," answering "yes," all before the game was called as a deluge hit.

The SeaWolves lost the rain-shortened game, but the game proposal was a winning idea for Jeff, because, as it does for so many fans, the game evokes sweet memories of bygone days.

Jeff grew up hearing the story of how his parents met thanks to a baseball game. "My dad was in the Coast Guard and they sent him to a place to watch the waterway of the St. Lawrence River, protecting the shores of the United

States." At the end of a pickup game, Jeff's dad, Ed Scarpitti, spotted "this '55 Chevy, blue and white. She was beautiful," the story goes. So was the girl. "I've gotta go meet her," Jeff's dad said. "That's my sister," his father's crewmate, Tim, told him.

"My mom and dad met at Thousand Islands," Jeff told me.

I'm sure it's sheer coincidence that it's the same gorgeous place steeped in history where the Geers and the Stapleys started their all-American Great Lakes vacation this summer.

It's also just a quirk that Walsh, whose novel *Lakewood* explores the impact of the untimely death of the narrator's young sister on his life, lives in Atlanta, where the medical examiner and the forensic investigator I met at a game also live.

There's nothing eerie about tying their stories into one piece, but there is something very Erie-centric about all of them.

During the baseball game, Ron and 12-year-old Henry Stapley, who plays cricket, chatted with players in the Erie bullpen. They learned that pitcher Chavez Fernander played cricket when he was growing up in the Bahamas. "Hey, do you want a ball?" the player asked Henry. "We didn't have to ask, he just tossed him the ball. It takes you back to when baseball was really America's pastime," said Ron.

Before heading home to England with his parents, Henry also tried his hand at a hot new game of pickleball in the Geers' neighborhood. Naturally, he was wearing his Erie SeaWolves baseball cap.

Liz Allen is savoring the home stretch of the SeaWolves' baseball season. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com



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www.ErieGives.org

August 9 | 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.



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Boro Sweet Spot, located inside Edinboro Market, is a small from scratch bakery. Breads, cookies, cheesecakes, scones, pepperoni rolls, "almost famous" banana bars, and more. Delicious gluten free and vegan options available. Taste what you've been missing.



Live and Learn Farms is a regenerative farm and homestead established in 2013 and located in Edinboro, PA. They produce microgreens, pastured chicken, duck, and goose eggs, fresh cut herbs and flowers, edible flowers, and seasonal produce using the best practices possible.



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BIRDS • PEOPLE • HABITAT



Please Remember Erie Bird Observatory on Erie Gives Day, August 9

Erie Bird Observatory conducts avian research and habitat conservation in Northwestern Pennsylvania and beyond, and offers public programming that brings people and birds together for a better understanding of the natural world.

f Erie Bird Observatory @ Instagram: @bird_Lerie t Twitter: @bird_Lerie

eriebirdobservatory.org



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www.mealsonwheelserie.org



The Erie Reader Gives 2022

Our staff and contributors show local nonprofits their support

Growth potential may have no better analog than the acorn, a tiny nut weighing less than an ounce with all the stuff of a multi-ton oak inside. For centuries, it's been revered by cultures throughout the world as a symbol of promise, perseverance, and strength. Some say it conveys the wisdom of old age and others the vitality of eternal youth. (Surlier folklorists suggest it portends a bump on the head or a dent in your car's roof, but don't mind them).

Regardless, seeing acorn potential through to oaken prosperity takes patience. It's without a doubt a long-term investment, to be nurtured over time and many seasons. Once matured, however, an oak might flourish for generations. Given the same care, communities can thrive in the same way.

That's been the mentality of the Erie Community Foundation since its inception in 1971, with over 800 philanthropic endowments nestled under its wide-reaching administrative canopy. It planted another acorn in 2011 with Erie Gives Day, a 12-hour public charity drive that brought in \$744,444 from 2,770 unique donors to the benefit of 213 local nonprofits.

Fast-forward a decade and it's safe to say we've got a full-fledged tree growing in our backyard. On Erie Gives Day 2021, 10,808 donors (second only to 2020's 11,482) set aside a record \$7,057,176 in gifts — nearly 10 times more than the inaugural event. That's nuts.

You know what would be even nuttier, though? Eclipsing those numbers on Erie Gives Day 2022, which is taking place Tuesday, Aug. 9 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. You'll have the opportunity to donate (a minimum of \$25) to one or more of 434 partnering nonprofits supporting a breadth of causes, with the Erie Community Foundation and sponsors offering a pro-rated match for each contribution.

Think of it as Miracle-Gro for transformative efforts all across Erie County, and you'll understand why we've dedicated so many pages to it over the years (apologies to the non-metaphorical trees). In a continuation of an annual tradition, the Erie Reader staff and contributors will now share with you the nonprofits we'll be supporting this year, and encourage you to follow suit or find others you're passionate about at eriegives.org (with an easily searchable database).

Our Nonprofit Picks

Career and Dreams Inc.

Who's giving: Adam Welsh, Editor-in-Chief

Who they are: Career and Dreams Inc. seeks to “empower at-risk youth, families, and individuals with disabilities by partnering with local businesses and educational entities to create alternative career and educational training programs that enhance regional career opportunities.” Their programs are designed to help underserved members of our community achieve their employment goals, further education opportunities, and even improve personal health and



JESSICA HUNTER

The Erie Community Foundation, located at 459 W. Sixth St., has been hosting Erie Gives Day annually since 2011. Its acorn logo is representative of strength and prosperity over time.

wellness.

Why I'm giving: Sometimes in life all you need is an opportunity. Career and Dreams Inc. aims to do just that, offering alternative educational and apprenticeship programs that include paths into fields such as aviation, culinary arts, law, education, multimedia, even scuba diving. Ensuring that everyone in our community is exposed to such diverse career opportunities as these is something much needed, and something I hope to see continue to grow in the coming years.

Adam previously gave to: Erie Women's Fund, Film Society of Northwest Pennsylvania, Lake Erie Region Conservancy, LifeThruMusic

Community Access Media (CAM Erie)

Who's giving: Nick Warren, Managing Editor

Who they are: Community Access Media, better known by the apt acronym of CAM Erie, says it all in the name. They help give members of the Erie community access to media. Be it via podcast recording, live-streaming, original programming, or special event coverage, CAM Erie is there for those that want to create.

Why I'm giving: Years and years ago, I took training classes at CAM Erie (or, should I say, CATV Erie).

Learning the in-booth editing techniques and getting access to equipment at virtually no cost seemed like a dream. Having been on both sides of the media and the arts, the value is crystal clear. These days, every time I walk into their offices, I'm energized by how far they've come, and the wonderful content they're able to cultivate, from their CAM Jams to the local podcasts that populate my Stitcher feed.

Bonus: Find them filming this year's Blues & Jazz Festival, and tune in Thursday, Oct. 6 for a special performance featuring yours truly.

Nick previously gave to: Erie Latino Leadership Association, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE), Erie Animal Network, Dramashop, and the Performing Arts Collective Alliance (PACA)

Compton's Table, Inc.

Who's giving: Dan Schank, Writer

Who they are: A rapidly-expanding organization that helps queer youth and young adults “find community and resist marginalization,” according to their website. Compton's Table recently took up residence in the PACA building at 15th and State, where it will offer support-group services, host gender-affirming community events, and provide physical resources like clothing, hygiene products, and accessories.

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FEATURE

Why I'm giving: Erie's recent track record on LGBTQIA+ rights is worth celebrating, especially as it relates to the advocacy of Tyler Titus (the organization's founder). Through their work as an educator, activist, and mental health professional, Tyler has cultivated a strong track record of successful community engagement. It's a volatile time for our LGBTQIA+ community, and Compton's Table provides the concrete resources our youth need in a world that often demonizes and diminishes them.

Dan previously gave to: The Erie County Community College of PA, the Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC)

Erie Arts & Culture

Who: Erin Phillips, Writer

Who they are: The local organization both fosters and funds local art projects and artists throughout Erie. Founded in 1960 as the Arts Council of Erie, in recent years especially, they've been responsible for numerous mural projects around the city.

Why I'm giving: One of my family's favorite books to read together is *Extra Yarn* by Mac Barnett. It's about a little girl who lives in a colorless, cold little town. She finds a magical box of bright yarn that never runs out, and after knitting sweaters for everyone in town, she starts to make sweaters for buildings, mailboxes, pickup trucks, etc. At one moment in the book, the author writes: "Things began to change in that little town."

We choose to donate to Erie Arts and Culture for Erie Gives Day because they are doing just that. Through public art and generosity, bit by bit, Erie Arts and Culture is changing our little town. I find myself amazed at how a previously overlooked piece of utility, like a retaining wall or garage doors can be seen as a blank canvas, and then transformed; making a walk to work or school feel like walking through an art gallery. I also feel it is important that my own children and the children of Erie have the opportunity to see that transformative power of art, to see that creativity is something to be valued, and to feel inspired by an artist's vision.

We look forward to many more projects to come from Erie Arts and Culture and are happy to donate to the organization every Erie Gives Day.

Erin previously gave to: Asbury Woods, Our West Bayfront

Erie Police Athletic League (PAL)

Who's giving: Jim Wertz, Contributing Editor

Who they are: The Erie Police Athletic League (PAL) program first began in the 1950s to bridge economic, cultural, and racial divides that framed the day. The PAL program gave kids an opportunity to get off the streets and build relationships with mentors that helped them navigate their lives and to look forward toward opportunities that would have previously gone unrecognized. But these programs waned throughout the United States during the 1970s and 1980s as police department priorities shifted based on operating procedures and funding incentives.

The Erie PAL reemerged in 2015 under the direction of former Erie County Sheriff John Loomis, former

Erie City Police Chief Randy Bowers, and Attorney Ron DiNicola. In the seven years since reorganizing, the program has grown from a few dozen Erie kids and a handful of police officers into a program that served more than 800 kids and 93 participating officers under the leadership of Lt. Tom Lenox.

Why I'm giving: The PAL program participated in more than 300 community policing events in 2021-22, in addition to after school programs at six city elementary schools, three city middle schools, Erie High, Collegiate Academy, and several community centers including the Erie Boys and Girls Club, the St. Martin's Center, and the Eagle's Nest. School year programming often includes Saturday programming as well. When school isn't in session, the Erie PAL runs summer programming including weeklong camps in collaboration with the Erie Boys and Girls Club and Gannon University, a weeklong Junior Police Academy, and field trips including Niagara Falls and the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh. It's an equally invaluable experience for the participating students and the officers who mentor them.

Bonus: In addition to its regular programming, the Erie PAL hosts birthday parties for its participants and last December the Erie PAL delivered Christmas bags with gifts and other family needs — individually door to door — to more than 300 families and PAL students. If you're participating in a conversation about police reform, it should include initiatives like the Erie PAL.

Jim previously gave to: The Urban Erie Economic Development Corporation, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, and the League of Women Voters

Lake Erie Food Rescue

Who's giving: Matt Swanseger, Copy Editor

Who they are: Self-described as the "Uber" of donated food, Lake Erie Food Rescue (LERF) is all about saving what is wasted. LERF enlists "Food Rescue Heroes" to pick up items from partnering donors (grocery stores, restaurants, food wholesalers, etc.) and drop them off at local nonprofits for redistribution to those in need.

Why I'm giving: Have you ever returned from holiday to find your produce drawer an ICU for vegetables in critical condition? Or seen a restaurant table cleared with only a few bites missing from each plate? As both a home chef and a former food service worker, food waste at any scale *bothers* me — whether it's a handful of spring mix or a Santa-sized sackful of sub rolls. Furthermore, food insecurity is one of the greatest existential threats facing us all. I would not toss a chance to help hungry neighbors down the garbage disposal.

Matt previously gave to: The Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA), Erie Together, Bayfront Maritime Center, Asbury Woods, and the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center

Lake Erie Region Conservancy

Who's giving: Jessica Hunter, Photographer; Publishing and New Media Coordinator

Who they are: Lake Erie Region Conservancy

(LERC) is a land trust that was formed in 2000 to identify, conserve, and protect the natural, cultural and historic resources in Pennsylvania's Lake Erie watershed. It was initially formed to preserve the Coho site on the shoreline of Lake Erie, which in 2004 successfully became the 540-acre Erie Bluffs State Park, the first new state park in 25 years. The Elk Creek Access Area, formerly owned by Girard Township, was incorporated into Erie Bluffs in 2009 making the park 587 acres. The park has nearly two miles of frontage on Lake Erie and two-thirds of a mile on Elk Creek.

