

The only local voice for news, arts, and culture

PRIDE IN THE COLLECTION

ERIE ART MUSEUM CELEBRATES QUEER ARTISTS

PLUS TRUST HOTEL | WILCO'S NELS CLINE | MEAD CHILDREN'S LIBRARY AT BLASCO
MCGARREY'S OAKWOOD CAFE AND COLONY PIZZA | SSJNN | ART IN TANDEM

ERIE READER

June 2026 // Vol. 16 No. 6 // ErieReader.com

FREE

WITH: THE COST OF BEING VISIBLE | CELEBRATE ERIE'S CAFE BOARD | LOCAL EVENTS & MORE

Art in Tandem 73
PAUSCHERB HOUSE PRINT '19 73

Summer Refreshers



Strawberry
Lemonade
Green Tea



Wildberry
Pomegranate
Green Tea



LIMITED
TIME
ONLY!

Customizable
Frozen
Coffee

Downtown Erie • 32 North Park Row

Country Fair
FLAGSHIP STORE

LECOM

MEDICAL CENTER AND
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PAVILION

Help that meets the moment.



Specialized behavioral
healthcare for older adults

(814) 864-4031

LECOMbh.org

The only local voice for news, arts, and culture.

Editors-in-Chief
Brian Graham & Adam Welsh

Managing Editor
Erin Phillips

Copy Editor
Matt Swanseger

Contributing Editors
Ben Speggen
Nick Warren

Media Editor / Photographer
Jessica Hunter

Local Reporter
Alana Sabol

Contributors
Liz Allen
John Bavaro
Mary Birdsong
Jonathan Burdick
Edwina Capozziello
Julia Carden
Anthony Carson
Nathaniel Clark
Gretchen Gallagher Durney
Chloe Forbes
Cassandra Gripp
Dalen Hooks
Mabel Howard
Ally Kutz
Tommy Link
Jeff McCullor
Sarah Morrison
Dan Schank
Jen Sorensen
Cara Suppa
Melissa Sullivan
Forest Taylor
Thomas Taylor
Bryan Toy
Larry Wheaton

Cover Art
Untitled (1973) by Robert Rauschenberg from the Erie Art Museum's permanent collection

Cover Layout
Nick Warren

PO Box 10963
Erie, Pa., 16514
contact@eriereader.com

The Erie Reader is published monthly and distributed at over 200 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well as social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, PO Box 10963, Erie, Pa, 16514. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct sales inquiries to 814.314.9364. For editorial inquiries, email contact@ErieReader.com.



CONTENTS

June 4, 2026

From the Editors: June 2026 - 4
On symbiosis

A Bigger, Better Blasco: Renovating the Mead Children’s Library - 6
Changes highlight accessibility, engagement, and built-in learning

The genius of Genesis - 7
How SSJNN program creates new homeowners

The Cost of Being Visible - 9
Pride means resilience not just rainbows

CAFE Brings Changes to CelebrateErie Celebration for 2026 - 10
Cultures, Arts, Festivals, and Events Board explores improvements to experience, accessibility

Pride in the Collection Celebrates Queer Artists - 11
Erie Art Museum exhibition spans nearly 80 years of queer artistic expression

McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe and Colony Pizza Expand Eastward - 12
Two long-standing Erie favorites join forces

Restoring TRUST in the Erie Economy - 14
Officials, investors break ground on \$65 million historic hotel transformation

Regular Columns - 16
Bird of the Month, Edwina Tries, The Reader Beat Recap, Take Your Beer For A Walk, and Gem City Style

Nothing More Important Than to Know Someone’s Listening - 24
An interview with Wilco guitarist Nels Cline ahead of their Chautauqua performance

Spotlight on Erie - 26
It's the way you ride the trail that counts, here's a happy one for you: National Trails Day! Juneteenth! Pride Celebrations! 1776 at the Playhouse! And more!

Local, Original Comics - 34
The latest from Brad Pattullo, Bryan Toy, John Bavaro, Nick Warren, Anthony Carson, and Tommy Link

Mabeline’s Poetry Corner - 35
GROW LOVE

Film Reviews - 36
I Love Boosters and Obsession

Album Reviews - 38
The latest cuts from Ralphie’s Gone Blind, The Lemon Twigs, Flea, and Taj Mahal and The Phantom Blues Band

Crossword Puzzle - 39
The latest stumper from Matt Jones, Jonesin’ Crosswords

WQLN

SOUNDS AROUND TOWN

FREE CONCERT SERIES

June 19
Round
Midnite

June 26
RM Delta

July 10
Lords of the
Highway

July 17
Reminiscent

SHOWS START AT 7:30 PM
AT THE WQLN PAVILION
INFO @ WQLN.ORG/SAT

From the Editors: June 2026

On symbiosis

Last month, I took a moment in this space to point out the vulnerability we all experience when we depend upon a fallible technology – and how the Erie Reader website as we know it nearly bit the dust in a widespread ransomware takedown. And while we came away from it intact (thanks to the swift work of our local web host heroes Epic Web Studios), there has been a significant amount of rebuilding that has taken a lot of time, patience, and work. But, positively, with that rebuilding we’re also seeing a lot of *improvements* to our website, our services, and the ease of use (for us on the admin side as well as on the public side).

One of those areas of improvement is our shiny new advertising page. This can be found in the top menu on our homepage, or by visiting advertising.eriereader.com.

Now listen, I’m the first one to put both hands up and say **THAT’S NOT MY JOB** when someone approaches me about ad sales. No one loves that part of the business. But in the alt-

news world, it is as essential as the air we breathe. Unequivocally: the Erie Reader would not be able to exist without the support of those folks in our community who regularly purchase ads, both in print and digitally.

We are a (stubbornly) free publication. No one ever has to pay to read the Erie Reader’s content. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, the Erie Reader will always be free to read, but

community who see value in what we do and choose to support us by purchasing ads monthly (or, for the regular Reader reader, by becoming a subscribing donor. Click **DONATE** on our homepage for more info).

These are small businesses, nonprofits, organizations without a ton of budgeted funds to throw around and yet, they see the value in bolstering one of the few local publications

their festivals, their concerts, their mission – is to support us.

It is symbiosis.

Those art and cultural institutions, and all of the other businesses and nonprofits adorning our pages each month understand that without supporting us, the support we provide goes away. And we’re so grateful that they can see and understand that connection. Which, in turn, makes us happy to prioritize their needs in terms of coverage within these pages that they support.

As you hold this issue in your hands, take a moment, not only to read our incredible, thought-provoking, well-researched, curated content, but also to glance at the ads – and maybe think about them a little bit differently this time around. Rather than existing as something that is bought and sold, look at them in terms of mutual support – as a symbiotic relationship. And perhaps then make that symbiosis go full circle by giving your support to those businesses that help support us.

Unequivocally: the Erie Reader would not be able to exist without the support of those folks in our community who regularly purchase ads, both in print and digitally.

it is not free to make. Quite literally, the only way to print a paper, pay our writers and staff for the work they do, host a website, have a regular newsletter, maintain a robust public events calendar, publish 12 issues and a visitor’s guide each year – is through the cash generated by folks in the com-

where they can be visible.

Our advertisers understand that without us, they lose an avenue for promotion. And that the only way for us to continue being one of the only free cultural news sources covering and promoting their events, their plays, their markets, their art shows,



Family law isn’t just about legal outcomes. It’s about helping people *move forward*.



Nicholas W. Radock, Esq.



Bryan L. Spry, Esq.

At Shafer Law Firm, we approach every case with the goal of protecting what matters most to you: your children, your future, your peace of mind.

With thirty combined years of serving Erie-area families, Attorneys Radock and Spry bring the kind of experience that only comes from being genuinely invested in the community.

We handle:

- Divorce
- Child Custody
- Child and Spousal Support
- Protective Orders and Domestic Matters
- Prenuptial and Postnuptial Agreements
- Adoptions
- Child Dependency Matters
- Guardianships
- Actions in Partition

(814) 871-6411 • 2890 Copperleaf Dr., Ste. 100, Erie, PA 16509 • www.shaferlaw.com

BARGAINS GALORE!



75,000+ USED BOOKS
MEDIA, PUZZLES
plus the
COLLECTOR'S CORNER.

FLO FABRIZIO
ICE CENTER
AT THE ZOO
527 W 38TH ST
ERIE, PA 16509

Sunday-Thursday

June 14-18
10am-8pm

Friday

June 19
10am-3pm



IS YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL MAKING THE GRADE?

"When our daughter started at Erie Day School, she was shy and quiet. Now, she stands in front of a crowd—speaking clearly and confidently on a microphone! Watching her deliver lines at Morning Meeting filled us with pride. Her growth in self-confidence over the past three years has been incredible."

-Proud Parents, Andrew & Kelly



Erie Day School
Learning today, leading tomorrow.

Contact Sarah Williams, Director of Admissions, to learn more.
swilliams@eriedayschool.com | 814.452.4273

AUTO REFINANCE SPECIAL OFFER

2 GOOD 2 PASS BY

Get up to **2% APR***

Rate Reduction

off your qualifying rate when you refinance your **Auto Loan** from another lender!

- ▶▶▶ Same car
- ▶▶▶ Lower payment
- ▶▶ More cash in your pocket!

Apply online in minutes
www.eriefcu.org/AutoRefi

Apply in person

Schedule an appointment
(814) 825-2436

Erie Federal Credit Union®

Loans subject to credit approval. Certain restrictions apply. Rates, terms, and conditions vary based on credit worthiness, qualifications and collateral conditions and are subject to change. Lowest rate available after rate reduction is 4.99%.

*Annual Percentage Rate = APR. *Up to a 2% APR auto loan rate reduction may be applied to qualifying interest rate. Existing Erie FCU auto loans are excluded. No other offers or promotions may be applied to rate reduction. Promotion subject to change and could end without notice. Membership eligibility required. Insured by NCUA

A Bigger, Better Blasco: Renovating the Mead Children’s Library

Changes highlight accessibility, engagement, and built-in learning

By: Dan Schank

My children are always at our downtown Blasco library and there’s always something to keep them busy. It can involve Lego, storytelling, crafts, or games. Sometimes they host film screenings. One time, we built cars out of cardboard, and they sat in them *during* a film screening. The displays are constantly changing as well, and not just for Christmas or Halloween. You’ll find curated collections highlighting Ramadan, Latin American history, and kid-friendly cookbooks. As you enter the kids’ area, the artwork in the glass enclosure is constantly revolving, showcasing youthful creativity from throughout the region. The amount of work on display always impresses me – and it’s about to get much more ambitious.

In 2024, the Mead Children’s Library received nearly a million dollars from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to “enhance the library’s ability to provide educational and community programs, create a more engaging environment for young learners, and improve accessibility and functionality for all patrons,” according to a government media release. By the time I met with Jessica Spitulski, the Erie County Public Library’s executive director, in mid-May, that project was well underway.