Why I'm giving: Conserved lands create an enhanced quality of life for our community and everyone benefits. It means more open space for recreation and less stress on the local ecology. In addition, spending time in nature can relieve our own stress and anxiety, improve moods, and boost feelings of happiness and well-being.

Bonus: LERC's mission of protecting open space, providing public access to nature, protecting watersheds, and advocating for a cleaner planet is something that I think we can all get behind. Check out one of LERC's 10 protected lands on your next outdoor adventure!

Jessica previously gave to: Inner-City Neighborhood Art House, NAMI of Erie County, and the Erie Humane Society

McCord Memorial Library

Who's giving: Bryan Toy, Longtime Cartoonist, Writer, and Sometimes Cover Artist

Who they are: Our local library in the town of North East since 1889.

Why I'm giving: When my family first moved to North East, McCord Library became our second home. Nearly every day, as toddlers and preschoolers, the kids would walk with a parent or grandparent over to the library for story time or educational programs. They helped turn my children into lifetime readers. My father and I both volunteered to run workshops in the amazing children's section. When I was in grad school, McCord Library became a quiet place for me to study and use the POWER Library to do research.

Funded mostly from township and borough taxes, which are limited, they rely on individual donations to pay their awesome staff and support their programs. As an independent library operating outside the umbrella of the Erie County Library System, they must show financial backing from local residents in order to maintain state funding.

Bonus: Their annual book sale is second only to the Great American Book Sale. If you are addicted to books like my family is, keep an eye open for it. You can never have too many friends or books!

United Way Imagination Library

Who's giving: Brian Graham, Editor and Publisher

Who they are: Music icon Dolly Parton started the Imagination Library in her home county of Sevier County, Tenn. with the mission to provide free monthly books, delivered in the mail, to every child in the county, regardless of income, from birth until the age of five.



JESSICA HUNTER

Erie Arts and Culture funding is responsible for many beautification and mural projects throughout the city. This example, found at West 11th Street and Weschler Avenue, was painted by artist Nicole Salgar with assistance from Precious Thompson, Sarah Howard, Katherine Peters, and Raina Harden.

In 2000 Dolly took the idea nationwide, making the program available to any community with a local partner, and in 2013 United Way became that local partner for Erie County.

Why I'm giving: Soon after my daughter was born we signed her up for the Imagination Library. Every month we looked forward to the surprise in the mail. On the day it arrived we would say "Dolly sent us a new book!" and we would either read it right away or save it for bedtime. Old classics like *The Little Engine That Could* and modern classics like *Hair Love* were a delight to read. There was even one book written by Dolly herself: *I Am a Rainbow*.

Shortly after her fifth birthday, we received the final book and a letter from Dolly congratulating her on completing the program. I'm not afraid to say I got a little choked up thinking back on the many stories we shared over her first five years.

A love of books and a bulging bookshelf are just a couple of the benefits of signing up for this awesome free program. Erie's Imagination library is funded 100 percent by United Way of Erie County, and that's why I'm donating to the United Way Imagination Library this Erie Gives Day.

Brian previously gave to: Friends of the Erie County Library, Meals on Wheels, Hooked on Books, Because You Care

Urban Erie Community Development Corp.

Who's giving: Liz Allen, Writer and Erie City Council President

Who they are: UECD serves young people, including many New Americans, with free programming, including career counseling, cultural opportunities, community events and English as a Second Language and GED classes, to name just a few of its offerings.

Why I'm giving: I have known about the good work done by UECD, under the leadership of Director Gary Horton, his staff, and their volunteers, for many years and have always been impressed by the annual Walking in Black History field trip that gives youngsters the chance to visit the places and learn about key leaders in the civil rights movement. In recent years, these young people have made it their mission to speak up at Erie City Council meetings about important issues in our community. I always learn something new from their presentations and requests.

I also will continue to give to other organizations caring for people in need in Erie and helping to transform our community, including the Eagle's Nest Leadership Corp., the SSJ Neighborhood Network, the Mercy Center for Women and Emmaus Ministries, along with several other nonprofits. The Urban Erie Community Development Corp. is housed at the E.F. Smith Quality of Life Learning Center, 2046 E. 19th St. Visit uecdc.org to learn more.

Liz previously gave to: All Aboard Erie, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

"Previously given" notes only reflect write-ups that appeared prior in the Erie Reader.



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Reaping What We Sow: Preserving the Historic Barns of Erie

Local nonprofit draws attention to fading agricultural heritage

By: Erin Phillips

When one thinks of Erie's historic architecture, the first buildings that come to mind are usually ornate and awe-inspiring mansions, churches, or museums. But in reality, some of the oldest structures that exist in Erie County are its barns, which are oftentimes older than the homes on the same property, and can tell a vibrant history of early immigrant culture and agricultural heritage through their style and structure.

According to the latest survey (done in 2017), Erie County is still home to over 1,100 farms and has, more than most counties in America, been able to sustain some amount of agricultural success, largely due to the grapes and cherries of North East and Harborcreek. But those abundant small family farms of yesterday, with historic barns on the property, are being lost at a fierce rate. When barns no longer have a functional use, their size makes repairs extremely costly, then those barns start to crumble beyond repair and are lost to history.

Local nonprofit group Preservation Erie has decided to call some much needed attention to the preservation of our agricultural heritage and the rural architectural history of Erie County for their upcoming event: the organization's 10th annual Greater Erie Awards being held Thursday, Aug. 18. These awards aim to highlight the most impressive preservation projects, as well as the best examples of adaptive reuse or preservation advocacy happening throughout Erie County.

While historically the event was city-centric, taking place in the Masonic Temple's ballroom in the heart of Downtown Erie, this year the organization has decided to expand their reach into the county. It will be held in the 1860s historic barn and homestead at Mound Grove Golf Course in Waterford, with the event's theme built around that location.

Committee chair and local historian Michael Fuhrman speaks to the group's choice to focus on barn preservation for this event: "It's often said that the railroad built America during the late 19th and early 20th century. But that's only partially true. What is often unrecognized was the key role of the farm and the barn which produced and stored the food that was shipped on those rail carts to the exploding cities like Chicago, Cleveland, and Buffalo. Once the backbone of American economic success, the family farm and its barn are fading quickly from the American landscape. I can't think of a better use of Preservation Erie's effort and time than to bring the much needed recognition and awareness to the family farm and particularly to the barns of Erie County."

There are many distinct architectural styles of barns and Erie is actually home to a number of those examples, all in various stages of repair. These barn styles happen to be conveniently listed by style and address on the website eriebuildings.info, which is a county-wide survey completed by Preservation Erie in 2014. Most often the style in which the barn was built is in-



DAVID NELSON

Photograph from *The Barns of Erie County* by David Nelson. Nelson completed a huge photographic preservation project with his book, documenting the disappearing barns of Erie County. (Shared with artist's consent).

dicative of the country of origin of the family building it. These range in style from Standard German Barns, Dutch Gable Entry barns, English Bank barns, etc.

Preservation Erie plans to discuss these different types of barns and their contribution to Erie's rural landscape by hosting two different barn aficionados to speak at the Greater Erie Awards event on Aug. 18. One is David Nelson, a local photographer who recently published his photographic barn chronicle *The Barns of Erie County*. The second is barn and house historian Gregory Huber, author of the book *The Historic Barns of Southeastern Pennsylvania*, who will be giving the keynote address. Both men are passionate about barns and their preservation, and their knowledge and genuine excitement about historic barns is inspiring.

When Nelson was in high school he delivered janitorial supplies for his father's business, which took him on long drives all over rural Erie County. "As I drove the van through the countryside, I marveled at the beauty of the idyllic country scenes and the amazing barns that had been built around the turn of the century." After leaving Erie for many years and traveling all around the country, Nelson realized that there was no place quite like home and, some 35 years later, decided to return only to find that many of the idyllic farms he had admired in his youth were now gone.

It was then that he and his wife, Marilyn, decided that the only preservation hope that many of these dwindling barns had left was documentation. "We constantly found ourselves saddened by the loss of another barn and decided that the best thing we could do was to try and at least get some documentation photo-

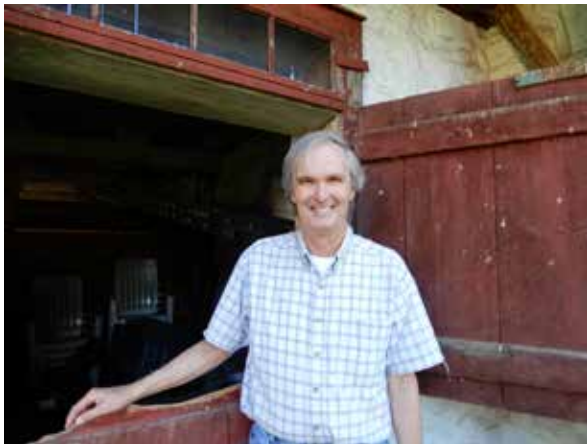
graphically of the barns that were still standing." And what they ended up capturing, after going through the county very methodically, is a remarkable, artistic, and thorough photo-documentation of most of the existing barns of Erie County. And even now, a mere five years after the book has been published, a photograph is all that remains of many of those historic barns.

Gregory Huber agrees. "Because the upkeep and renovation of so many historic buildings are so prohibitive, the very least we can and should do to safeguard them is to record them. This should form a very high priority in any area or any county." Huber was also inspired to care about barns at a young age and his massive tome, *The Historic Barns of Southeastern Pennsylvania*, is a definitive guide to understanding how the architecture of a barn tells its origin story.

In addition to privately owned barns, there are a number of historic barns in Erie County that one can see up close, and while most of these are no longer functioning in an agricultural capacity, they are being reused for educational, commercial, or artistic ventures. Some examples include:

- **Goodell Gardens and Homestead** in Edinboro (who was awarded a Preservation Erie Greater Erie Award in 2020 for their bank barn restoration), which has multiple historic barns on their property.
- **Asbury Woods** maintains their 1928 Browns Farm barn.
- **Port Farms** in Waterford has a multi-generational barn and homestead that they rent out for special events.

ERIN PHILLIPS



Gregory Huber, barn historian and author of *The Historic Barns of Southeast Pennsylvania*, will be sharing his knowledge of barn architecture and preservation as the Keynote speaker during the Greater Erie Awards event.

- **Grounded Print Shop**, located at 19th and Cherry, has a Civil War era barn on the property that has somehow survived all these years in an urban setting.
- The former **Sprague Farm and Brew Works** in Venango and the **Riverside Brewing Company** in Cambridge Springs have both reused historic barns for their businesses.

Among these restored barns in Erie County is the 1860s barn and homestead at **Mound Grove Golf**

Course, Restaurant and Bar, in Waterford, where Preservation Erie will hold their event.

Mound Grove's barn and homestead were named and built by Jesse Coover, who was born in 1814 and lived until the ripe old age of 90. When Jesse was young, he left Greene Township, went to Louisiana and married his wife, Sophianna. When he returned to his family's land just prior to the Civil War, he had a grand home built on the property in the style of those elegant Southern homes he grew to love, which still stands majestically on Mound Grove's property today. Around the turn of the 20th century, Mound Grove was purchased by Peter Biebel and the Biebel family descendants still own and maintain the property today. The owners and staff are very excited to help Preservation Erie bring some attention to the history of Erie's barns, to show off their beautifully preserved barn and the very same elegant Southern style home that was built by Jesse Coover so long ago, which has been lovingly cared for through the years. After the awards ceremony, the house will be open to attendees for self-guided tours.

Events like the Greater Erie Awards are helpful for focusing positive attention on those doing the work to keep the historic structures of Erie standing for generations to come, much like the Biebel family has done for the historic homestead of Mound Grove. Preservation Erie's board president, Melinda Meyer, reflects on their importance: "Our built environment

is changing so quickly, it's easy to focus attention on the buildings and special places we've lost. The Greater Erie Awards is an opportunity to celebrate the preservation success stories happening across the county: stories created by ordinary people who see the value and beauty in old buildings and invest their own time and money to keep them thriving, active places for the benefit of Greater Erie."

Please join the board of Preservation Erie for their 10th Annual Greater Erie Awards to celebrate some exceptional local preservation projects, along with David Nelson and Gregory Huber, who will both be speaking at the event as well as signing and selling their books. Mound Grove Golf Course, 10760 Donation Road in Waterford, on Thursday, Aug.18 at 5:30 p.m. Ticket information is available at preservationerie.org or by emailing info@preservationerie.org

And, as always, please remember Preservation Erie on Erie Gives Day on Aug. 9, 2022 to help them carry on their mission of preserving the built history of Erie.

Erin Phillips runs the Instagram @olderieonfoot, an in-depth look at local architecture "by foot, stroller, papoose, bike, and occasionally minivan."

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August 9, 2022



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Clarence Darrow: An Unapologetic Pessimist's Search for Truth

Legendary defense attorney for Leopold and Loeb, Scopes "Monkey" Trial was Allegheny alumnus

By: Jonathan Burdick

Clarence Darrow was a complicated man. He was both gruff and charismatic. He could be combative and difficult, yet was playful and witty. He was principled, but could be inconsistent. Central to his very existence was empathy and idealism; however he was consistently doubtful and cynical and *intensely* pessimistic — so much so that he gave public lectures defending pessimism.

His worldview didn't soften as he aged. "It's a pretty silly world, from wherever you look at it," he said near the end of his life. "If I were a young man, with life ahead of me, I think I'd chuck it all. The odds are too great against you."

That life for Darrow began in 1857 in Kinsman, Ohio, a quiet country village of about 400 near modern-day Pymatuning State Park. His parents, Amirus and Emily, had married and moved to Meadville, Pa. where his father attended Allegheny College with theological aspirations. After graduating, they moved back to Kinsman where Amirus made furniture and served as the village undertaker. They had eight children, the fifth being Clarence.

About an hour's drive from Erie still stands the octagon-shaped house that the Darrows called home. Clarence remembered his childhood there fondly. It was a youth filled with reading,

exploring, swimming, fishing, riding horses, and daily games of baseball. He liked to learn, but on his own terms, and found much of his schooling to be wasted time. When he was 16, the Darrows were struck by tragedy: Emily died from cancer. It profoundly affected the family and Darrow always stressed the influence of her "infinite kindness and sympathy."

That same year, Darrow enrolled at Allegheny College. When the Panic of 1873 (a financial crisis spurred by European investors selling off investments in American railroads) prevented him from going back, he returned home and dabbled in manual labor. He loathed it. He took a teaching job and studied law on his own, eventually attending the University of Michigan's law school for one year. He returned home again and passed the bar exam.

"I had no money and no influential friends," Darrow recalled. He opened his first law practice in Andover, a few miles north of Kinsman. In 1880, he married family friend Jessie Ohl, and three years later their son Paul was born. The family soon moved to Ashtabula. While he was improving as a lawyer and an orator, his marriage was collapsing. In a private letter, he told Jessie that he understood she had never *truly* been in love with him and they had been too young to know any better. "I suppose neither of us are to



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Legendary defense attorney Clarence Darrow spent the majority of his youth between Northeastern Ohio and Northwestern Pennsylvania before building a career in Chicago. Simultaneously a staunch pessimist and a tireless advocate, his nuanced personality and biting sense of humor made him a popular figure.

blame for this," he wrote.

They divorced amicably in 1887. Jessie and Paul moved to Chicago. Darrow followed soon after. He took a job with the city and then with the railroads

before his career trajectory shifted drastically when he represented union leader Eugene V. Debs, defending him against federal charges over organizing the Pullman Strike of 1894. For the next 15 years, Darrow practiced primarily as a labor lawyer. He irritated many in power, including Joseph Pulitzer who denounced him as a "misanthrope" and "hopeless cynic."

During these years, Amirus died. Paul enrolled at Dartmouth. Darrow also married again. Ruby Hammerstrom was a sharp, witty, and fashionable journalist, and she'd initially turned down his offer of courtship — after all, he was older, divorced, and had a reputation as a womanizer — but later came around to the idea, describing him as being "all ages" at once with a "boyish" charm and shyness. Ruby became an essential partner of his in every facet of his life.

After a bribery scandal nearly ended his career in 1912, Darrow shifted to criminal law. The courtroom became his pulpit and he vocally opposed capital punishment, keeping dozens off

Four Noted Lecturers to Conduct Debate on Religion



Rabbi Max C. Curriek



Clarence Darrow



Dr. John A. Lapp



Dr. Bruce S. Wright

FOUR lecturers of note, who will conduct a symposium on religion in Erie at the Public Auditorium, Nov. 9. Each one is outstanding in his particular field and each has a different view of religion. Rabbi Curriek will represent Judaism; Mr. Darrow, Agnosticism; Dr. Lapp, Catholicism, and Dr. Wright, Protestantism.

Clarence Darrow, an agnostic, was invited to Erie to speak at the 1931 "Conference for Tolerance" at the Hotel Lawrence.



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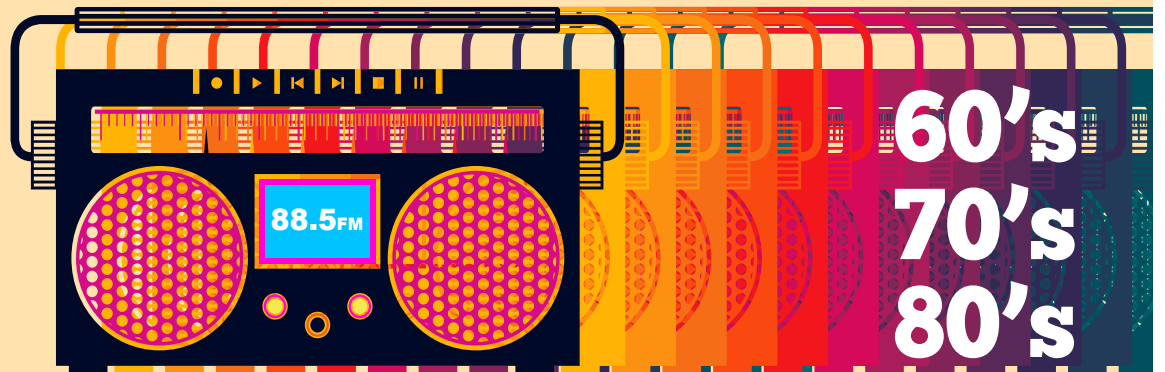
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Clarence Darrow's octagonal childhood home still stands about an hour away from Erie in Kinsman, Ohio — near modern-day Pymatuning State Park.

death row. He took on more and more criminal cases, many pro bono for people whose prospects seemed hopeless. His reputation as a “champion of the underdog” grew.

An Evolving Career

In 1925, his most remembered case made national headlines: the so-called “Scopes Monkey Trial.” The openly agnostic Darrow defended Tennessee teacher John T. Scopes against charges of teaching evolution. Scopes was found guilty, but the sensationalized trial (and his own showmanship) made Darrow the most famous lawyer in the United States.

That same year, he traveled to Detroit to defend Dr. Ossian Sweet and his family against murder charges in another highly-publicized trial. The Sweets were arrested after defending their home from a white mob determined to terrorize them out of the neighborhood. Darrow, like his abolitionist parents, had always been passionate about issues of equality. He spoke out against segregation, mocked those against interracial marriage, and openly ridiculed the Ku Klux Klan. John Brown, no surprise, was a personal hero.

Darrow championed other causes too. He had long supported women's rights. He criticized Prohibition, calling it an “unmitigated humbug” and its supporters hypocrites who “enjoy making everyone else miserable.” He attacked the growing eugenics movement, likening its following to a cult. He had little patience for perceived

fools.

“Few people try to think,” Darrow remarked. “Most of them deliberately chloroform themselves, lest a random thought might find lodgment in their brains.”

Darrow in Erie

In 1926, at the height of his fame, Darrow was invited to Erie to lecture at the Elks Club on evolution. Tickets sold out quickly. This alarmed some. One local minister announced a “reply, review, and discussion” to Darrow's talk the following Sunday.

Darrow came at the invitation of Rabbi Max C. Currick of Erie's Eighth Street Temple. Currick had served in Erie since 1901 and was a respected member of the community, described by the Erie Daily Times as “a highly constructive citizen, interested in all projects for the public good.” To curtail the criticism, he penned an op-ed explaining the invitation. “The answer is not hard,” he wrote. “Clarence Darrow has been a valiant exponent of some of religion's main teachings ... He has dared to stand against the majority for what he holds to be justice and truth. Almost his entire record ... has been consistently an advocacy and defense of suppressed truth and oppressed right.”

Darrow and Ruby arrived in Erie by train and they checked in at the Hotel Lawrence. An Erie Daily Times reporter accompanied them, describing Darrow as a “twenty minute egg,” a term for someone tough and unsentimental. Before the lecture, Ruby set out

more casual clothes for her husband to wear. “Oh, I'm not going to put on that soup and fish stuff,” he told her. “They tell me they're regular folks here in Erie and I guess they'll accept me as I am.”

The crowd was at capacity. Rabbi Currick introduced Darrow to the stage to applause. As he began speaking, he stood mostly in place with his thumbs hanging in his vest, occasionally fidgeting with his glasses, pointing an index finger for emphasis, and taking a sip of water.

The Erie Daily Times wrote that Darrow explained evolution with simple language, but refrained from making absolute claims. “His entire talk, while entertaining and replete with wit and humor ... left none convinced that man descended from an ape,” they wrote. Regardless, the audience response was positive.

A few days later, the Erie Daily Times printed a response from Reverend H.C. Shaw, who had attended the lecture. He wrote that it was “familiar and bookish” and a “rehash” of the Scopes trial that didn't contain “a single new thought.” He called Darrow a sarcastic “iconoclast,” comparable to “the heathen Goliath” whose “worst enemy would not accuse him of being handsome.”

“Mr. Darrow was welcomed by his admirers in Erie as a conqueror,” Shaw purported, then reminded readers that Darrow had lost the Scopes case. “Some folks have an exaggerated idea of scientific men. But they are just ordinary men who have studied science.”

Shaw recalled an audience “shocked beyond measure” when Darrow said that man's ancestors “had roamed about the earth as vagabonds, clothed in nothing but sunshine and shadow.” He said people didn't challenge evolutionists because scientists were “egotistic and presumptuous” and “intolerant and abusive.”

An Agnostic Among Believers

Over the next few years, Darrow continued with his speaking engagements — partially out of financial necessity due to the economic depression. He returned to Erie in 1931 for a “Conference for Tolerance,” described as “one of the most unique forums it has ever been Erie's privilege [sic] to witness.” It was a series of lectures, *not* debates, with Darrow and three others: Rabbi Max C. Currick representing Judaism; sociologist Dr. John A. Lapp represent-

ing Catholicism; Dr. Bruce S. Wright, a former Erie minister, representing Protestantism; and Darrow explaining his agnosticism. Each presenter was allotted 30 minutes. There were not to be any rebuttals or rulings.

On the morning of the event, the four men met at the Hotel Lawrence. They arrived at the lecture hall that evening to over 2,500 in attendance. The lectures were reported as “brilliant and logical.” Wright and Lapp were described as professor-like, talking “point by point, slowly without color.” Wright wasn't planning to convert anyone, he said, as most people retain the religion of their parents. Protestantism though was “against all things which hinder the progress of civilization.” Lapp explained that Catholics were extremely diverse and Catholicism transcended race, politics, and geography — but more than anything, they all strove to “love their neighbors and to be good to them.”

Currick was described as outstanding and the most compelling. He noted that he was, of course, born Jewish, but he embraced Judaism more spiritually as he aged. “As I grew older, I learned to look upon Judaism not only as a religion but as a way of life,” he stated. He explained that humanity was progressing towards “justice, brotherhood, and peace” and Judaism provided “a prescription for the healing of the world's hurt.”

The 74-year-old Darrow was described as gaunt with squinting eyes, a bit of stubble, and dark, slightly grayed hair. In his talk, he “appealed to the humor of the audience with a sparkling wit” and with “the showmanship of a Barnum.” Still, the Erie Daily Times reported, he spent less time explaining agnosticism and more time mocking religion.

“No man who thinks for himself can believe in the stories of the Bible,” declared Darrow. “They merely believe in it because they think they will be damned if they don't.” He criticized religious leaders who fought scientific advances. “It is the death of wisdom,” he stated. “Doubt and skepticism are the foundation of what we call civilization. The modern world is the child of doubt and inquiry.”

Despite his hostility, he reminded the audience that he was *agnostic*. “I am not an atheist,” he stated. “Atheism is too dogmatic. Man believes what he believes and can't help it. If I don't know, well, I don't know, and that's all

there is to it." Not knowing didn't stop him from enjoying life. It didn't make him immoral. Everyone was agnostic about *something*, he contended, and anyone who claimed otherwise belonged "in the madhouse."

"There is only one way to live," Darrow concluded. "Live openly and freely, looking for the truth and the truth alone."