“Something that was very important for me to include was learning when

you *don’t realize* you’re learning,” says Spitulski. “We will have an info desk, but we’ll give kids the first shot to find things on their own through a map. So, they’re not just learning how to use the library, they’re also learning navigational work, and how to follow directions.” Once they’re on their way, “it is designed to be like a neighborhood,” according to the director. There will be a fiction forest, a baby bay, a nonfiction neighborhood, and tree-shaped architectural flourishes – all encouraging kids to explore with purpose and independence.

The baby bay will include a wrap-around workstation, so that parents can sit on the outside of the play space with their laptops while their children are in view. It will also be gated, “with one side devoted to playthings and the other for books and literacy-related materials,” according to Spitulski.

Other improvements to the main space will include study rooms and small meeting spaces for therapists, tutors, and homeschooling parents. Colorful elements will be added to the ductwork on the ceiling, and the information desk will be made more inviting, open, and accessible. A special space for older children is also in the works. “We have an age group of 8 to 10-year-olds who are not quite ready for the teen space,” says Spitulski. “That’s something that was identified in our public feedback as missing – a

CONTRIBUTED



The children’s section at Blasco library is undergoing major renovations which will transform the space to be more welcoming, user-friendly, and improved – including an outdoor area, a dedicated baby play space, and a tween section.

space designated for those kids.”

Those public meetings ultimately attracted comments from about 60 families, allowing the library staff to assess what was most important to their visitors. Making the bathrooms more user-friendly and accessible was cited as a specific need, for example.

Perhaps the most impressive addition will be an outdoor deck, accessible through the back of the Joan Spiegel Children’s room (i.e., the crafting and activity space). This partially covered area will provide “opportunities for weather learning and to see out on the bay while we talk about the history of the area and the night sky,” according to Spitulski. Back inside the Spiegel room, you’ll find a kitchenette for cooking and nutrition instruction, a retractable stage for puppet shows, and triage curtains to make their free health clinics more private and multi-faceted.

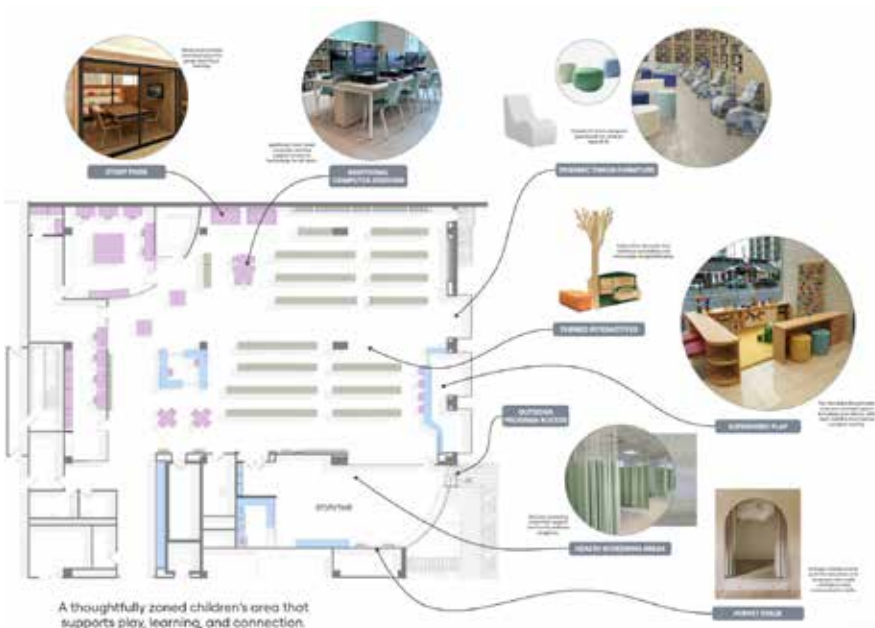
The DCED funding for the project comes from the American Rescue Plan Act, which was passed in 2021 “to address issues related to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic,” according to the Department of the Treasury. Spitulski sees a clear con-

nection between the library’s mission and the aftermath of COVID-19: “Libraries have always been focused on children’s literacy, and that’s especially important now,” says the director. “Children who were in their formative learning years when schools were closed are reaching a critical point. If they have not learned to read successfully by third or fourth grade, they will struggle for the rest of their lives. We are trying to build a space where those kids who were a bit left behind by the COVID disruptions can have the opportunity for a successful future.”

Barring unforeseen construction delays, the new Mead Children’s Library should be open this September. It won’t be long before our young ones are wandering its updated halls, with a little more excitement and a lot more independence than the last time they visited.

A pre-renovation walkthrough video of the Mead Children’s Library can be viewed on YouTube.

Dan Schank can be contacted at dan-schank@gmail.com



The Genius of Genesis

How SSJNN program creates new homeowners

By: Liz Allen

Shoppers at the Little Italy Farmers Market this summer can do more than find fresh and healthy local produce. Visitors to Three Sisters Park at 430 W. 19th St., where the Farmers Market sets up, will also appreciate the fruits of the 25-year efforts by the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) to revitalize this area.

With its goal to help individuals and families achieve the American dream of becoming homeowners, the SSJNN's Genesis Home program has helped to spur this revitalization. Genesis Home has multiple facets. Participants start by paying rent at a reduced rate – 55 percent of the fair market value of the property. They put the money they save on rent toward costs needed to buy a home, according to Michelle Jaggi, SSJNN's director of housing and community assets.

With mentoring that lasts anywhere from 18 to 36 months, participants also develop skills in budgeting, repairing credit, working with financial institutions to apply for a mortgage and maintaining a home after they move in.

"I have always been passionate about helping people in any way I can," said Kyle Blackmer, SSJNN property manager. "We empower people where they are at," he said.

That means that mentoring is individualized. Participants already adept at budgeting, for example, wouldn't take part in budget training.

At graduation, Genesis participants are encouraged to stay connected with SSJNN. They also receive a warm

send-off, which includes a housewarming basket as well as a toolbox to handle the chores of home maintenance. They've had the chance to learn from Blackmer's hands-on lessons when he has done a repair at their Genesis Home rental.

"I encourage tenants to be there when I am fixing something, to give them soft skills," he said. By watching him work, they gain confidence in themselves, he said. "They might even be able to teach me something," he said with a smile.

Ideally, renters who take part in Genesis Home will buy houses in the SSJNN footprint, which includes Little Italy but actually extends roughly from 12th to 26th streets, from Cranberry Street to East Avenue.

But as they learn the skills to manage finances and maintain homes, Genesis graduates are prepared to buy in any location; Blackmer can accompany them during house-hunting to make sure they get a good buy. Once, he traveled to Ohio to check out a potential home, Blackmer said.

In the 2025-2026 calendar year, three single-family homes have been purchased, rehabbed and sold to Genesis graduates. These homes received updated mechanical systems, including furnaces, air conditioning and hot water tanks, as well as new appliances. Some houses also got new 30- to 35-year roofs. Of the eight Genesis rental units that have been rehabbed, there are several openings available for new tenants, Blackmer said.

CONTRIBUTED



New homeowners celebrate with Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network staffers as they get ready to move into their own place through the SSJNN Genesis Home program.



DISTRESS SALE

NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN A NEWLY BUILT WINTER HOME NEAR:

- GULF COAST BEACHES
- NEW ORLEANS FRENCH QUARTERS

**FOR DETAILS: [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/PC4TOQGQMPG](https://youtu.be/PC4TOQGQMPG)
OR CALL: 504 416 7200
FOR SALE BY OWNER/AGENT**



The original
meals on wheels erie
Since 1971

**8TH ANNUAL
TAKE A SWING AGAINST HUNGER
GOLF SCRAMBLE**



BEECHWOOD
GOLF CLUB

MONDAY, AUGUST 31ST
8:00 AM REGISTRATION
10:00 AM SHOTGUN START

Presented By:



register online:



After July 31, 2026:
\$600/Foursome

- 18 holes of Golf with Cart
- Continental Breakfast
- Smith's Hot Dog Lunch
- Beverages & Snacks All Day
- Steak Dinner
- Prizes, Games, Raffles

mowegolfevent.com

USE CODE: EARLYBIRD
**\$500/FOURSOME UNTIL
JULY 31ST!**

For information:
jennifer@mealsonwheelserie.org
814.452.6930

When Blackmer began at the Neighborhood Network, the COVID pandemic had pushed up the cost of construction materials. In addition to those higher prices, Erie's aging housing stock also presents a challenge. "Out of 10 properties I go into, maybe one or two are actually suitable to invest money and bring back to square one," he said.

Genesis differs from other efforts to tackle the affordable housing crisis in Erie, such as the Triangle of Hope, which has been launched to repurpose three institutions into supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Triangle includes the former Washington School, which had belonged to the Erie School District, at West 21st and Sassafras streets; the former Sacred Heart Catholic School, at West 26th and Plum streets; and the former Saint Paul Catholic School and Parish Center, at West 16th and Walnut streets.

The Mercy Anchor Community Center, at Sacred Heart, is one point of the Triangle, explained Jennie Hagerty, executive director of the Mercy Center for Women. With 20 two-bedroom

apartments, this space will provide housing for 30 to 40 people, as well as a food pantry, diaper depot, educational programs, a thrift store, case manager and around-the-clock supervision. It is anticipated to open in 2028.

Rather than tackling chronic homelessness, Genesis addresses a different aspect of the housing market in Erie – the woeful rate of homeownership. The homeownership rate in Pennsylvania is 70 percent. In Erie, that rate is 54 percent. For minorities, the Erie homeowner rate skids to 34 percent, according to Jaggi, who joined the SSJNN in March of this year.

With a 20-year career in the social services and government, including serving as the county's outreach coordinator for the 2020 U.S. Census, Jaggi is well-versed in doing deep dives into statistics to search for solutions.

The Genesis Home program has changed over the years and now has a strategy to "better screen potential participants who are ready to purchase a home," she said. "We want to create homeowners in this area. We want to see people succeed. We want to see property values go up," she explained.

If a Genesis Home grad buys a property in the SSJNN footprint, there's another benefit. "We gift back a portion of the rent," Jaggi said. "We're incentivizing homeownership in the area," Blackmer added.

"Homeownership is so important to the stability of families and the neighborhood," Jaggi continued. "This is a program that meets the needs of middle-income earners," she said. For younger people, it counters the notion that they will never have the means to become homeowners.

Blackmer and Jaggi are delighted that since 2020, 90 percent of Genesis Home graduates have succeeded in becoming homeowners.

Blackmer recalls a family that had become ineligible for low-income housing after their income went up. They rented under the Genesis Home program and within three years, bought their own house on Erie's east side. When he visited, the kids grabbed Blackmer's hand and led him to see their artwork on the refrigerator. "They lit up. That right there is why we do it," he said.

Jaggi recounts the story of a Bhutanese family that had resettled in Erie after 27 years in a refugee camp.

When they arrived here, even transportation was a barrier, leading to a 3-mile walk to commute to work.

"After two years in the Genesis program, they were able to save enough to purchase a home, a long-abandoned 104-year-old property in Little Italy which has been restored," she said. "Because they purchased within the network's borders, they were gifted back a portion of their rent toward their downpayment."

If you visit the Farmers Market this summer, you might run into that family. You will certainly have a chance to chat with other neighbors at the market, which is open every Monday from 3 to 6 p.m., from June 22 to Sept. 28, except on Labor Day.

For more information on how to apply for Genesis or set up an interview, call Jaggi at 814-454-7814, extension 303 or email her at mjaggi@ssjnn.org. Call Blackmer at 814-454-7814, extension 204 or visit www.ssjnn.org

Liz Allen counts visits to the Little Italy Farmers Market among her weekly summer pleasures. You can reach her at lizal-lenerie@gmail.com.



MEN'S HEALTH



LECOM HEALTH



Is He Making His Health a Priority?

Encourage the men in your life to get regular checkups and be aware of the risks according to their age, ethnicity and lifestyle. Schedule a wellness visit with a LECOM Health provider today!

✓ Cardiovascular/Heart Health

✓ Vascular/Arteries

✓ Diabetes/Weight Management

✓ Kidneys

LECOMHealth.com

The Cost of Being Visible

Pride means resilience, not just rainbows

By: Dalen Hooks

There is something exhausting about waking up every day and feeling like your existence has become a political debate.

For many LGBTQIA+ people – especially Black queer and trans folks – the current political climate is not just something happening on television or inside government buildings. It is showing up in our workplaces, our schools, our healthcare systems, our churches, our social media feeds, and even our family dinners. It follows us into everyday life.

Over the last few years, we have watched politicians across the country use LGBTQIA+ people as talking points for campaigns, culture wars, and headlines. Drag shows became “threats.” Trans youth became “issues.” Diversity became a dirty word. Healthcare became negotia-

ing events, raising children, serving in churches, mentoring youth, and helping shape the culture of this city. Yet somehow, in moments like these, our existence is framed as something “new,” controversial, or disruptive.

What makes this political climate especially dangerous is how it emboldens everyday cruelty.

When national leaders spend years attacking LGBTQIA+ people publicly, it gives permission for that behavior locally. It normalizes discrimination. It strengthens online harassment. It makes people more comfortable excluding others in schools, workplaces, and community spaces. And for transgender people specifically, it has created a level of hostility that many have never experienced so openly before.

At the same time, there is another truth happening in Erie.

Pride has never only been about parties and festivals. Pride was born from people who were tired of being criminalized, erased, targeted, and silenced. It came from people demanding the right to exist openly and safely. That history matters right now because many LGBTQIA+ people feel like we are watching the country move backward in real time.

ble. Human beings became political strategies.

And while some people experience these conversations as politics, many of us experience them as survival.

Here in Erie, the effects may not always register as loudly as they do nationally, but they are absolutely present. You can feel it in the hesitation of young queer people who are unsure if they are safe to be visible. You can feel it in the burnout among nonprofit leaders and organizers trying to fill gaps left by systems that continue to fail marginalized communities. You can feel it in the silence of people who once spoke up loudly but now feel exhausted from constantly defending their humanity.

The reality is that Erie’s LGBTQIA+ community has always existed. We have always been here – working in hospitals, running businesses, leading nonprofits, creating art, organiz-

Despite the fear, people are still building community.

Organizations are still creating affirming spaces. Public health workers are still showing up for vulnerable populations. Ballroom houses (community support structures for LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially those estranged from their biological families) are still giving people a chosen family. Pride organizations are still creating visibility in places where people once felt invisible. Small acts of care – checking on someone, making room at the table, creating safer spaces – have become acts of resistance.

And maybe that is what Pride really has to mean right now.

Not just celebration. Not just rainbow logos in June. But resilience.

Pride has never only been about parties and festivals. Pride was born from people who were tired of being criminalized, erased, targeted,

QBURGH



Dalen Hooks, clinic director at Central Outreach Erie, founder of Erie Pride 365, and member of the 2025 Class of Erie’s 40 Under 40 reflects on what it means to be visibly queer in 2026 – and how political rhetoric translates to treatment the workplace, classroom, healthcare systems, and more.

and silenced. It came from people demanding the right to exist openly and safely. That history matters right now because many LGBTQIA+ people feel like we are watching the country move backward in real time.

But even in this climate, I still believe community is stronger than fear.

I believe Erie has an opportunity to decide what kind of city it wants to be moving forward – a city where diversity is treated like a threat, or a city where people from all walks of life can contribute, grow, and exist safely. A city where LGBTQIA+ youth feel forced to leave, or a city where they can imagine futures for themselves here.

Because at the end of the day, this conversation is not really about politics.

It is about people.

People who deserve healthcare without fear.

People who deserve workplaces where they are respected.

People who deserve schools where they feel safe.

People who deserve to love openly.

People who deserve to exist without constantly having to prove their humanity.

And regardless of political trends, legislation, or culture wars – LGBTQIA+ people are not going anywhere.

We are your neighbors.

Your coworkers.

Your leaders.

Your family.

Your community.

And we deserve to be treated like it.

Dalen Michael Hooks is a community architect, founder of Erie Pride 365, and Clinic Director at Central Outreach Erie. They can be reached at dalen@centraloutreach.com or dalenmichael.com

CAFE Brings Changes to CelebrateErie Celebration for 2026

Cultures, Arts, Festivals, and Events board explores improvements to experience, accessibility

By: Sarah Morrison, Board of Directors of CAFE

CelebrateErie has gone by many names over the years – Erie Days, We Love Erie Days, even 814 Days. No matter what you call it, one thing has remained the same: it is Erie’s annual invitation to come together downtown and celebrate what makes our city special.

In 2026, CelebrateErie returns Aug. 14-16 with a fresh look, renewed energy, and a stronger commitment to transparency and community involvement.

What many people may not realize is that CelebrateErie is simply not a “City Hall event.” It is organized through the CAFE (Cultures, Arts, Festivals, and Events) Board. CAFE is a nonprofit governing body created to help bring community events like CelebrateErie to life. CAFE also oversees the annual July 3 fireworks celebration, the Sounds of Summer concert series, and other initiatives designed to activate Erie’s neighborhoods and public spaces.

The mission is straightforward: bring the City of Erie’s vision to life through fun, engaging events that celebrate our diverse cultures and welcoming, vibrant neighborhoods. The CAFE Board is made up of 11 volunteer directors representing community members, business owners, organizations, and city offices. These are people who care deeply about Erie and dedicate countless hours designing, planning, and executing the entertainment, vendors, logistics, sponsorships, safety, and long-term development to ensure these events reflect the community they serve.

That also means we hear the criticism.

Anyone who has ever planned a major public event understands there is no way to please everyone. Some people come for the national headliners, others enjoy the ChalkWalk, the family activities, local food vendors, or simply spending time downtown with neighbors and friends. Over the years, CelebrateErie has experimented with different districts and layouts to showcase the best of downtown Erie while creating an event footprint that works for visitors, businesses, and residents alike.

This year, under the leadership of

the Devlin administration and with collaboration from downtown stakeholders, the CAFE Board took a closer look at concerns raised by business owners within the festival footprint. One of the most common criticisms centered around the placement of the main stage and how it limited visibility and accessibility for surrounding storefronts. The setup unintentionally created barriers between festival-goers and downtown businesses.

The resulting solution is a redesigned footprint intended to better integrate existing businesses into the event rather than isolate them from it. By swapping the locations of the stage and portions of the business district, the festival can create a more welcoming and accessible downtown environment while also improving operational efficiency. The updated layout allows the main stage to take advantage of facilities at the Warner Theatre through a partnership with Erie Events, an important logistical improvement when hosting nationally touring acts.

What many attendees never see is the infrastructure required behind the scenes. Building a festival-quality stage, backstage, greenroom areas,

By swapping the locations of the stage and portions of the business district, the festival can create a more welcoming and accessible downtown environment while also improving operational efficiency.

security operations, and technical production space is an enormous undertaking in terms of labor, planning, and budget. Every layout decision has ripple effects for safety, accessibility, crowd flow, emergency management, and the overall attendee experience.

The same can be said for Erie’s annual July 3 fireworks tradition, another



Expect some changes along with old favorites at this year’s Celebrate Erie festival – including a flip on the location of the main stage to the area outside of the Warner Theatre, allowing better accommodations for visiting performers and easier access to downtown businesses.

signature event coordinated by the CAFE Board in partnership with the City of Erie. Known in past years as “Boom Over the Bay” or “Lights Over Lake Erie,” the 2026 event returns as “Lights and Liberty on the Lake” as part of Erie’s America250 celebration.

Launching from the Bicentennial Tower at Dobbins Landing, the fireworks display highlights the waterfront, with visibility from the Bayfront neighborhoods, Downtown Erie, and Presque Isle State Park. Lights and Liberty on the Lake is made possible by this year’s presenting sponsor, Rebich Investments.

Lights and Liberty on the Lake coincides with a concert at Rebich Amphitheater in Liberty Park, as national acts The Marshall Tucker Band and Buckcherry take the stage prior to the fireworks. Though this is an Erie Events concert, CAFE has worked side by side with the City of Erie, Erie Western PA Port Authority, Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority, and emergency services to make sure these events follow both the America250 theme and CAFE’s mis-

sion.

None of this happens without collaboration. As we move closer to CelebrateErie 2026, think of the volunteers, sponsors, city staff, public safety officials, local businesses, artists, entertainers, and residents willing to show up and participate. Events like CelebrateErie are constantly evolving because Erie itself is evolving.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is progress.

CelebrateErie belongs to the community. It always has. And as the festival continues to grow, the CAFE Board hopes more residents understand not only what happens during the event, but also the work, conversation, and community collaboration that happens long before the first stage is built or the first fireworks launch over the bay.

Check back with the Erie Reader in August for a full rundown of Celebrate Erie Events.

Learn more about CelebrateErie and CAFE by visiting celebrateerie.com

Pride in the Collection Celebrates Queer Artists

Erie Art Museum exhibition spans nearly 80 years of queer artistic expression

By: Julia Carden

Queer art is often defined by its engagement with themes of gender, sexuality, and identity. But the power of queer art lies not only in its subject matter, but in its existence itself. At its core, queer art is also about visibility – the ability of LGBTQIA+ artists to create, express themselves, and share their work on their own terms.

“Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made – I try to act in the gap,” said Robert Rauschenberg, the influential American painter and multimedia artist. His photolithograph, *Untitled* (1973), is among the artworks included in *Pride in the Collection* at the Erie Art Museum and is featured on the cover of this issue of the Erie Reader.