The audience was engaged over the two hours. While many clearly disagreed with Darrow, the paper noted that the audience responded to his humor. Another op-ed stated how many "openly deride his theories and arguments," but his sincerity was undeniable as "an intense lover of humanity, especially suffering humanity."

A Return to Kinsman

Darrow was given a ride to his old hometown of Kinsman the following day. He viewed his vacant boyhood home. He visited with companions, old and new. He wrote about these rare visits home with far more sentimentality than one might expect, but also noted that going home was always his "undoing." Each time, his playmates

were increasingly "bent and gray and old." Each time, the cemetery included more familiar names.

Now in his seventies, Darrow retired from law, but he wrote and continued lecturing. He left his Chicago home less and less. He'd read and answer letters and visit with his three granddaughters, Jessie, Mary, and Blanche, as Paul lived only a block away. Still, his cynicism towards humanity swelled. He seemed despondent. The "almighty dollar," he proclaimed, had replaced religion in a society that had gone crazy. "Greed will ruin the world," he suspected. "There's plenty of wealth, but a rotten distribution of it. There's a tremendous supply of food everywhere and yet people are starving. It's all bughouse. I'll be glad to leave it."

In 1935, he told a reporter that he was waiting for death "without fear or enthusiasm," but throughout his long life had found no evidence of an afterlife. "I no longer doubt," he said. "I know now that there is nothing after death — nothing to look forward to in joy or in fear."

The Erie Daily Times printed an editorial defending the "old warhorse"

against his own melancholy. It stated that Darrow had dedicated his life to fighting "desperate, last-ditch battles" for the less fortunate. "For underneath everything else, Darrow has been moved by a rich human sympathy, an understanding of erring humanity, and a warm desire to take the side of the man whom everybody is against," the editorial said. "[He] may think of himself as a blind and helpless pawn of chance, wandering under a starless sky. But somehow he hasn't acted like one. ... His life itself is the very stuff of which human hope remains."

Reflecting on his law career the following year, Darrow said that it had been horrible. "There is no such thing as justice — in or out of court," he remarked. Humanity loved *vengeance*, not justice. "At 20, a man is full of fight and hope. He wants to reform the world. When he's 79, he still wants to reform the world, but he knows he can't."

He returned to Kinsman once more. With the scenes of his childhood as the background, he visited, read, and contemplated — "mental whittling," as Darrow put it. "I cannot realize that I

am old, and that the sun has so quickly passed from the morning over the meridian," he'd written. He now understood that life had no "hard-and-fast rules," that the line between right and wrong was rarely straight. "It is only our mistakes and failures and trials and sins that teach how really alike are all human souls," he said.

Darrow was bedridden not long after. Ruby, Paul, and a sister were by his side as he fell into a coma and slipped away into the great unknown. "He seemed to have no fear of death," his son later said.

Clarence Darrow was a complicated man, but for someone so full of doubt, a cynic, and an unapologetic pessimist, his words still periodically reverberated with a cautious optimism. "The best that we can do," he advised, "is to be kindly and helpful toward our friends and fellow passengers who are clinging to the same speck of dirt while we are drifting side by side to our common doom."

Jonathan Burdick runs the historical blog Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com.

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MIAC Live 2022-2023 Season Promises Something For Everyone

Bernadette Peters, Fran Lebowitz help kick off Mercyhurst concert series

By: Cara Suppa

Fall means back to school, shorter days, and the start of the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture Live 2022-2023 season.

As we come out of the darkest days of the pandemic, we emerge into a world that is cautious, but ready to roll out the red carpet for a multitude of Broadway stars and internationally recognized acts.

Brett Johnson, Ph.D., the director of Mercyhurst's theater department and the artistic director for the MIAC, said, "Our 25th anniversary season, which featured a roster of iconic performers, including Martin Short, Vanessa Williams, and Leslie Odom, Jr., was a resounding success. We were thrilled to see full houses and appreciative audiences gathered once again to share in the life-affirming artistry of world-class entertainers."

But if ever there was an organization that strives to outdo itself again and again, "MIAC is back and better than ever, strengthening the vibrancy of the Erie region through world-class performing arts experiences."

Johnson continued, "From Broadway legends to cultural icons to internationally acclaimed superstars, our 2022-23 MIAC Live series is our most eclectic season to date, and promises something for everyone."

From showstoppers like Bernadette Peters and Kelli O'Hara, to the biting wit and sharp observations of Fran Lebowitz, to the passionate movement of Ballet Hispánico and the joyful hymns of The Kingdom Choir, Johnson puts it best: "Our 2022-23 season includes cherished MIAC veterans and new artists you simply won't want to miss."

All shows begin at 7:30 p.m. and take place at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center at 501 E. 38th St.

Bernadette Peters with the Erie Philharmonic

Saturday, Sept. 17

For more than six decades, Bernadette Peters has shined on stage and screen, starting when she was just three-and-a-half years old, on the TV show *Juvenile Jury*.

Since then, this powerhouse vocalist — who has numerous Tony Awards to her name, as well as a Golden Globe, plus Emmy and Grammy nominations —



has become the "foremost interpreter of the works of Stephen Sondheim" and has appeared in countless films and TV and Broadway shows.

For her performance on Sept. 17, Peters will be joined by the Erie Philharmonic, for a performance fit for the season opener of the MIAC Live 2022-23 series.

An Evening with Fran Lebowitz

Thursday, Oct. 6



The woman who famously said, "It's what I wanted my entire life. People asking me my opinion, and people not allowed to interrupt" is coming to the Mary D'Angelo stage Oct. 6, and she's bringing her (uninterrupted) social commentary in full force.

Martin Scorsese finds her fascinating, as he has made her the subject of two projects, *Public Speaking* for HBO and *Pretend It's a City* for Netflix, and she is an outspoken critic of gentrification in New York City, celebrity culture, and smoking bans.

While Lebowitz is "famously resistant" to technology, with no cell phone or

computer, her acerbic wit, which will no doubt be on full display for the evening, is the stuff tweets and Instagram posts are made of.

Get Happy! Michael Feinstein Celebrates the Judy Garland Centennial

Wednesday, Oct. 26



She was born Frances Ethel Gumm in 1922, but the world better knows her as Judy Garland.

From her iconic performance as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* to her accidental overdose at the age of 47, Garland has left a legacy of music and showmanship that few have matched in the years since.

So it's fitting that Michael Feinstein, singer, pianist and keeper of the Great American Songbook, has taken up the mantle of Garland's legacy and is celebrating Garland's life through song, film and photos, many never-before-seen.

This performance is executive produced by Garland's own daughter, Liza Minnelli, and will "lead audiences on a historical journey through Garland's amazing life..."

Holiday Stomps with the Hot Sardines

Tuesday, Nov. 29

From a chance 2007 meeting in a noodle shop in Manhattan between Evan Palazzo and Elizabeth Bougerol, Hot Sardines was born, and this "hot jazz" group has since produced eight albums and hit the number one spot on the iTunes Jazz chart.

With their Holiday Stomps show, the Hot Sardines are taking songs like "White Christmas" and "Please Come Home for Christmas" and making them joyful and



fresh, as they have been doing with jazz standards for over a decade.

With a sound that is at once vintage and updated, old-fashioned and new-fangled, Hot Sardines are sure to please come the winter holidays, with a show for all ages.

Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy Present A Celtic Family Christmas

Monday, Dec. 12



For fans of Christmas music, fiddle, and Celtic tradition, plus everyone in between, gather 'round the Mary D'Angelo stage for fiddle virtuosos Natalie MacMaster and her husband, Donnell Leahy.

The duo will be joined on stage by their children, as well as other musicians, and will feature a lineup of classic Christmas and Celtic songs that will no doubt have audiences in the holiday spirit.

Ballet Hispánico

Friday, Feb. 10

Founded by Tina Ramirez in 1970, Ballet Hispánico describes itself as "the foremost dance representative of Hispanic culture in the United States," but much more than that, it is the eminent Latinx



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cultural organization in the country, too. With its strong emphasis on community outreach and giving voice to underrepresented talent, Ballet Hispánico is for the people, electrifying audiences with its mix of traditional ballet and modern and Latin dance.

The Kingdom Choir
Tuesday, Feb. 21



Though they have been performing for over 20 years, it wasn't until they sang at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle that The Kingdom Choir attained worldwide fame and signed a record deal with Sony Music. This London-based gospel group, which was founded and continues to be conducted by Karen Gibson and is made up of 20 young and vibrant voices, will bring their infectious energy and joy to the Mary D'Angelo stage.

Kelli O'Hara
Thursday, Mar. 2

If you were watching HBO's *The Gilded Age*, one thing became abundantly clear: They had poached half of Broadway's brightest stars to be cast in the program, among them Kelli O'Hara. The Tony Award-winner (for the lead role of Anna Leonowens in *The King and I*) and frequent face on film and TV fea-



tures on 10 different cast recordings, can be seen often on PBS concert specials, and has even graced the New York Metropolitan Opera stage in 2014 and 2018.

Chris Botti
Tuesday, Mar. 28



Chris Botti has worked with the likes of Paul Simon, Sting, and Aretha Franklin — and he even left college his senior year to tour with Frank Sinatra and Buddy Rich. He has released numerous albums and done countless collaborations with many big names in music, even winning the 2013 Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental Album for *Impressions*. "Because you don't have the advantage of lyrical content," he explained in a 2009 interview with the Palm Beach Post, "you have to make sure the melody is more exceptional...you have to make it silky and haunting and try not to downplay too much."

Angelique Kidjo
Thursday, Apr. 13

Dubbed by Time Magazine as "Africa's premier diva," Beninese-born vocalist, actress and activist Angelique Kidjo has been inspired and influenced by numerous artists and tastes: Nina Simone, Jimi Hendrix, Afropop, Congolese rumba, and jazz. She is fluent in five languages, all



of which she sings in, and in 2021 released her 15th album, *Mother Nature*. A UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador since 2002, Kidjo has been described as "the undisputed queen of African music."

Aaron Tveit
Wednesday, May 3



Rounding out the 2022-2023 MIAC Live season is Aaron Tveit, fresh off his 2020 Tony win for originating the role of Christian in Broadway's *Moulin Rouge*. The actor and singer, who featured as Enjolras in 2012's *Les Misérables* adaptation, has over a dozen theater credits to his name, as well as numerous TV appearances, and he can currently be seen in the main cast for *Schmidgadoon!* For tickets and more information, go to miac.mercyhurst.edu. Cara Suppa can be reached at carajsuppa@gmail.com.

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The 30th Annual Erie's Blues & Jazz Festival

Davy Knowles, Grady Champion, Person2Person headline weekend at Frontier Park

FRIDAY, AUG. 5 - 7

Traditionally speaking, blues and jazz music have always been about locking into a groove and the present moment, embracing the real and the real-time. For nearly three decades, Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival had been like that too — early August, Frontier Park, world-class musicians, and big turnouts were as predictable as a metronome.

But for the past two years, COVID-19 has thrown off the beat — the 2021 Blues and Jazz Fest was delayed by several measures into late September, and the 2020 edition was canceled altogether. It's been decidedly avant garde territory as of late for this warmly familiar community standard, but we are pleased to report that 2022 will be a return to form.

The 30th Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival is back in its usual early August slot, featuring a full weekend of music and activities. As per tradition, Saturday will have a bluesier slant while Sunday will lean much jazzier, but there is and always has been plenty of overlap and cross-pollination between the two genres. Also continuing the custom of more recent years, Friday evening will play host to artistically and culturally edifying events.

Here's what's on tap for the weekend at Frontier Park. — Matt Swanseger

FRIDAY, AUG. 5

7 to 8:30 p.m. — Find your rhythm; join in a **drum circle** led by Lynn Johnson on behalf of the **Erie Dance Consortium**.

8:30 to 10 p.m. — Immerse yourself in

the history of the blues with a double feature presented by the **Film Society of NWPA**. W.C. Handy's 1929 short *St. Louis Blues* will be followed by *Deep Blues: A Musical Pilgrimage to the Crossroads*, which examines the Mississippi Delta's role in cultivating the genre.

SATURDAY, AUG. 6

Noon to 1:30 p.m. — Erie's Best New Band (as voted in the 2021 Best of Erie Awards) gets the party started in fashionably funky style. **Phunkademic** derives its sound from the scene's pioneers (Parliament/Funkadelic, The Meters) and today's trailblazers (Lettuce, Cory Wong & The Fearless Flyers) with an irresistible energy.

2 to 3:30 p.m. — **Matt "Broke" Boland's Blues Batch** reunites the Pickles frontman with mentor (and Erie blues mainstay) Rodger Montgomery, along with several other respected veterans of the local live music circuit including saxophonist Phil Papotnik, multi-instrumentalist David VanAmburg, harmonicist Ron Yarosz, bassist Paul Sontheimer, and drummer Mike Russell.

4 to 5:30 p.m. — Melding Afro-Caribbean, worldbeat, and Latin musical traditions, **One World Tribe** is the epitome of "musical melting pot." The Jazzfest regulars will be accompanied by **West Indian Revelation**, a rotating cast of musicians and performers anchored by core members Adrani and Calvin "Fuzzy" Samuel.

6 to 7:30 p.m. — Since first blazing



Bluesmen Davy Knowles and Grady Champion (top row) headline Saturday at the 30th Annual Erie's Blues and Jazz Fest, with (unrelated) saxophonists Eric and Houston Person of Person2Person closing out Sunday.

into the blues landscape in 2007 with his then-band Back Door Slam, guitarist **Davy Knowles** has maintained a regular presence atop the Billboard Blues charts, most recently with his 2021 solo release *What Happens Next*, a soulfully nuanced departure from his musical bread and butter of high-octane blues and Americana.

8 to 9:30 — You might think that Saturday's headliner, **Grady Champion**, would've gotten lost in the shuffle as the 28th of his preacher father's 28 children. However, that's not at all the case, as the Mississippi-born singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and producer has managed to shine brightly among his blues peers, highlighted by a Grammy Award for Etta James' cover of his song "Trust Yourself" in 2003.

SUNDAY, AUG. 7

2 to 3:30 p.m. — The 40-year career of **Cat's A Bear** has been nothing short of prolific — since 1982, core members and co-founders Frank Singer (guitar/keys) and Joe Dorris (drums/vocals) have released over 20 albums, inventively reinterpreting jazz standards. Nick Ronzitti (congas) and Joe Frisina (bass) round out the current lineup.

4 to 5:30 p.m. — City Gallery co-owner Stephen Trohoske has always been passionate about putting local talent on exhibit. The veteran bass player's

ElectroHOPE Ensemble features some of the best in Corey Wilkes (trumpet), Eric Brewer (guitar), Tony Grey (bass/FX), and Reggie Evans (drums). Expect a groove-heavy melange of originals and reworked standards from Lonnie Smith, Duke Ellington, and more.

6 to 7:30 p.m. — Buffalo-based **Sol Y Sambra** knows how to crank up the heat. For 15 years preceding the pandemic, they were the Saturday night house band at the Anchor Bar, better known as the birthplace of the Buffalo wing. The sextet, led by pianist and arranger Kevin Doyle, tantalizes with their tropical fusion of the Latin and American jazz traditions, sauced up with a progressive flair.

8 to 9:30 p.m. — Call it coincidence or call it fate, but saxophonists Eric Person and Houston Person — totally unrelated and nearly three decades apart in age — first took the stage together in 2009 and have been a dynamic duo ever since. The elder Houston has a whopping 70 album credits to his name, most recently lending his talents to Eric's *Blue Vision*, an appropriately blues-inflected set of mostly originals. Any person(s) in the vicinity of Frontier Park will want to be on hand to experience two virtuosos in **Person2Person**.

Friday 7 to 10:30 p.m., Saturday noon to 9:30 p.m., Sunday 2 to 9:30 p.m. // Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. // All Ages // Free // For more information, go to eriebluesandjazz.com



PACApalooza provides a full weekend of free entertainment

Performing Arts Collective Alliance celebrates their 10-year anniversary

BEGINNING FRIDAY, AUG. 12

PACA is celebrating its 10-year anniversary with a free three-day celebration of theater, music, dance, comedy, poetry, film, fashion, an art auction, and more. Erie's Performing Arts Collective Alliance not only supports the entrepreneurial efforts of emerging artists and produces award-winning theater, but is also revitalizing a historic downtown property and bringing labor and tourism dollars into the heart of Erie. If you haven't yet visited, PACApalooza is the perfect time to sample all things PACA.

PACA is located at 1505 State St. in the Meyer building, and is home to more than 30 artist-tenants, including sculptors, photographers, painters, craftsmen, and musicians of all types who will have their doors open to visitors for this event. Tours of the building, which is listed on the National Historic Register, will be given throughout the weekend.

"We wanted to give thanks to the Erie

community for Erie Gives Day. It's such an important day for nonprofits, and Erie as a whole is always so generous in supporting the arts," said Char Newport, PACA's administrative manager. "There is something for everyone at PACApalooza — poetry, fashion show, comedy, theater, and music. We also have two movies made by local filmmakers we will be showing. Sunday is our art auction, we have a number of gift baskets for raffle generously donated by local businesses, and we will livestream the drawings Sunday."

The schedule is PACKed with something for everyone. — Amy VanScoter

FRIDAY 8/12

- 5 p.m. — Poetry
- 6 p.m. — Live Music: Jeremy Jaeger
- 7 p.m. — Stand-up comedy
- 8 p.m. — Theatre
- 10 p.m. — Live Music: Stephen Trohoske

SATURDAY 8/13

- 12 p.m. — Tarot readings



DAVE SCHROEDER / PACA

PACApalooza will celebrate 10 years of the Performing Arts Collective Alliance with a diverse lineup of entertainment, including live music, poetry readings, stand-up comedy, theatrical performances, and movie screenings.

- 1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m. — Footlights, Kids Zone
- 5 p.m. — Fashion Show with The Dollhouse at Pointe Fouré Vintage Boutique
- 6 p.m. — Film: *Blinded* directed by Jim Morton and Jesse James, *Alexander the Brain*, written and directed by Danny Pakulski (Oddity Productions)
- 7 p.m. — Live Music: "Mark" (Joe Popp, Tim Driscoll and Kenneth Felix Cornelius)
- 8 p.m. — Theatre
- 10 p.m. — Live Music: Matt "Broke" Boland

SUNDAY 8/14

- 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. — Art auction
- 3 p.m. - 4 p.m. — Gift drawings
- 4 p.m. — *Blinded* directed by Jim Morton and Jesse James (Distorted Vision Productions and Oddity Productions), *Pact of Vengeance*, written and directed by Len Kabasinski
- Friday 5 to 11 p.m., Saturday noon to 11 p.m., Sunday 2 to 6 p.m. // 1505 State St.
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EVENTS

Celebrate Erie is Fresh for 2022

The free local weekend features X Ambassadors, Mýa, Ja Rule, and Jimmie Allen

BEGINNING FRIDAY, AUG. 19

"We wanted this year to have a fresher feel to it," expressed Aaron Loncki, executive director of Celebrate Erie. "I think it's important that we celebrate all the different parts of Erie like we have in the past, our food, our culture, our businesses, etc. But I think this year, we really wanted to hone in on the future of Erie and the up-and-coming pieces of Erie, and wanted our entertainment to reflect that," Loncki explained.

The weekend is bursting with things to do, all at no cost to attendees. It's also the comeback year for Celebrate Erie, with a full cancellation in 2020 due to the pandemic and the jam-packed 814 Day taking its place in 2021.

Certainly one of the most noteworthy parts of the festival is also the biggest: The headliners. With X Ambassadors on Friday, Mýa and Ja Rule on Saturday, and Jimmie Allen on Sunday, there's a decisive lack of deep "legacy" type acts this time around.

In our eyes, that definitely is refreshing. Rather than seeing a band from the '70s consisting of one famous lingering member, Celebrate Erie is making the effort to cater to a younger crowd.

Of course, it's varied, and after all, **Ja Rule's** quadruple-platinum watershed album *Pain is Love* came out more than 20 years ago now.

The former Murder Inc. member (along with hip-hop giants DMX and Jay-Z) still has a memorable catalog, however, and is one of the highest-profile guests, especially to an elder millennial, and he's easily the most well-known hip-hop act the main stage has seen.

In a similar vein, R&B singer **Mýa** rose to prominence in the late 1990s early 2000s. With worldwide hits like 2001's "Lady Marmalade" (with Christina Aguilera, Pink and Lil' Kim) and "Ghetto Supastar (That Is What You Are)" (with Pras Michel and Ol' Dirty Bastard), Mýa's four-octave vocal range and breathy delivery have made her a success both commercially and critically.

Rewinding to Friday, **X Ambassadors** cap off the first day. Hitting the scene in 2015 with their platinum-selling debut album *VHS*, they're known for hits like "Jungle," "Renegades," and "Unsteady." The quartet from Ithaca, N.Y. blend pop and alternative rock, with their latest album *The Beautiful Liar* released last year.

Closing out the festival will be the crossover country artist **Jimmie Allen**, known for tracks like "Best Shot" and "Make Me Want To" from his 2018 debut album *Mercury Lane*. In 2021, Allen won the Country Music Association Award for New Artist of the Year, the same year he supported Brad Paisley on a 23-city tour.



Headliners for this year's Celebrate Erie include X Ambassadors (Friday), Mýa and Ja Rule (Saturday), and Jimmie Allen (Sunday).

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



JESSICA HUNTER

The Chalk Walk will be back in full swing and full-color at this year's Celebrate Erie, with local artists illustrating sponsored sections of State Street.

There's always *much* more at Celebrate Erie than just the headliners, of course. This year sees the addition of a special **Alley Stage** located at Eighth and State streets. A vision of event organizer/talent buyer Maria Gangemi, this stage features entirely original bands and artists that have a slightly harder edge.

The **Living Room Stage** returns this year, with its low-key atmosphere highlighting acoustic-leaning artists and singer-songwriters.

This year will feature **interactive drum circles** and jam sessions too. Be part of the music and work as a group in whichever way suits you best. There will also be a cornhole tournament going on all weekend, a youth basketball tournament in collaboration with the Police Athletic League (on Saturday), and a 3-point basketball contest (on Friday and Sunday).

Loncki wagers that "the goal would be to have something more interactive, something that people can walk up and do instead of just look at, so we wanted to do that a little bit differently," speaking to a number of new activities slated for 2022.

There will be a **Culture District Stage** this year, spotlighting diverse music and dance, as well as a multicultural marketplace nearby.

The **Chalk Walk** is back in full swing

and full-color this year as well, one of the most memorable pieces of Celebrate Erie, where local artists illustrate sponsored sections of State Street. Get a chance to check out their works in progress early in the festival, or peruse the finished works as the weekend wears on.

In addition to the Chalk Walk, there will be numerous local artists with items for sale, doing live art demonstrations, and participating in an Erie-themed art gallery.

Want to walk away with something to remember the weekend by? There will be specially-made t-shirts and pins from Erie Apparel available all weekend and on the website.

And don't forget about the food; this year, food vendors will be seen throughout Downtown Erie, as opposed to being congregated in one main location.

The event has many family-friendly offerings as well, including the **Family District Stage**, with music for all ages.

Celebrate Erie is simply *the* place to be, with virtually every aspect of the city being showcased in some way. It's free, it's fun, it's local, and it's mesmerizing.

— Nick Warren

Nick Warren will be performing at Celebrate Erie three times this year. He can be reached at nick@eriereader.com, or nearby the Alley Stage on Friday.

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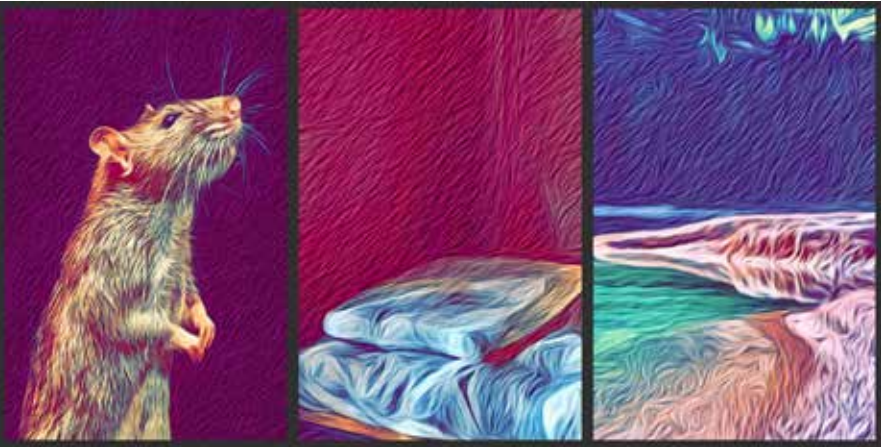
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EVENTS

All An Act Brings Three Times the Mystery with 'The Rule of Three'

Three short plays, three casts, one great evening



All An Act's production of Agatha Christie's *The Rule of Three* brings together three one-act mysteries featuring different directors and casts — *Rats*, *The Patient*, and *Afternoon at the Seaside*.

detective attempting to find a priceless emerald that has been stolen from a nearby resort, searching amongst an interesting group of beach-goers trying to enjoy a day at the seaside. Directed by KC McCloskey and Marie Glaser, the play stars Roland Robinson, Hadleigh Bills, Wayne Gardner, Chad Santos, Lizdel Collado, Marnie Foss, Zach Mota, David Strazisar, Lisa Simonian, Michael Graham, and Chris Hinchman.