The museum will host *Pride in the Collection* on Saturday, June 6, a special exhibition and fundraising event featuring artwork by LGBTQIA+ artists, spanning nearly eight decades of queer artistic expression.

The exhibit brings together works by influential artists including Paul Cadmus, David Hockney, and Andy Warhol while also spotlighting emerging artists from Gannon University, Penn State Behrend, Allegheny College, and PennWest Edinboro. The collection features a variety of mediums, including painting, prints, photography, textiles, jewelry, and mixed-media pieces.

“LGBTQIA+ artists have always been

(1981), a collaborative portfolio featuring works by 44 New York avant-garde artists. The discovery helped inspire the museum’s inaugural *Pride in the Collection* exhibition being held this year.

Domencic credited museum board member and cultural studies scholar John Champagne with much of the research that helped shape the exhibition and contextualize the portfolio’s significance.

“In many ways, *Artifacts at the End of a Decade* is the anchor of this presentation,” Domencic said. “It’s a true treasure trove – all in one box. As John began researching the portfolio and the artists involved, the exhibition started to take shape and evolve from there.”

The Erie Art Museum hopes to establish *Pride in the Collection* as an annual tradition. In addition to celebrating LGBTQIA+ artists, the community event serves as a fundraiser supporting the exhibition’s continuation in future years.

The event will also support the museum’s ongoing digitization efforts. Proceeds will help bring works from the museum’s permanent collection online, making the artwork and stories accessible to audiences well beyond the museum’s walls. The museum describes this project as a “long-term commitment that extends well beyond a single evening.”

“Art has no rules but holds so much importance – what a perfect place for queer people to exist. In today’s climate that’s actively trying to silence us, as well as countries that don’t allow queer people to live freely, art is the easiest way to express ourselves. Art is still a way to bring meaning and expression in a discreet yet powerful way.” – Maeve McCormick, local artist

part of our story – woven into this collection, this institution and this community,” said Laura Domencic, executive director of the Erie Art Museum. “*Pride in the Collection* is our opportunity to celebrate that openly, and to begin a new tradition that grows with Erie.”

During the museum’s ongoing digitization efforts, staff opened a box containing *Artifacts at the End of a Decade*

Pride in the Collection underscores how museums can hold space for work that spans generations, connecting artists and audiences through artwork and storytelling. The exhibition places contemporary artists in conversation with figures who helped shape art history. By exhibiting student work alongside pieces from internationally recognized artists, the museum hopes

GABY APOLLO REYES



The *Pride in the Collection* show will also feature locally produced artwork from LGBTQIA+ identifying artists including this piece from Gaby Apollo Reyes entitled *The Gay Agenda* #2.

to encourage young creators while expanding conversations about representation.

“The artists whose work hangs in museums today were once young artists looking for their first opportunity, too,” Domencic said. “Having work displayed in a museum is a significant milestone early in an artist’s career. It tells young artists that their work matters. The students are very excited.”

Maeve McCormick, 22, a student at Gannon University, is one of the artists featured in *Pride in the Collection*. Her collage piece, *Memory is the Muse*, incorporates both her poetry and journalistic writing.

“Art has no rules but holds so much importance – what a perfect place for queer people to exist,” McCormick said. “In today’s climate that’s actively trying to silence us, as well as countries that don’t allow queer people to live freely, art is the easiest way to

express ourselves. Art is still a way to bring meaning and expression in a discreet yet powerful way.”

Domencic said the exhibition also reflects a broader commitment to self-expression and visibility.

“Celebrating LGBTQIA+ artists is at the core of the collection. Everyone should be able to be themselves,” Domencic said. “People should feel free to express who they are, and art is one of the most powerful outlets for that expression.”

For many LGBTQIA+ artists, art served as more than creative expression. Paintings, photographs, and prints often became records of lives and experiences that were otherwise absent from public narratives or not safe to share publicly. The exhibition reflects that history while celebrating the artists who continue to shape queer culture today.

That legacy continues in the work of

contemporary, local artists featured in the exhibition. Works from the museum’s permanent collection are shown alongside Erie-based artists, including Gaby Apollo Reyes, whose comic-style painting *The Gay Agenda #2* is among those on view.

McCormick said being included in the exhibition has left her feeling grateful and aware of the opportunity it represents. She hopes the exhibition encourages others to create and find meaning in art.

“Being a part of this collection just shows how lucky I am,” McCormick said. “I want to use this privilege to invite others out there to create. Art is a journey, and so is understanding who you are. I hope all of the queer artists involved can inspire others to find comfort in art.”

Museums play an important role in creating spaces where diverse stories can be shared, preserved, and understood, particularly for artists and communities whose work has historically been underrepresented in institutional collections. The Erie Art Museum aims to do that for Erie, both for the audiences that visit the museum and for the artists featured on its walls.

“There’s a lot to like in this exhibit. It’s great to have such a range of mediums and such an interesting culmination of work. It’s a great way for the museum to connect with young, contemporary artists. We’re excited to share it,” Domencic said.

By bringing together internationally recognized artists and emerging local voices, *Pride in the Collection* highlights both the history of queer artistic expression and its continued presence and growth within Erie’s arts community.

The evening reception for *Pride in the Collection* will feature live music, cocktails, and light bites, marking the beginning of what organizers hope will become a lasting tradition celebrating queer artists. The event will open the exhibition as both a celebration of queer artists and a reflection of the museum’s broader effort to build an ongoing tradition of visibility through its collection.

Saturday, June 6 from 6 to 9 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5th St. // Ticket prices vary // For tickets and info: erieartmuseum.org/pride

Julia Carden can be reached at juliacarden91@gmail.com

McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe and Colony Pizza Expand Eastward

Two long-standing Erie favorites join forces

By: Jonathan Burdick

Last summer, my sons and I went on an Erie County pizza tour. Guided by my 12-year-old’s rubric, we ranked each pie in four categories on a 10-point scale: pepperoni, cheese, sauce, and crust. Folks are pretty passionate about pizza, so I won’t start a social media war by sharing our very scientific results, but Colony Pizza & Catering, which opened a few years ago in the Colony Plaza, ranked very high. Needless to say, if we’re headed to Waldameer Park or Presque Isle, there’s a good chance we’re swinging by Colony Pizza to snag some of their famous slices.

In my mind, pizza is one of the ultimate comfort foods. As Jandy Nelson so eloquently put it in her 2014 book *I’ll Give You the Sun*, “Even when I’m in the middle of eating pizza, I wish I were eating pizza.” There are other foods that make one feel that way too, like a warm hug: those delicious home-cooked meals from your childhood. There’s a reason why McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe, located at 1624 W. 38th St., has been an Erie staple for decades. As Erie Times-News reporter Kevin Cuneo wrote in 2013, eating their “comfort food dishes” is like “going home to Mom.” Their Reubens, specialty sandwiches, and hot dinners are as legendary as their friendly atmosphere.

It should come as no surprise then that social media had an *intensely* positive reaction when it was announced that the owners of Colony Pizza and McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe were teaming up for a new venture on the east side of town: Oakwood Pizzeria. “Two Erie staples are joining forces! Two brands. One kitchen,” their announcement read.

“It’s been overwhelming in a good way,” Colony Pizza owner Eric Broffman says of the response. Opening a new location had been on his mind for quite some time.

“[Eric] had requests to move east, as did I over the years – a lot of people for both of us,” explains Oakwood owner Shane McGarrey. “And one night, we got to talking about it.”

The two are longtime friends who frequent each other’s establishments. As they are both in the restaurant industry, they also often talk shop.



If there’s one thing everyone can agree on, it is that pizza is delicious. This month, Jonathan Burdick tells us the tale of two legacy family businesses in Erie – McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe and Colony Pizza – and how they’re joining forces to open Oakwood Pizza on Erie’s east side.

After Broffman posted a feeler on social media a few months ago about adding a second eastside location, McGarrey made his pitch.

“I brought that up to him and that’s when it spawned the idea of a collaboration between our two brands,” McGarrey says. “To open up a store that is all of our heavy hitters between the two of us.”

The concept of Oakwood Pizzeria was born. The new location, 861 E. 38th St., is one that has seen half a dozen businesses come and go over the past decade, but it’s a high traffic route with plenty of surrounding neighborhoods, as well as nearby Mercyhurst University. While many have joked on social media that the location is cursed due to the turnover, McGarrey and Broffman are approaching their new venture with thoughtfulness *and* significant experience.

The long-operating McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe is a family business in every sense of the term. “My dad bought it in 1978,” says McGarrey. His father, Michael McGarrey, purchased The Oakwood Cafe from Michael P. Sontheimer, who himself had purchased it in 1971 from Bob and Frank Kupper when it was named Kupper’s Tavern (which Frank had built in 1956). After some renovations, Michael reopened the restaurant offering up classics like Lake Erie perch, tuna noodle casserole, and roast pork. As reporter Kevin Cuneo re-

flected years later in the Erie Times-News, Michael was under “enormous pressure ... not to screw it up.” He did the opposite. By 1990, according to old Times articles, sales had tripled and Michael had expanded the family-run business to 25 employees.

When Michael died in 2011, Shane was living in Pittsburgh. “I obviously grew up in Erie, worked in Erie all through grade school, high school, and college,” he explains. “Then I moved to Pittsburgh, where my brother also currently resides, and then when [my father] passed, I moved home to take it over.”

There was an outpouring of grief over his father’s death, a man as legendary as his restaurant’s Reubens. The Erie Times-News eulogized Michael by noting his popularity with patrons and how he “made many friends for the restaurant.” In a letter to the editor, a former employee described him as “the best boss and best person” and a “humanitarian” who always trusted and respected his employees. As anybody who owns or works in a restaurant knows, special bonds are often formed – including with the regular patrons.

“A lot of people, I mean, you see them five, six times a week, more than you see your own family sometimes,” says McGarrey.

“Everybody knows everybody,” Michael’s brother, Kevin, told the Erie Times-News in 2014. The article emphasized that “family and fellowship”

were simply part of Oakwood’s DNA. McGarrey and Broffman describe the new venue as “fast casual” and they hope to carry over some of the cafe’s beloved atmosphere.

“It’s pretty much the same vibes. I would call it a *scaled-down* version, but very, very similar,” explains McGarrey. It won’t have as much seating as the West 38th location, but will still be able to seat around 70 patrons. Honoring both of their Pittsburgh connections, there will also be plenty of Steelers black and gold.

As the duo point out, their sub and salad menus already share some similarities, but each will bring their own unique offerings to the Oakwood Pizzeria too.

“I’ll be bringing the Reuben, the Reuben pizza, chicken biscuits, our soups, some of the hot dinners – meatloaf sandwiches, hot pot roast, all that stuff,” says McGarrey. “[Eric’s] bringing his pizzas and wings and calzones.”