Up next is *The Rats*, a one-act much darker in nature than the one before it. When two secret lovers find themselves lured to an apartment under the guise of a party, things take a turn as they find themselves framed for murder and with no way to escape the

apartment. Directed by Larry Lewis, the play stars Marie Glaser, Roland Robinson, Shantel Kay, and Zach Mota.

Finishing off the evening is *The Patient*, a tense thriller in which a woman recovering from illness seemingly falls from her balcony, ending up in the hospital. After the doctor informs her family that she now suffers from a temporary paralysis, an experiment begins to attempt to find out what exactly happened — did she fall, or was she pushed? Directed by David W. Mitchell & Michael Weiss, this play stars Zach Mota, Lizdel Collado, Chris Hinchman, Wayne Gardner, Lisa Simonian, David W. Mitchell, Fred Monahan, and Theresa Testrake. — Ally Kutz

Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 3 p.m. through Sept. 4 // All An Act, 652 W. 17th St. // \$5 - \$15 // For tickets and more information, visit allanact.net

PREMIERING FRIDAY, AUG. 19

This month, the Mistress of Suspense's work graces the All An Act stage once again, but this time with a twist. Agatha Christie's *The Rule of Three* showcases three one-act plays, but each will host a different director and cast (with some actors appearing

in multiple roles), promising a unique experience for all.

Afternoon at the Seaside, *The Rats*, and *The Patient* boast all the hallmarks of Christie's signature mysteries, with the cast and crew of All An Act capable bringing them to life.

Beginning on a lighthearted note, *Afternoon at the Seaside* sees a de-



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EVENTS

Famous Last Words' Anthology Tour At Basement Transmissions

A unique brand of metal & post-hardcore hits Erie

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 24

Another big pull for Erie has been registered as popular metalcore and post-hardcore band Famous Last Words brings their Anthology Tour to Basement Transmissions. Based in Petoskey, Mich., the band has released three studio albums, dating back to *Two-Faced Charade* in 2013, with their most recent being 2016's *The Incubus*. However, the band also released a three-track concept EP in 2021 titled *The Negative*. Joining them on this tour are similar yet diverse supporting acts Across the White Water Tower and Dark Divine.

In terms of local representation, showgoers can look forward to bands Blouses and Ladders opening the show. A self-professed "rocknroll" band according to their social media, Blouses perhaps has most in common with the urgent, occasionally melodic metalcore of Every Time I Die. Following the release of their debut album *Eat Glass* in February 2021, the band is now celebrating the release of their brand new single, "Hot Salad." Ladders, on the other hand, share more musical DNA with modern punk



JON REINO PHOTOGRAPHY

Popular metalcore and post-hardcore quartet Famous Last Words pulls into Basement Transmissions on Wednesday, Aug. 24 as part of their Anthology Tour.

and post-punk like Hot Water Music and the Dirty Nil, bringing a distinct vocal tone to the mix.

Between the electronic-tinged rap-metal of Across the White Water Tower and the more organic, aggressive tones of our local opening acts, Famous Last Words' Anthology Tour at Basement Transmissions is shaping up to be one of the most explosive shows of the year. There's never been a better time to explore new genres while supporting local artists. — Aaron Mook

6 to 11 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$13 advance tickets, \$15 at doors

Tall Ships Erie Raises Sails for 2022

The four-day event will feature seven different sailing vessels and two ducks



JESSICA HUNTER

BEGINNING THURSDAY, AUG. 25

The bi-annual Tall Ships Erie will take place during the last weekend of August this year. Kicking off with the "Parade of Sails" on Thursday, with the

festival grounds open the following day until Sunday.

This family-friendly event lets you see, board, and sail on historic ships, with a "Kid Zone" near the Maritime Museum.

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EVENTS

Unsurprisingly, one of the main attractions is the **U.S. Brig Niagara**. Making its home port in Erie, it is an accurate reproduction of the War of 1812 flagship that fought in the Battle of Lake Erie under Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry.

Locals may also be familiar with the **Lettie G. Howard**, which has been in Erie on loan from the South Street Seaport Museum in New York City since 2018. "The Lettie" is a Fredonia fishing schooner, possibly the last surviving type of its kind.

Toronto's **Empire Sandy** is Canada's largest schooner, with a 200-foot topsail. Equipped with double cannons, it can hold up to 275 people.

Home to Bay City, Mich., the **Appledore IV** was launched in 1989, named after Appledore Island off the coast of Maine, where Herb Smith first met his wife Doris. The couple later commissioned the ship to be built by Mark Treworgy.

The **St. Lawrence II** docks in Kingston, Ontario. Now part of a sail training program, led by Brigantine Inc., it first launched in 1953.

Traveling the farthest, from Huelva, Spain, the **NAO Trinidad** is a replica of

a square sail ship from the 1500s. Built to celebrate the city's 525th anniversary, it now travels the world. This year the ship will be telling the story of Ferdinand Magellan, as opposed to that of Christopher Columbus, as it was formerly known as the *NAO Santa Maria*.

The **Pride of Baltimore II** sails up from Chesapeake Bay to the port of Lake Erie, and is a reconstruction of a Baltimore clipper ship of the early 1800s.

Lastly, there are the eye-catching **Mama and Baby Ducks**. With Mama standing six stories tall, she is the world's largest rubber duck, and is accompanied by her as-of-yet-unnamed progeny.

The *Lettie G. Howard* and the *Appledore IV* are available for day sails, while the other ships (not counting the ducks, of course) are available for deck tours only. – Nick Warren

Parade of Sails: Thursday at 4 p.m.; Festival open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday through Sunday // Erie Maritime Museum, 150 East Front St., Suite 100 // Single-day passes for \$10 with \$5 deck tour add-ons, weekend passes for \$39, VIP Passes for \$199 // For more information, go to tallshipserie.org



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Bomb Shelter

Mary Laura Philpott shows how existential fear can translate into hope

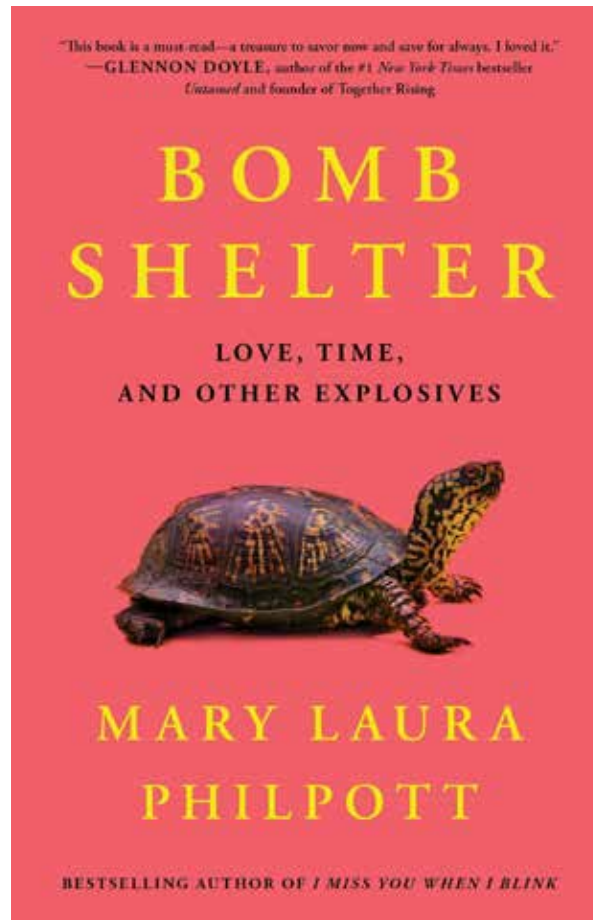
All her life, Mary Laura Philpott has been a worrier. From a young age, she has categorized catastrophes and dangers, analyzing what is more urgent (like kidnapping and shootings) versus what can take a back seat (like volcanic eruptions and spacecraft explosions).

But when she and her husband find their teenage son unconscious on the bathroom floor at 4 a.m., the anxiety goes into overdrive. What follows includes diagnosis, familial adjustments, and a whole slew of other obstacles, all filtered neatly and precisely through the calculation of danger that Philpott has come to apply to her life.

Don't write her off as a cynic, though: Philpott has an exceptionally sunny disposition for someone who is such a chronic worrier. As a reader, many may feel seen by this combination, as this author certainly does. Going through life as a worrier can make the positives feel impossible, but Philpott and her writing are proof that apprehension and fear can make those positives shine even brighter.

Told via a series of essays, Philpott's memoir *Bomb Shelter: Love, Time, and Other Explosives* examines big questions about life, death, and fear that many over-thinkers will recognize as familiar thoughts and feelings. Interwoven well between the past and the present — from childhood and the origins of the worrying to present-day events — Philpott's writing is staggeringly hopeful and often hilarious in its approach to the often wondered question: if this happened, what else could happen? And how do we keep going from here? — Ally Kutz

Atria Books // 288 pages // Non-fiction, Memoir



The Pallbearers Club

Paul Tremblay's latest not your average thriller

At 17 years old in the late 1980s, Art Barbara was not cool. As a high school loner who listened to hair metal and was stuck in a back brace at night for his scoliosis, he started a volunteer-based club assembling pallbearers for poorly attended funerals.

But then he makes a new friend — who just so happens to be the coolest girl he's ever met. She is fascinated by The Pallbearers Club and decides to tag along, with her Polaroid camera to take pictures — of the corpses. This isn't the only strange thing about her, though — aside from her obsession with New England folklore involving digging up the dead, there are a lot of other bizarre and terrifying things that happen whenever she's around.

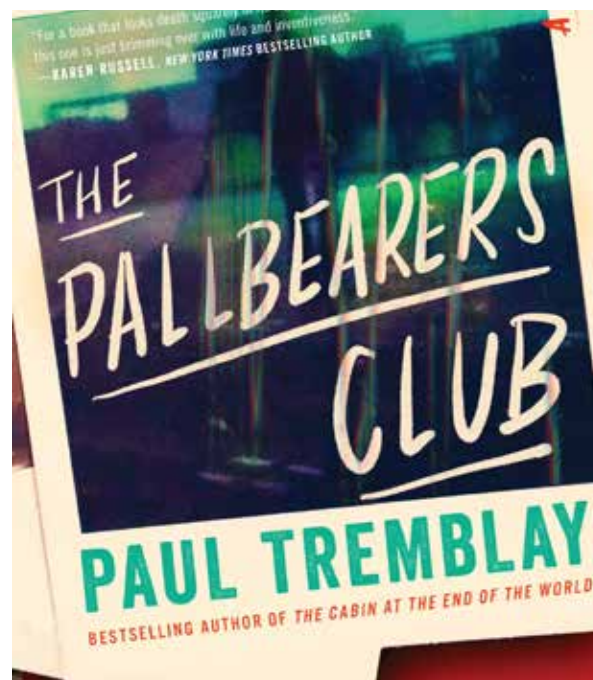
Now, decades later, Art finds himself trying to understand everything that transpired in those teen years by writing it all down in *The Pallbearers Club: A Memoir*. But just as things start to make sense, his old friend reappears and somehow gets her hands on this manuscript, taking issue with some of what is written and begins making cuts and corrections.

It is clear from the start that this is not your average psychological thriller. Truly, it is difficult to pigeonhole this novel as one specific genre, as it encapsulates qualities from many distinctly different areas of writing. Blurring the lines between fiction and memory, supernatural and ordinary, Paul Tremblay's latest work is nothing short of enthralling.

Written from the beginning in the style of Art's memoir

and featuring footnotes and other writings throughout, Tremblay takes you on a journey not as a second- or third-hand witness, but instead as though you have just picked up the manuscript, ready and waiting for your review. — Ally Kutz

William Morrow // 288 Pages // Fiction, Thriller



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MOVIE REVIEWS

Empathy Machine: *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On* is Terrific Family Fun

★★★★★

Roger Ebert once called the cinema an “empathy machine” where people can see life through the eyes of someone else. Independent movie studios like A24 have taken that to the highest degree and often ask us to see life through something we never imagined ... like a googly-eyed seashell. And *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On* is definitely full of life that will have audiences laughing, crying, and everything in between. It is the true definition of a movie for kids and adults alike.