Broffman is already very well-known for his pizza slinging skills. Born in New Jersey and raised in Pittsburgh, Broffman was already working in food service for a stint in Erie when

he opened up his first pizza joint here in 1992: Drew’s Pizza at East Fourth and German streets.

“That was my first pizzeria in Erie,” says Broffman. “That was the first place when I was actually working for myself.”

Since then, as described by the

visiting even if you’re a Cleveland Browns or Buffalo Bills fan and “your blood boils at the sight of black and gold”).

After that, of course, Broffman opened his current Colony Pizza & Catering near Presque Isle where he’s been serving up his brick oven pies

It should come as no surprise then that social media had an intensely positive reaction when it was announced that the owners of Colony Pizza (Eric Broffman) and McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe (Shane McGarrey) were teaming up for a new venture on the east side of town: Oakwood Pizzeria.

Erie Times-News in 2003, Broffman became “something of a cult figure in local pizza lore.” Many of his original Drew’s Pizza customers followed him wherever he went. If you have mouthwatering memories of T & E’s Pizza, Eric B’s Pizza, or Slices on French, they all have one thing in common besides pizza: Eric Broffman. Then there was Steel City Pizza and Sandwich Company, described when they opened as “Pittsburgh food without the drive” (and, as reporter Floyd Lawrence quipped in 2008, still worth

and slices over the past few years. His oldest daughter, who previously served at the Colony Plaza location, is the new venue’s assistant general manager.

Are there any new challenges the two have faced during this collaboration?

“Oh, [Eric’s] a nightmare, man,” McGarrey jokes and they both laugh. “No, I mean, like I said, we’ve known each other for a long time and he knew my father very well. He knew my uncle very well. We both know each

other’s *businesses* very well. ... Eric comes in every Friday night. We have a pretty good idea of what we were both getting into, right?”

One of the most exciting parts: the pizza-by-the-slice drive-thru. This is a rare offering from non-chain restaurants.

“We’re going to start [the drive-thru] off on Friday and Saturday nights (9 p.m. through 1 a.m.), just to get the hang of it,” says McGarrey. “Then we’d like to eventually have it possibly full-time – or at least during lunch as well.”

Also, despite some rumors circulating on social media, Oakwood Pizzeria is *not* replacing the other restaurants.

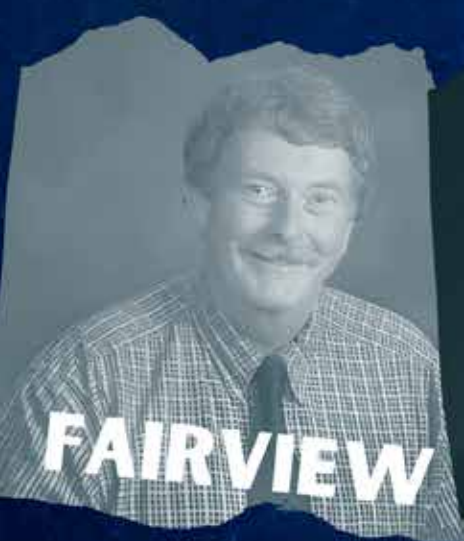
“Our other two restaurants aren’t going anywhere,” McGarrey stresses. “Those are our workhorses. This is just a new venture. The old places are what made the new place possible.”

As I live only a few short minutes away, my boys and I hope to be ranking the pizzas and Reubens there for years to come.

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

JUNE WITH JES!

JOIN US AT OUR SATELLITE LOCATIONS DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE FOR SEVENTEEN UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES!



FAIRVIEW



HARBORCREEK



CORRY



EAST ERIE



JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR A FULL LIST OF
EVENTS, SPEAKERS, AND LOCATIONS.

REGISTER ONLINE: [JESERIE.ORG/EVENTS](https://jeserie.org/events)



Restoring TRUST in the Erie Economy

Officials, investors break ground on \$65 million historic hotel transformation

By: Chloe Forbes

Staring up at 1001 State St., Erie County's tallest building and the former home of the Erie Reader offices, the words "Together for Erie" came to fruition on Friday, May 29 as the city, county, and Commonwealth joined to celebrate the groundbreaking of The Trust Hotel – a \$65 million project that will transform the 14-story building into a 195-room boutique hotel.

The building was originally the Erie Trust Company, which began construction in 1925 and has operated under different names and owners as time has passed. Most recently, it has been the Renaissance Centre, a chapter that began in 1998 as the building served as a space for businesses and professional tenants and ended in 2024 when it was sold for \$2 million.

"100 years ago, you can imagine what they (the builders) were thinking about, how they were striving for the future to create something that was exciting, was confident, and would create value and help Erie grow into the future," said Christian Siembieda, the investor behind State OZ Operator LLC, owner of The Trust Hotel.

Against the backdrop of one of the building's murals painted by Edward Trumbull in 1926, Siembieda said that he plans to preserve the history of the building.

The landmark is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and is known for its Art Deco and Renaissance Revival architecture. As part of The Trust Hotel renovation, Trumbull's five remaining historic murals will be restored and preserved, along with arched windows, bronze elevator doors, and architectural detailing.

"We want to make sure that this building is here for another 100 years and provides a place that is an anchor for development – economic development – in Downtown Erie," Siembieda said.

Laying the foundation for success

Prior to the May 29 groundbreaking, Siembieda said the Erie community laid its own economic development bricks that led him down the path to finding The Trust Hotel.

An outside investor, he remarked that it was the work of the Erie Downtown Development Corporation

(EDDC) and Erie Events, with investment from Erie Insurance that proved, "Erie could produce a 24-hour live, work, and play environment." The new hotel, which will include a ballroom, lounge, spa, and restaurant, looks to cater to that ecosystem.

Tim NeCastro, CEO of Erie Insurance, said that Erie Insurance provided upfront financing to keep things going and will have some other funding going into the project as well. NeCastro is also the EDDC board chairman and said that when the EDDC was founded, one of its major goals was to stimulate outside investment into the city, and he sees that coming to fruition in this partnership with Siembieda.

The \$65 million capital budget includes private investment as well as state funding. The Trust Hotel is located in one of the 130 acres of downtown designated as a City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ).

Businesses in the zone pay state and local taxes, and after the 2024 CRIZ designation, some of those taxes are being sent back to the CRIZ Authority to invest in local redevelopment. CRIZ generates up to \$15 million a year for 30 years, and the funding can be used on new construction, infrastructure, business grants and loans, and property acquisition. For every \$5 from CRIZ, there must be a \$1 private match, and all investments must be reviewed by the CRIZ Authority, the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the PA Department of Revenue (DOR), and the Office of the Budget (OB).

The DCED is also investing \$5 million for electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and fire suppression work that needs to be done to rehabilitate the building. Of that, \$4.5 million is Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) money, and \$500,000 is an annual historic preservation tax credit.

As the building prepares for its makeover, Siembieda said that part of his priority was not to displace tenants to the suburbs. He said it was important to keep the energy and momentum moving on State Street.

"We were very successful and paid a lot of attention to moving tenants from this building to other empty buildings

CHLOE FORBES



The Renaissance Center, the former home of the Erie Reader offices, has been rededicated as the Trust Hotel. Developer Christian Siembieda recently broke ground on renovations in a ceremony attended by Governor Joshua Shapiro, Mayor Daria Devlin, Erie Insurance President and CEO Tim NeCastro, and others as the building's plans to be converted into a boutique hotel begin to take shape.

on State Street," he said. "We were able to take empty buildings and reactivate them."

City of Erie Mayor Daria Devlin said that The Trust Hotel will create jobs, attract visitors, and support surrounding businesses to continue the surge of revitalization in the downtown corridor.

"Let me be clear: this project is about more than a building," she said. "It represents confidence in Erie's future."

It's an example of what can happen when the public and private sectors come together around a shared vision, she remarked. Other partners in The Trust Hotel investment include ERIEBANK, the Erie County Redevelopment Authority, the City of Erie, and Erie County.

"And while today is a celebration of this investment, it is also a reminder of the work ahead," she said, noting

that growth and investment is vital in every corner of the city. "Projects like this matter, and so does the broader work of strengthening neighborhoods, expanding opportunity, and creating a city where every resident can share in Erie's success."

Few reservations about the future

Just this month, VisitErie reported that there's been an increase in visitors and spending to Erie as it continues a year-after-year increase in tourism.

Gov. Josh Shapiro said that visitors to the Great Lakes region contribute nearly \$2 billion to the state's economy each year, making it extremely important to invest in infrastructure for visitors.

Recently, Shapiro was elected chair of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, which is a binational organization that unites the governors of the eight states border-

ing the Great Lakes with the premiers of Ontario and Quebec.

"I want to show off Erie, I want to show off the Great Lakes, and I want to show off, of course, this great new hotel," Shapiro said. "Look, here's the bottom line: Erie is on the rise, and I got your backs, and I'm excited about the future. We're going to keep investing in the success of Erie."

In talking to the Erie Reader, Shapiro said that the commonwealth comes into places with a vision and provides the expertise to overcome challenges and the funding to move it forward. He pointed out that his administration has created a new permitting model that increases speed of permitting so that businesses can get on the fast track in a number of days rather than weeks, so that investors like Siembieda have less red tape to cut through.

"We look to show up in communities where they've got their act together, where the public sector and the private sector are working together, where labor and business are work-

ing together, and where they have a vision," Shapiro said. "And then we come in to try to complement that vision."

The comment about collaboration came following an Erie City Council announcement that it will revisit the Bayfront Market House project after a recent 4-2 vote rejecting a conditional use permit. The Shapiro admin had touted its \$9.5 million in RACP funding for the project, which would create a 27,000-square-foot indoor market.

Shapiro said on Friday that he is in talks with the mayor and others, saying "I'm confident that there are local issues that are going to get resolved and that project is going to go forward. I'm a big supporter of that project."

He also touted the \$37 million state dollars invested in the Bayfront Parkway project to connect downtown to the waterfront and its properties.

There is another bayfront hotel planned by Scott Enterprises at a price tag of \$31.8 million next to the

existing Hampton Inn & Suites Erie Bayfront, signaling a larger push for development near the waterfront as the Parkway progress continues.

By opening businesses at a fast enough rate to match the tourism demand, Shapiro said that it drives tax revenue in the community which can in turn be reinvested in shared priorities like schools, parks, cops, and firefighters.

Although tourism rates have increased, VisitErie did note that hotel occupancy was down 5 percent this year compared to last year in the first quarter. The agency attributed it to more visitors doing day trips and said the pattern may change come summer.

Siembieda told the Erie Reader that he thinks the current political tension between the United States and Canada could be affecting tourism as well. He's not worried about saturating the hotel market or not having enough tourists to fill the rooms, though.