Based on the YouTube short films by Dean Fleischer-Camp and Jenny Slate, the film follows Marcel (voiced by Jenny Slate), a one-inch shell wearing tennis shoes as he goes about his daily life as filmed by a documentarian (Dean Fleischer-Camp) who wishes to tell Marcel's story. We learn that he was once part of a large community of shells but the rest were swept away, leaving behind only Marcel and his grandmother (voiced by Isabella Ros-

sellini). As Marcel's story becomes an Internet sensation, he begins to learn that this is an opportunity to find his family.

The documentary style of filming gives the cinematography a hazy, lived-in look, and Slate voices Marcel with a very childlike sense of naivety, making it much funnier when Marcel lets out occasional words of great wisdom. The story itself is so simple yet so effective that it's impossible not to get hooked. The film can be almost unbearably sweet, but in these times when cynicism and irony so permeate our movies, maybe unbearably sweet is just the thing we need.

— Forest Taylor

Directed by: Dean Fleischer-Camp
// Written by: Fleischer-Camp, Jenny Slate and Nick Paley; based on the short films by Dean Fleischer-Camp, Jenny Slate, Nick Paley and Elizabeth Holm
// Starring: Jenny Slate, Dean Fleischer-Camp, Isabella Rossellini, Rosa Salazar, Thomas Mann, and Lesley Stahl // 90 minutes // Rated PG



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I Want to Believe: *Nope* May Be Too Ambitious for Its Own Good

★★★

After making just two films, Jordan Peele has already fully established himself as a great horror director, telling creepy tales that also work amazingly as metaphors for deeper societal issues. While *Get Out* and *Us* both brilliantly intertwined their themes with their stories, his newest film *Nope* contains so many metaphors that they threaten to overtake the film. The result, despite some very impressive filmmaking, is a movie that gets bogged down by its own ambitions.

The plot follows Otis Haywood Jr. (Daniel Kaluuya) and his sister Emerald (Keke Palmer) as they try to keep their Hollywood horse ranch from going under after their father dies from mysterious causes. Strange events in the night sky that spook their horses and cause power outages all through the valley inspire Otis and Emerald to set up cameras on their ranch to capture these phenomena, believing that they may be visitors from outer space.

Unlike his previous films, *Nope* goes for big-budget spectacle more than straight horror. But like those films, the story is there to prop up the film's deeper meanings, this time about the exploitation of the entertainment industry, our perverse need to relive horrific events through a camera, and the anonymous, often forgotten people that make movies possible. These themes don't really mesh well with the main story, however, making everything more than a little convoluted. The metaphors get in the way of the story and characters that in the end get dropped for a climax that is overlong and frankly, pretty silly. Peele is using his bigger budget to go after loftier goals and while that is admirable, this one may just be all too much.

— Forest Taylor

Written and directed by: Jordan Peele //
Starring: Daniel Kaluuya, Keke Palmer, Steven Yeun, Brandon Perea, Michael Wincott, Wrenn Schmidt, Terry Notary, and Keith David // 131 minutes // Rated R



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Podcast Picks

Exceptional audio infotainment to enroll your ears in

Sounds Like a Cult

Hosted by: Amanda Montell & Isabela Medina-Maté // *All Things Comedy Network*

Have you ever looked at a wildly popular trend or group and said, "Yeah, that definitely sounds like a cult?" If so, you're in the right company with Amanda Montell and Isabela "Isa" Medina-Maté.



In June of 2021, right off the heels of the publication of her book *Cultish: The Language of Fanaticism*, writer and linguist Montell teamed up with Medina-Maté, a documentary filmmaker and comedy writer, to create a podcast that looked critically at these so-called modern day "cults," examining them through the lens of popular culture and media.

This is more than just a chat show between friends, though. Montell and Medina-Maté delve deeply each episode, often bringing in expert guests on the topic being discussed and analyzed.

With subjects including SoulCycle, astrology, Trader Joe's, and minimalism, there's sure to be at least one topic that will pique the interest of every listener.

Rating each cult-like subject on a three tiered scale — Live Your Life, Watch Your Back, or Get the **** Out — Montell and Medina-Maté seek to answer the all-important question: this thing sounds like a cult, but is it really? — Ally Kutz

The Flop House

Hosted by: Elliott Kalan, Dan McCoy, and Stuart Wellington // *flophousepodcast.com, maximumfun.org*

Sure, there are a lot of podcasts out there about bad movies, and a lot of them are hosted by three white guys. But there's something magical about *The Flop House*. Maybe it's the fact that they've been doing it for nearly 15 years.



Your hosts are Dan McCoy (a writer for *The Daily Show*), Stuart Wellington (a comedian and NYC bar co-owner), and Elliott Kalan (also a former writer for *The Daily Show*, now working on *Mystery Science Theater 3000*). The interplay between the hosts bounces around like a tennis ball, sometimes unsure of where exactly it's headed but always rocketing toward whatever destination lies ahead at top speeds.

The premise of the show is simple — pick a bad movie and talk about it. Whether lasering in on a commercial or critical failure (or, as the parlance goes, a "flop"), they always approach their subject lovingly. This isn't a pile-on of negativity like you might quickly find on YouTube; this is a labor of love by three men (and the occasional guest) who *genuinely* love bad movies, warts and all.

Filled with countless inside jokes and running gags, from the Flophouse Housecat to a very specific scene in *Castle Freak*, this is a podcast that you'll be happy to check in with. — Nick Lastnamewithheld

Films to be Buried With

Hosted by: Brett Goldstein // *shows.acast.com/films-tobeburiedwith*

Brett Goldstein rose to fame playing a curmudgeon sporting the occasional heart of gold (as *Ted Lasso's* Roy Kent). His podcast persona is all heart though, mixed with a good bit of charm and curiosity. That curiosity drives his podcast, *Films To Be Buried With*, a show with a pretty clever premise: that week's guest "dies," and the rest of the episode details what movies they'd take to the afterlife (if the guest believes in that sort of thing). The structure ranges from "first film you remember seeing," to "sexiest film," to "film you love but people hate." By the end, you truly feel as if you've got some insight on what's inspired our favorite artists throughout their lives.



A true cinephile like Bill Hader (Episode 202) is perfect for the show. His story about skipping out on the SATs to go watch *Mars Attacks!* is a clear highlight, while the beloved *A Christmas Story* and *The Godfather* (which he labels as the greatest of all time) round out his selections. Let's not spoil any more though.

Other great entries include directors Barry Jenkins (Episode 160) and Fran Kranz (197), but there are over 200 to dive into. — Christopher Lantinen

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS LIKE WE JUST DON'T CARE

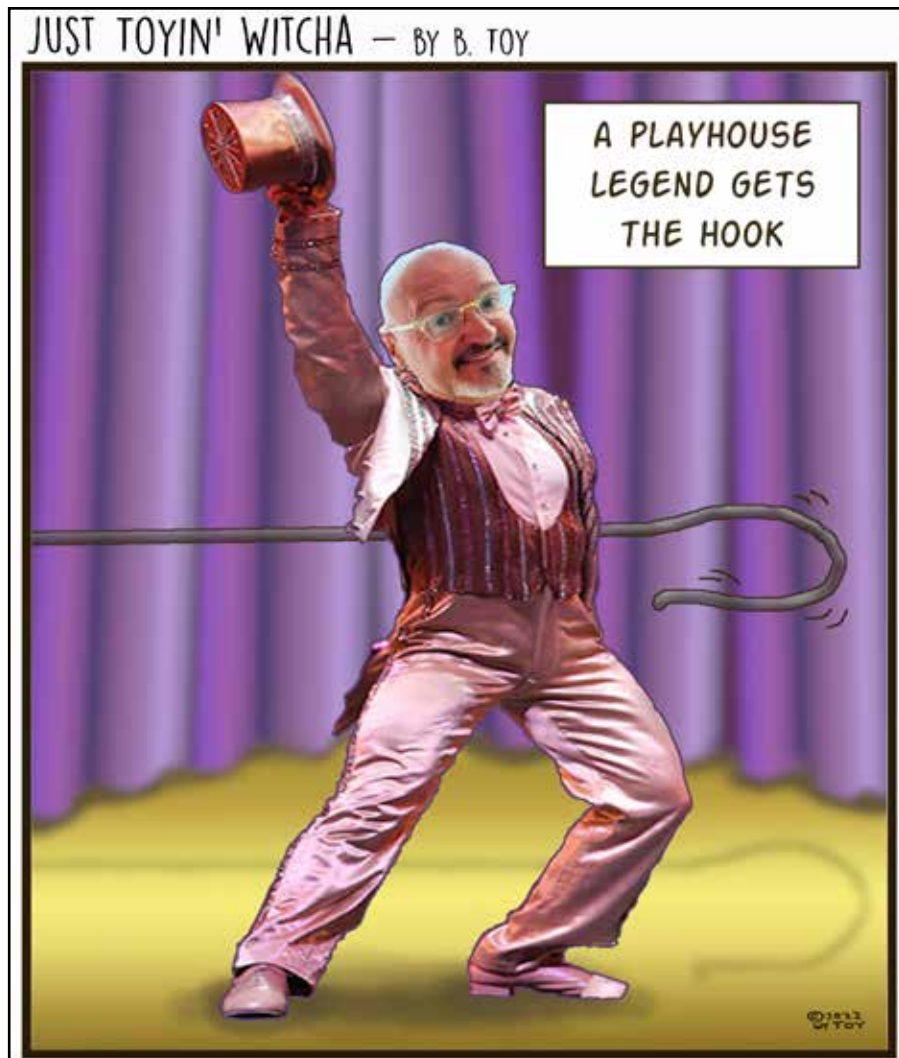
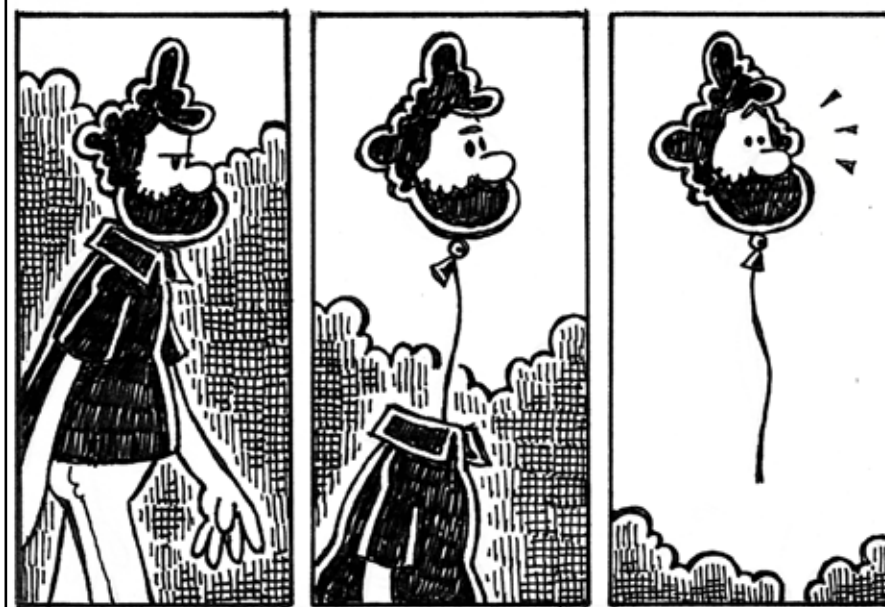
I CALLED TO TELL HER PETER BOGDANOVICH HAD DIED AND TO SEE IF SHE WANTED TO GO GET SOME ICE CREAM WITH ME. AND ALL SHE SAID WAS, "I'M DOING FINE." THEN SHE SAID, "EVERYTHING IS FINE." I ASKED HER AGAIN, AND SHE JUST SAID, "THANKS FOR CALLING."



I CALLED HER YESTERDAY TO SEE IF SHE HAD WATCHED THE LATEST DAVID CRONENBERG MOVIE YET. ALL SHE SAID TO ME WAS, "I'M DOING FINE." AND THEN SHE SAID, "EVERYTHING IS FINE." I ASKED IF SHE HAD HEARD THAT ULTRAVOX HAD A NEW BOX SET OF TWELVE INCHES. SHE JUST SAID, "I'M DOING FINE. REALLY JUST FINE." I ASKED HER AGAIN, AND SHE SAID, "THANKS FOR CALLING. TAKE CARE." THEN SHE HUNG UP THE PHONE.