"I think that will right-size at some point, but also, we're two years out

from completing our hotel, and I think that what we offer is distinctly different from what exists in the market, so our market might not be directly comparable to the Erie market as a whole," he said.

The hotel is marketed as Erie's only four-star destination hotel and will remain independently owned rather than run by a chain. Shapiro said that the hotel not only will be a destination itself but puts Erie on the map as a destination once again.

"The Trust Hotel is going to be, I believe, a transformational project," Shapiro said. "Not just for its beauty and its splendor and wonderful rooms and meeting places that will go into this place, but I think by showing that we are willing to work together to revitalize the tallest building in Downtown Erie, we send a message to the rest of the community, the entire county, all of Northwestern Pennsylvania, that the city of Erie is open for business."

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

PAST LIVES

JEWELRY & ANTIQUES

SUITE 211

NOW OPEN!

- Vintage Jewelry
- Fine Antiques
- Original & Decorative Art
- Unique Gifts!

**Hours: Fri. 10-1 & 4-6; Sat. 10-4; Sun. 10-4
or by Appointment 814-881-5481**

2133 W. 8th St. • Erie, PA 16505

WERNER

BOOKS & COFFEE

In the Liberty Plaza 3608 Liberty St. • Erie, PA 16508 •
www.wernerbooks.com

Proud to be Erie's Community Bookstore

Bird of the Month: Purple Martins June 2026

Summer vacationers rent local digs

By: Mary Birdsong

Approximately 350,000 people in the United States spend their summer doing nest checks, solving problems, and collecting data for science. They are called Purple Martin landlords.

Why? Because Purple Martins – a large, broad-chested iridescent blue or purple swallow with a slightly hooked bill and long, tapered wings – are entirely dependent on human-provided nest boxes in eastern North America.

Once nesting in natural cavities, Purple Martins started relying on artificial nest structures when natural cavities grew scarce. As early as 1712, Purple Martins occupied gourds in the Carolinas and Florida, according to Cornell’s Birds of the World. Early naturalists reported Native Americans erecting gourds for Purple Martins, indicating the birds began their shift to artificial nest sites before the colonization of North America by European settlers.

Tara Dodge, education and member services director for the Purple Martin Conservation Association, tells me that she is fascinated by the fact that east of the Rocky Mountains, these birds are entirely dependent on humans to provide their housing. “So that means that every single martin you see in the sky was raised in someone’s backyard.”

The landlords of North America are doing their jobs well. According to Partners in Flight, a network of more than 150 partner organizations dedicated to conserving land birds and their habitats, there are approximately 7 to 9 million Purple Martins in the

skies over North America during the nesting season. The eastern subspecies *Progne subis subis* comprises the vast majority of those numbers, according to Dodge.

With those numbers they should be relatively easy to spot. Males are metallic dusky violet or deep blue; females are similar but duller and less uniformly blue. Both have distinctly notched tails that help with identification when they are flying.

Purple Martins survive on a diet consisting exclusively of flying insects. In our region, a cold snap can take away their only food. Periodically, regional populations can be eliminated or reduced by cold weather. Landlords supplement their birds’ diets with crickets, mealworms, or scrambled eggs (yes) in times when spring temperatures plummet.

Supplementing food is something these dedicated caretakers are willing to do. The use of backyard birdhouses and the frequent return of individuals to the site where they nested the previous year endears landlords to “their” birds.

For Julie Dell, a landlord in Edinboro, the fact that the same birds return annually is very rewarding. “It’s so hard to pick one thing that I like the most about being a landlord. Having my yard full of wonderful birdsong all summer, watching courtship, young being raised right before my eyes, and laughing at their antics,” all make the nesting season fun and rewarding. She also cherishes holding baby birds in her hand as she cleans their nests. She’s proud that her activities con-



Purple Martins, a type of swallow, are entirely dependent on human-provided nest boxes in this region. Look for their (often elaborate) cavity condos on Presque Isle, surrounding the TREC, or in rural backyards throughout Erie County.

tribute to understanding more about these birds and helping this species survive.

One of the mysteries of Purple Martin nesting behavior is why they use fresh green leaves in their nests. They place the leaves in the nest bowl over and around the eggs. Scientists still don’t know why they do this. According to Dodge, the exact reason is still a bit of a mystery, but there are several theories. The most common are that the leaves may act as a type of insecticide, help regulate the temperature and moisture levels in the nest, or to help keep the nest clean. They may also use the leaves to help hide the eggs when they are off the nest.

But whatever their reason, Purple

Martins are obviously fascinating birds worthy of our notice. Should you see a tall pole with white gourds or boxes in a rural backyard or at Presque Isle where they are situated near the Rotary Pavilion, at the west pier, and by the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, stop to watch them for a bit. They won’t be here long – enjoy them while they occupy their summer vacation homes.

For more information about Purple Martins and view their highly popular live nest cam, visit purplemartin.org.

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

Meet local makers and try traditional American crafts, from colonial times through the Industrial Revolution, celebrating Pennsylvania's unique place in our national story!

Pottery

Calligraphy

Hand Carding

Fly Tying

Sewing

Soap Making

& MORE!

July 1 • 10 AM - 2 PM

FREE KIDS ADMISSION

16 | Erie Reader | ErieReader.com

June 4, 2026

Edwina Tries... Working at a Dinor

Shirley's is under new ownership and as busy as ever

By: Edwina Capozziello

Full disclosure: Jennifer Bayhurst is my favorite restaurant owner. She has also been my favorite food truck owner, my favorite kindergarten teacher, and my

favorite housemate. She is, in general, one of my favorite people. I have called her "bestie" for years. Late last year, when she decided to take over Shirley's from the

retiring previous owner Lynn Fogle, I knew it was a great idea.

Jen previously ran the successful STO LAT Kitchen food truck, worked in the service industry throughout college, and her family has a history of cooking delicious food for generations. It's never a surprise to see her parents, cousins, friends, or her children hanging around or lending a helping hand. When my partner and I recently went to Shirley's for breakfast, I thought, "Hey, it might be fun to work here a day or two a week." So I asked my friend if she needed any help.

In my youth, I worked in many restaurants. In my 20s, I could work a double shift like nobody's business, then sleep a couple of hours

and do it all over again the next day. In my 50s? Man, oh man... the work is fun but hard. I helped at the register, bussed tables, greeted and seated guests, and rolled silverware. I worked two short and sweaty shifts. I felt like I had great work-outs, and that was about all I had in me; I couldn't hang. But that made it all the easier to appreciate the reputation Jen has so dutifully managed to uphold.

Shirley's gets busy, but it is worth the wait; the staff is friendly, fast, and they run the place like a well-oiled machine. You'll often see the lovely owner in the expo window or cooking, always with a smile and totally in her element. In addition to classic breakfast and lunch diner

fare, Jen has added Polish dishes and Polish flair to standard faves. There's a little something for everyone.

Stop in sometime soon. I may not be working, but I could be in the corner booth having breakfast and lots of hot, fresh coffee.

Shirley's Restaurant is located at 5924 Old French Road. Open weekdays from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. (closed Tuesdays) and Saturdays and Sundays from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. Last orders taken 20 minutes before close.

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



Have you ever worked in food service? If you have, you know it is often physically and mentally exhausting work. This month Edwina gave it a try, working a few shifts at Shirley's Restaurant, which is now under the new ownership of former food truck owner Jennifer Bayhurst.



CONGRATS 2026 GRADS



APPLY TODAY: www.ec3pa.org

The Reader Beat Recap: June 2026

A summary of May meetings

By: Alana Sabol

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

County Council, May 5: During the first meeting of the month constituents came to speak about the Erie County Re-entry Services and Support Alliance (ECRSSA) being disbanded and reinstated under the Adult Probation Department. It is unlikely that the program will keep the same structure or case managers that it once had. One of these case managers was Allen Brown, who served 47 years in prison for accidentally killing a peer when he was 16. He would not be able to be rehired at the future county-run reentry program due to his criminal record. "I have a great sadness that you could be so emotionally calloused in your hasty decisions," Brown said. "Society decided hastily that I wasn't worthy of a chance. That at 16 years old, a child, I should be thrown away forever. Well, I proved them wrong, I was worthy of a chance." Councilman Jim Wertz made a commitment during his report to work to resolve some of the concerns constituents had about the program being under County Probation which "might ultimately force folks back into the system."

Attendees also defended Councilman Wertz following his removal as Erie County Board of Elections Chair by a vote of 4-3, due to alleged conflict of interest by associating with the Election Truth Alliance. Some constituents, including Erie County Democratic Party Chairman Sam Talarico called for Wertz to be reinstated as Chair. "The Election Board claims that their votes were cast to protect the credibility of the board, but your actions had the exact opposite effect. So if your concern really is credibility, this body must reverse its decision," Talarico said.

Others pointed out the hypocrisy present in the board, as Election Board member Charlie Bayle questioned the validity of the 2020 presidential election in 2021. Bayle wrote: "Anyone in this country with an ounce of common sense knows the left

cheated to some extent," according to a *Rolling Stone* article. No official action was taken at that time within the Board of Elections. Wertz addressed the alleged conflict of interest, saying that he had conversations with County Solicitor Tom Talarico about recusing himself from a possible future vote, "which would be appropriate to avoid even the perception of a conflict of interest."

Copeland also defended his colleague and raised suspicion about the legality of the Special Board of Election Meeting under the Sunshine Law. These issues include Wertz not being notified of the request for a special meeting and the official action of ousting Wertz not being includ-

possibility of the Maennerchor building being considered a historic site. The city's cultural resource manager Matthew Falcone described the building, which was built in 1889 and maintains unique historical handiwork to this day. Constituents praised Julio Reyes, the current owner of the Maennerchor, who they say has put in hard work to maintain and beautify the building. Councilman Andre Horton said he is "tickled to death about a proud Mexican-American owning and taking care of the building." He also reminded the room of the historical and cultural significance of the club beyond the positive aspects, as for much of its existence the Maennerchor did not allow Black

"We have to be mindful about the deals we make to entice people to do things here and then later it falls on our taxpayers." – Councilwoman Jasmine Flores

ed on the agenda, which obscures the meeting for the public. "This is not just a violation of the Sunshine Act of a specific statute, book, chapter, verse. It's not just a violation of the spirit of the Sunshine Law. This is the entire reason the Sunshine Law was created," Copeland said. The councilman also exposed that in an executive session, "there was no privileged information that was discussed," and that council only discussed the vote on whether or not to remove Wertz. After the meeting adjourned, Solicitor Talarico confronted Copeland for speaking publicly about the executive session, claiming he broke trust with the rest of council. Solicitor Talarico punctuated his confrontation with profanity, asking rhetorically: "You think I need this job?" Although it is considered unconventional to break the executive session, it is not considered illegal if the information is not confidential or privileged.

"There's a decorum issue in the solicitor understanding his role in serving council rather than directing it," Copeland said.