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ALBUM REVIEWS

TV Priest
My Other People
Sub Pop Records
★★★★★

The London-based four-piece TV Priest returns with a wry and rollicking new album. One thing that stands out on their sophomore release is that they stepped up their production and adopted a less angular sound. Whereas their debut album *Uppers* showcased muddier textures reminiscent of The Fall, *My Other People* tilts more in the direction of bands like Joy Division and Bloc Party. There are still plenty of fuzz-toned songs with manic preacher style vocals from Charlie Drinkwater on tracks like “Unraveling” and “I Am Safe Here” that fans of the debut will enjoy, while “Bury In My Shoes” and “It Was Beautiful” are strong indie-pop tunes with a “cleaner” aesthetic. Another change was the use of acoustic guitar on several tracks to accent intros and outros, cohesively connecting the various styles and influences that TV Priest are trying to incorporate. A great example is the chaotic ending of “Bury In My Shoes” flowing into the Sonic Youth-esque “Limehouse Cut,” leading into the acoustic intro of “The Happiest Place On Earth.” TV Priest proves that you can still have a distinct sound all while exploring new territories. — Larry Wheaton



Crooner
Heaven In A Hurry
Self-released
★★★★★

Easily one of the most well-hidden gems in Erie, Crooner has crafted another remarkable album with their sophomore release, *Heaven In A Hurry*. Similar to classic albums, it's brilliantly front-loaded, with its opening tracks “Voice Of God” and the titular second track being some of the best indie-pop to come out of the area in this reviewer's memory, followed by the earworm of “Better Ways.” If you're a fan of any bands ranging from The War on Drugs or Jimmy Eat World, you'll find solace among these 13 tracks. The band is composed of prolific singer-songwriter Teddy Rankin and fellow music critic Aaron Mook, joined by Brian Kinney and Travis Mook, all sharing writing credits on the record. Building upon songs the band shared following the release of their debut album *We're Gonna Live Forever*, the band found themselves in a new situation following the pandemic. The results are astounding, a subtle and elemental array of gorgeous and lush vocal harmonies against a spectacular spine of genius songwriting. Recorded, engineered, and mastered by Kinney, the end product is endlessly listenable from the aforementioned early cuts to the cinematic feel of “In The Shade (My Hidden Beach).” — Nick Warren



Beach Bunny
Emotional Creature
Mom + Pop Music
★★★★★

Considering their rise to public recognition on TikTok, it may be easy for some listeners to write off Beach Bunny without giving them a moment to justify their existence. This would be a grave mistake, as singer Lili Trifilio and company have repeatedly proven themselves in a saturated market of throwback power-pop acts. Not unlike Soccer Mommy, Beach Bunny has an undeniable tie to the early 2000s and the hits that dominated pop radio during that time. But what sets Beach Bunny apart is the way they've crafted these songs to fill stadiums. Nearly every song on *Emotional Creature*, starting with “Entropy,” is not only hooky, but produced to be heard on the biggest PA system imaginable. Beyond being one of the best-sounding albums of the year, *Emotional Creature* is also one of the easiest to listen to. Trifilio is skilled at writing about universal themes from a personal perspective, ensuring that her grasp never exceeds her reach. On “Love Song,” she repeats a scenario mentioned earlier on the album — loving someone so much, you want to kiss them while the whole world watches. And you don't have to be the frontwoman of a popular power-pop band to know that feeling. — Aaron Mook



Anthony Green
Boom. Done.
Born Losers Records
★★★★★

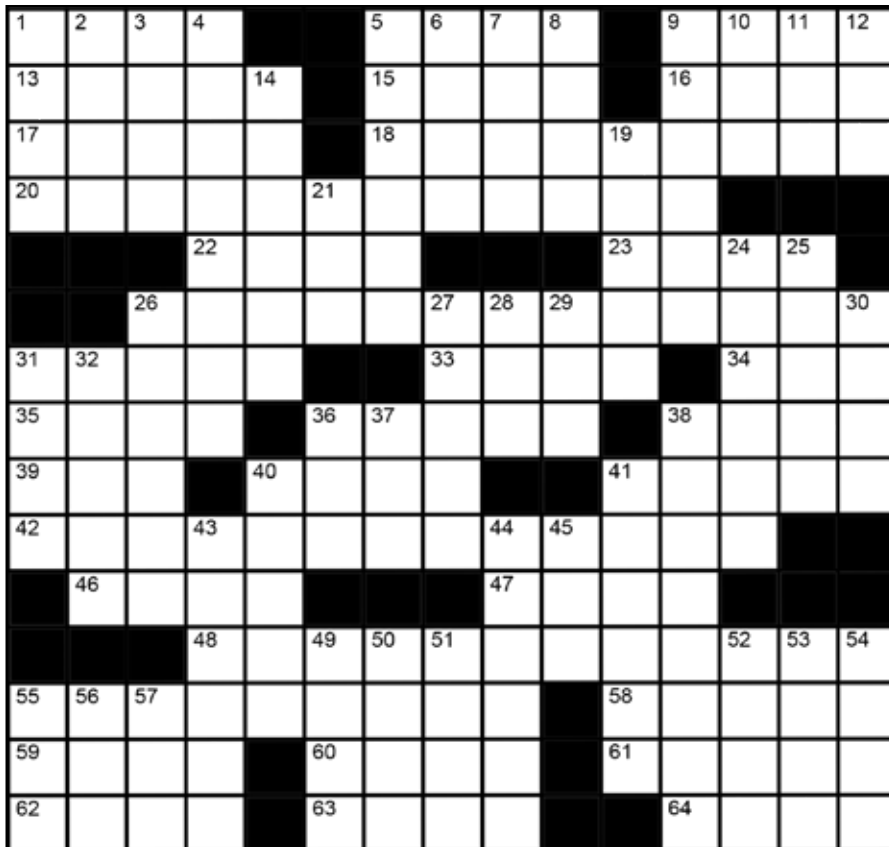
At this point in his career, Anthony Green has to be considered one of the most consistent singer-songwriters to come out of his scene. From his short but fondly remembered time with Saosin to Circa Survive and his now decade-long career as a solo musician, Green hasn't taken a break in over 15 years; that's quite the feat, considering he has not only become a father to three, but has worked unimaginably hard to get clean after a number of stints in rehab. It's not the kind of thing I write about lightly, but it's nearly essential knowledge going into his newest album, *Boom. Done.* On *Boom. Done.*, Green sounds invigorated in a way he hasn't since 2014's *Descensus*. Equal parts challenging and triumphant, he finds a way to turn his recent lows into songs that reaffirm his gratefulness to be alive, and if that's not enough, they feature some of his strongest hooks to date. In addition to the quality fans have come to expect, he also manages to tread new ground here, verging into slow, borderline R&B-tinged melodies on highlights “Maybe This Will Be the One” and “Pleasure of the Feast,” resulting in one of the most varied and exciting albums of the year. — Aaron Mook



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



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Across

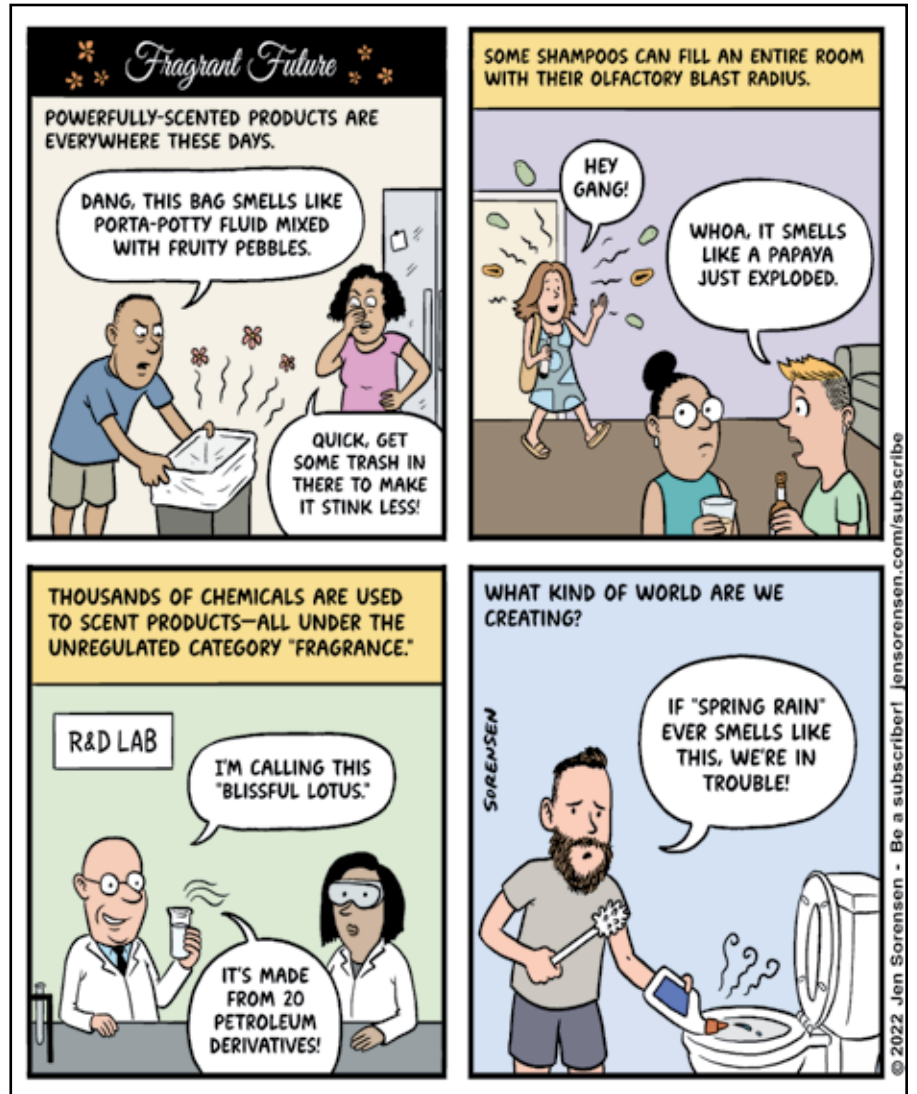
1. "Couldn't have said it better myself!"
5. Grammy winner McEntire
9. Grammy winner Turner
13. Hot ____
15. They used to be a "thing"
16. Knowledgeable about
17. Matthew McConaughey has one
18. Turned out badly
20. Area of the water a snorkeler looks for?
22. Swimmer Torres with 12 Olympic medals
23. Texter's "Then again ..."
26. Something growing in a City Hall garden?
31. Gives the go-ahead
33. Complaint
34. Brian whose last name, spelled backwards, is a 1992 U2 hit he helped produce
35. Three-ingredient sandwiches, for short
36. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Tony
38. About 30% of Earth's land
39. Tracy and Jenna's boss on "30 Rock"
40. Cornfield cries
41. Let out or take in
42. Unprincipled music source?
46. A founding member

of the Avengers

47. Snoots put them on
48. What Sigmund Freud might suggest 20-, 26- and 42-Across all suffer from?
55. "U up?" text, maybe
58. Colorful aquarium swimmer
59. Lyft offering
60. Vincent van Gogh's brother
61. Western New York natives
62. Ran
63. Home of many Zoroastrians
64. Annie Lennox, for one

Down

1. Band with the albums "High Voltage" and "Power Up"
2. ____ reflex, infant's instinctual spreading of the arms
3. Plug-in vehicle, briefly
4. Currently
5. Don't change out of
6. Biz biggie
7. Set (on)
8. Wine city near Turin
9. Ask, as for assistance
10. 2019 event for Zoom, in brief
11. "Starter" starter
12. Director Lee
14. Soothes
19. "A Room of One's Own" author
21. "No seats" indicator
24. Has because of
25. 1920s-'30s skating legend Sonja
26. Bread eaten during Passover
27. Bottomless pit
28. Director Wiseman
29. Marshland
30. One may be heard on safari
31. Syllables before di or da, in a Beatles song
32. "The Kiss" artist Gustav
36. ____ pal
37. Org. with a panda logo
38. Most-wanted invitees
40. Keep in stock
41. Promo charge
43. Did some rummaging
44. Criticize intensely
45. ____-en-Provence, France
49. Opening on Broadway
50. Bert who played the Cowardly Lion
51. Kind of market
52. Suffix with arthr-
53. Cookie that has been deemed kosher since 1997
54. "Santa Claus and His Works" artist, 1866
55. "1 sec"
56. Medium for Kehinde Wiley's "President Barack Obama"
57. Tribute poem



Answers to last puzzle



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