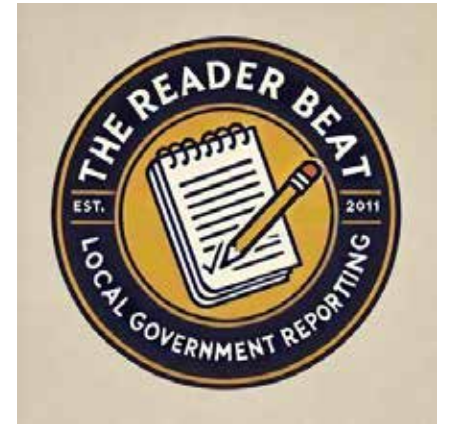
City Council, May 6: City Council held a public hearing to discuss the

people or women to be members. "Whenever we have an opportunity to talk about history, we're going to talk about all of it," Horton said.

Owner Julio Reyes spoke about his mission in owning the Maennerchor and the importance of recognizing history so we can improve the future. "My statement is about leaving places better than you found them. It is to really do your work, do your due diligence, ask for information, recognize history, and recognize the places," Reyes said.

During public comments, some constituents discussed the city's Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships (SPCP) program and needing to represent the Black community more besides two Black Church seats in the faith/clergy community. "They have neglected to include the most affected community which would be Black Americans," Constituent Kennedy Horton said.

City Council, May 20: Public comments addressed the city's budget issue and the wealth gap continuing to widen. Constituent Marty Nwachukwu said, "We don't actually have a cost of living crisis, we have a cost of greed



crisis." She referenced New York City being able to balance their budget without cutting services or raising taxes. "We need to be really aggressive with the state. They need to be closing the tax loopholes that a lot of these corporations are getting away with," Nwachukwu said. Constituent Cole Schenley discussed needing a higher population in the city to increase the tax base, but that the average family may struggle if services are cut. "What are we doing for the poorest that live here? I really want you to consider that in everything you do," Schenley said.

Constituent Freda Tepfer referenced the city's budget issue and criticized the resolution to approve the construction of Erie Events' Bayfront Market House. "I am concerned because I know that the county's on the hook for some of the debt that Erie Events incurs and this is yet another nonprofit that won't pump any tax money back into the city," Tepfer said.

The resolution approving the construction of the Market House failed 2-4, with Horton, Pol, Flores, and Titus voting no. Councilwoman Pol spoke out against corporations and nonprofits dividing up the bayfront over the years. Councilwoman Flores connected the conversation to the tax base and budget concerns. "We have to be mindful about the deals we make to entice people to do things here and then later it falls on our taxpayers," she said. "I don't agree with the nonprofit sector making profits but also not paying their taxes when other smaller nonprofits have shown that they can pay their property tax."

Coming up this month:

County Council: June 2 at 6 p.m.

City Council: June 3 at 9 a.m.

City Council: June 17 at 6:30 p.m.

County Council: June 23 at 6 p.m.

LITTLE ITALY FARMERS MARKET

430 West 19th Street

EVERY MONDAY

3:00 - 6:00 PM

JUNE 22 IS OPENING DAY!

Featuring local, fresh produce – over 10 farms from Urban Erie, Erie County, and Crawford County.

Cash, Credit Cards, & EBT accepted.

SNAP, WIC and FMNP Senior Vouchers - DOUBLED!

For more info call: 814-454-7814

www.LittleItalyFarmersMarket.org

Facebook: @SSJNN Instagram: SSJ.NN



ABC's

of Building Better Lives

MEET OUR TEAM



Mary Lynn Rote



Rob Giannamore



Samantha Marcinko



Sara Allegretto



Hannah Proper



Alen Melik-Adamyan



Jillian Rhoades



Henry Krol



Jessica Dahlgren



Jordan Stevenson



Sarah Skillman



Alicia McGill



Melissa Eimers



Moebius the ABC's Mascot

COUNSELING SERVICES

Individuals | Couples | Families

CALL US TODAY (814) 825-2930

4320 Dexter Ave • Erie, PA • 16504

For more info, visit www.marylynnrote.com

1902 CHERRY ST • ERIE PENNSYLVANIA

GROUNDED MAKER'S MARKET

VENDORS • LIVE MUSIC • FOOD TRUCKS
• ART DEMOS • DRINKS • ART SHOWS

DATES

6/26	5PM-10PM
7/25	11AM-4PM
8/15	11AM-4PM
9/18	5PM-10PM

CALL FOR VENDORS!



Impression Massage Erie

Trusted, licensed Massage Therapy

Mo welcomes his many former clients to his new studio. Located in the safe, open historic area of downtown Erie... You can now avoid the cost of high-priced chain stores and their rents.



If you don't know him already...Meet Mo.

- A licensed massage therapist with over five years of health care and massage experience.
- Mo has helped hundreds of clients with mobility, pain issues and preventive techniques. He listens to his patients to help fix their problems and explain what he's doing.
- As an award-winning athlete and bodybuilder – He understands the approach needed to help you to feel better and relax.
- Now offering Stretching.

Introductory rates are located on website or by phone.
Text or Call 814-331-9718 • www.impressionmassageerie.com



JOIN US JUNE 26TH FOR A NIGHT OF BACK TO BACK EVENTS

Gallery Night • EAC Gallery Space • 5:00-8:00 & World Refugee Day • Perry Square • 6:00-9:00



Yahn Planetarium

AT PENN STATE BEHREND

PUBLIC SHOWS SATURDAYS:

10:00 A.M.: CHILDREN

11:30 A.M.: GENERAL AUDIENCE



PennState
Behrend

FULL SHOW DETAILS AND MORE:
behrend.psu.edu/yahnplanetarium

THE ERIE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
& EMTA PRESENT:

14TH FEST

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

GreenZone

Professional Counseling



In-Person & Virtual Mental Health Therapy

(814) 734-0199

111 Walker Drive
Edinboro, PA 16412

www.greenzonecounseling.com

Anxiety • Trauma • Depression



EMDR • DBT • CBT • CBT

Take Your Beer for a Walk: June 2026

A southwest trek brings delight in Oakwood Cafe, Teresa’s Deli, and Maria’s

By: Jeff McCullor

Holy smokes, we’re into June. It sure feels like some big old red button was pushed labeled, “SUMMER” and suddenly here we are in perfect outdoor beer drinking weather. Welcome, friend; we’re taking your favorite beer for a walk in southwest Erie. Grab your sneaks, pour up your favorite beer of choice, and let’s zip through town.

A perfectly situated starting point is McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe (featured elsewhere in this issue!). They’ve made their home at 1624 W. 38th St. since 1978 and they show absolutely no signs of slowing down. Take a drive past any day of the week and you’ll see their parking lot jammed with cars. The reason? Most likely the Reuben, considered Erie’s best by so many. Check out all the opinions on Reddit (there are *many*), Yelp, and even from food reviewers like Denny Glasser. McGarrey’s has a full menu aside from Reuben and Reuben accessories, all of which is solid, and the bar side of the restaurant is great for

midday Sunday hangs. Cheers to you, McGarrey’s!

Alright we’re going to move on down the dusty trail with beer in-hand, heading north along Greengarden Boulevard. Have you ever been down this street in the winter after a fresh snowfall? Man, it sure is something to see. If Thomas Kinkade painted winter streetscapes, I think this thoroughfare would be an excellent candidate. Hey wait! It’s summer and here I am dreaming of winter things...

Anywho, let’s walk along Greengarden all the way north to the corner of West 31st. Be sure to snag a few alco-sips along the way,

Holy smokes, we’re into June. It sure feels like some big old red button was pushed labeled, “SUMMER” and suddenly here we are in perfect outdoor beer drinking weather. Welcome, friend; we’re taking your favorite beer for a walk in southwest Erie.

the three-block walk can exact a hydration toll on oneself! On the northeast corner stands Teresa’s Italian Deli. You’ve been here right? The only correct answer is *absolutely*. The Teresa’s name dates back to 1949, and they’ve stuck to their time-honored values of making everything



Take a walk around a quiet, southwestern neighborhood in Erie with local brewer Jeff McCullor as he refreshes at some long-standing Erie businesses like McGarrey’s Oakwood Cafe, Teresa’s Deli, and Maria’s Tasty Delights.

from scratch, large portions, and lower-than-expected prices. Get the homemade meatball sub, size large (17-18”) for ONLY \$11.79. In these really weird and absurd economic times, that’s a screaming deal. Cheers to you, Teresa’s!

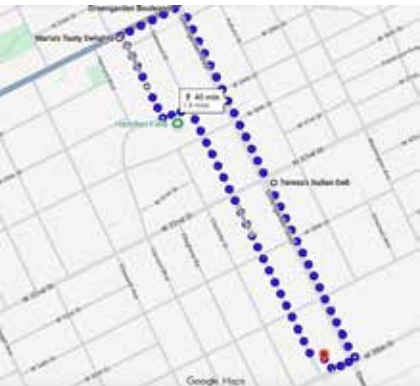
Next, let’s take this beer of ours (and maybe a meatball sub) more northward along Greengarden. You’ll note the nice homes, the manicured lawns, and wait – a bike lane! An honest-to-goodness travel method specifically for bicycles? Good golly. If you’re detecting some small sarcasm here, it’s because there definitely is. Neighbors along this street “fought” to block the construction of said bike lane, backed by some silly reasons. Look guys, sometimes people just want to ride a bike to work and save some CO2 emissions, coupled with exercise. You can’t tell but I’m over

here raising my hand, volunteering as tribute. Cheers to you, modern progressive transportation method!

Alrighty, we’re nearly to the end of this trip and I imagine your beer is nearing its demise soon enough. As we near the intersection of West 26th and Greengarden, let’s hang a left and walk two blocks to the corner of West 26th and Charlotte streets, home to Maria’s Tasty Delights. You’ve earned a sweet treat after all these steps, am I right?! Get the Peanut Butter Pretzel Paradise in a waffle cone. Trust me. Cheers to you, Maria’s Tasty Delights!

And cheers to you, walking reader! Thanks for coming along Erie’s southwest side with me this month. Keep up the good work.

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



Gem City Style: Jesse and Ricardo, Art in Tandem

Academics, artists, and adventurers

By: Jessica Hunter

There are people in every city who become part of its mythology. Erie has a few. Jesse and Ricardo are among them.

You've seen them. If you haven't, you will. Two men on a tandem bicycle, moving through town like a living painting – dressed in perfect unison, every detail considered, every color intentional. They are not an accident. They are not a coincidence. They are, by their own design, a work of art that has been in progress for over three decades, and Erie has been their canvas.

When I first reached out about featuring them in this column, they didn't hesitate. "Bring it on, Jessica."

They arrived at the patio outside my downtown studio right on time, dressed, as always, identically. Vibrant, deliberate, coordinated. I complimented them immediately, because how could you not? Then I gestured to my own look – a colorful ensemble, funky sneakers – and asked, maybe a little hopefully, how I did.

They approved.

With that settled, we moved inside for what turned out to be one of the most memorable conversations I've had for this column. Jesse and Ricardo didn't give me a sound bite. They gave me a philosophy. And once they started talking, I realized I've been thinking about things a little too small.

They go by the moniker Art in Tandem. The two met at the Blues and Jazz Festival at Frontier Park – one of Erie's most beloved summer traditions – and the story, like everything about them, is perfectly them.

"Ricardo asked me to play tennis," Jesse told me with a smile, "and we've been volleying ever since."

Somewhere around 35 years ago, they decided to become a couple – and with that, they decided to become, in their words, "one person." One cappuccino, shared. One meal between them. One tandem bicycle. It sounds like a concept until you're sitting across from them and realize they've actually done it – that their lives are so genuinely, thoroughly intertwined that separating the two would be like pulling a painting apart by color.

JESSICA HUNTER



This month, Jessica Hunter met up with Jesse (right) and Ricardo (or Art in Tandem) at her downtown studio as she got to know more about their motivations to be living art. They spoke about their conscious choices towards living creatively, their world travels and experiences, and how they hope to inspire others to live in an authentic way.

So what is Art in Tandem, exactly? I asked them to describe it to someone who's never encountered them before.

"Art off the wall," Ricardo said without hesitation. "Living, moving art that you can't hang on your wall above the sofa. And it may talk back to you."

Jesse said, "It's not AI. We're not algorithms. We're sentient beings."

That's the line I keep coming back to. In a moment when so much of what we consume has been generated, filtered, optimized – Jesse and Ricardo are radically, defiantly, joyfully human. They are made of choices, not code. Every outfit, every outing, every appearance is considered. Nothing about them is accidental.

"It's a premeditative move," Ricardo said. "As if you're creating or painting a human landscape. You're very conscious about it."

The outfits are where people tend to get stuck, and Jesse and Ricardo know it. Locals sometimes assume

the matching aesthetic is a statement about their relationship. It isn't. Or rather, it's about something much larger than that.

"We're doing an art piece with our apparel," Ricardo said. "It has nothing to do with being gay."

And here's the part that stops me: even within the queer community, the assumption persists. "People used to say or think, well, they dress like that because they're gay," Ricardo said. "Even gay people think we're dressing this way because we're gay. So they're stereotyping themselves."

What the work is actually about is intention. Message. The outfits – sourced, refurbished, sometimes made from scratch, frequently featuring vibrant colors and unexpected textures – come together collaboratively and mindfully. Jesse might build the base. Ricardo adds the head wrap. Someone gets the socks right. And when there's a difference of opinion,

it isn't a disagreement.

Jesse nodded. "We advise each other, as a good couple does."

They want to be clear about what it isn't: fashion. It isn't trend-chasing. It isn't performance for performance's sake. It's closer to what Ricardo described as raising the level – of living, of thinking, of what we consider possible.

"We don't want this pedestrian look," he said. "I go to work, I come home, I go to the bar, pizza, home to my wife and kids, back to work. We kind of want to raise the level of living. We want to raise the level of people's thinking."

That's not a critique so much as an invitation. Just the day before our interview, someone walked up to them at Starbucks. "I love seeing you guys," the stranger said. "You make my day." Ricardo smiled telling it. That, he said, is the point. "We represent the possibilities. We have unlimited potential – and so do you. We're telling

you through us: you have agency. You have agency to create your own world.”

Jesse and Ricardo are travelers in the truest sense, and they’ve carried Art in Tandem far beyond Erie: Paris, Florence, Milan, New York, LA, Rio, Tegucigalpa. They’ve found that the response is more or less the same wherever they go. As Ricardo put it, in his own gently dated vocabulary: “They dig us.” A warmth, a recognition, that seems to translate across every border they cross.

In Spain, people have a name for them. When Jesse and Ricardo come into view, locals call out “Los Gemelos” or “here come the twins.” Ricardo said it with a certain quiet pride. Because that’s exactly what they’re after: to move through the world in a way that shatters the assumptions people carry – about gender, about identity, about what a life can look like.

“That’s the whole point,” Ricardo said. “To break stereotypes.”

Ricardo told me, “People are evolving. They’re coming to realize that peace is the answer. Peace, love, creativity, authenticity – these things are the way it should be.”

Jesse put it plainly. The culture is

catching up. But it’s late.

“They are late,” Ricardo agreed – not with bitterness, but with the kind of patient certainty that belongs to people who have been right about something for a very long time and simply waited for the world to catch up.

There’s something generous in the way Jesse and Ricardo move through Erie. Their visibility has never felt like a demand. It feels more like an offering – look, this is possible, this is what it looks like to fully inhabit your own life.

“We choose to be seen,” Jesse said. “We want people to know we’re not hiding. We’re not trying to identify as something. We just want to be there – like they’re there. We want you to try it yourself, too.”

Taking up space, they said, is part of it. Not demanding space but creating it. “You come as yourself and you make your own space,” Ricardo said. “And if it doesn’t fit, you can always create a new one. Or better yet, expand your thinking.” The implication being: there’s room for everyone, but you have to be willing to show up and claim it.

Jesse puts it simply: “Respect for artistic and cultural endeavors, pursuits, and aesthetic judgments. When they

see us – hopefully they see a little bit of themselves.”

When people see them riding through town, I asked, what do they think the first thought is?

Jesse grinned. “There go those guys.”

That is the definition of iconic.

They’ve dubbed their home “the Poetics of Space,” and it is exactly that. A living gallery that doubles as their life, filled only with what holds meaning. Every object chosen deliberately. Nothing decorative for decoration’s sake. Everything earned its place.

There’s an exit sign mounted on one wall, pulled from somewhere and installed in a corner where it became, Ricardo says, aesthetically pleasing in a way that surprised even them. A refurbished café sign, the café long gone but the sign still glowing. Mixed-media pieces made from Guatemalan coffee grounds and artifacts collected on their travels. Nothing is brought in unless it means something.

“We don’t bring anything into the space that isn’t meaningful to us,” Ricardo said. “And ‘meaningful’ can be interpreted rather broadly.”

Their reach extends well beyond

Erie’s city limits and well beyond what most people realize. Locally, they’ve presented at Gannon, Mercyhurst, and Edinboro on art, life, and literature. Abroad, the list reads like a well-stamped passport: Toulon University in France, Bogotá, Colombia, Oxford in the UK. They once sat in the window of a bookstore in Vienna, Austria – living art in the most literary of settings. At the Centre Pompidou in Paris, they walked through Yves Klein’s legendary blue show, surrounded by that impossible, electric Klein blue, and did what anyone who truly understands art would do.

They attempted to jump into the void.

“We can’t remember all the experiences after 30 years,” Ricardo said with a laugh – which tells you everything about the kind of life they’ve built. Not curated for an audience. Just lived, fully, and documented in memory rather than content.

Before they left the studio, I asked what the next chapter of Art in Tandem looks like. Ricardo thought about it for a moment.

“It’s like you read a poem,” he said. “What the poem is saying is not always on the surface. It’s between the lines. It’s sometimes what isn’t said. So stop thinking about what you think it is. It’s about something deeper than that.”

Jesse, for his part, offered one final note on where their heads are.

“We love to read books,” he said.

Of course they do. And you may catch them reading at a local coffee shop for “cappuccino klatsch time.”

Jesse and Ricardo have been raising the level of living in this city for a few decades. They’ve been doing it on a tandem bicycle, in matching outfits, through a philosophy that is equal parts art theory, love story, and quiet challenge to everyone around them to show up more fully as themselves.

Jesse and Ricardo ride together as Art in Tandem, Erie’s most iconic living art duo. Find them downtown, at the farmers market, at vintage car shows, or gliding past you on a tandem bicycle just when you need the reminder that life can be more interesting than you’re making it.

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

JESSICA HUNTER



The intentional apparel choices of Jesse and Ricardo, or Art In Tandem, are not made for fashion or trend-seeking – with curated pieces, often refurbished or handmade, they are taking agency over their own life experiences and, hopefully, encouraging others to do the same in their own way.

Nothing More Important Than to Know Someone's Listening

An interview with Wilco guitarist Nels Cline ahead of their Chautauqua performance

By: Larry Wheaton

The Chicago-based indie Americana rock band Wilco is returning to the Chautauqua Institution in June for a special evening with a performance delving deep into their catalog. With 13 albums, several EPs, and four collaborative albums with Billy Bragg, the group will have a lot of material to choose from. Longtime Wilco guitarist Nels Cline has been with the band since 2004 and has contributed to every Wilco album since 2007's *Sky Blue Sky*. He is also known for his solo jazz-influenced albums, collaborating with artists like Banyan, Mike Watt, and Yoko Ono. Erie Reader contributing writer Larry Wheaton spoke with Cline over the phone to discuss his work with Wilco, some of his influences, and the inner work of songwriting.

Larry Wheaton (LW): This is the second time Wilco has played the Chautauqua Institution in just two years, the last time being July 5, 2024. Tell me what it is about the place that you enjoyed, being that it's a unique venue along with the grounds surrounding it.

Nels Cline (NC): It's really quite beautiful and I imagine that everything will be in full bloom, flowering for summer. I am also a New York state resident, so I like being in New York state when I am on tour because it's almost home. I live near Oneida actually.

LW: Can you tell me about the new expanded editions of 2011's *The Whole Love* and 2004's *A Ghost Is Born*, just recently released. Do those releases have any effect on what is put in the set list for this tour?

NC: Not that I am aware of, no. We certainly play a lot from *A Ghost Is Born* generally. I know that Jeff (Tweedy, lead vocals/guitar) slaves over a hot setlist every afternoon, and he definitely keeps in mind, repertoire wise, what records songs come from and with anniversary issues coming out – pretty soon the *Sky Blue Sky* anniversary is going to roll around. These songs get emphasized, you could say. It's part of the architecture of the setlist, but in general I think Jeff tries to have a little something from every record in the set.

LW: There are certain songs that

fans expect – is there a conscious effort to mix it up each night of the tour?

NC: There are obviously certain songs that I could say are expected or beloved or ritualized at this point. Sometimes Jeff gets into a flow with the way they come together on each tour and that changes, but once he gets into that sort of flow for himself and the audience, the set lists don't vary quite as much as one might imagine. We are playing two sets because it's entitled "An Evening With Wilco," so lots of songs are getting played. There are some extended instrumental forays. Patrick (Sansone) and I are getting into some guitar mischief and that could be on one, two, or three songs per night and those change. You could say we are going to survey the Wilco groove, but certain things will be honored that are audience favorites. Jeff works really hard on this everyday.

LW: On the *Hot Sun Cool Shroud* EP I noticed there were some instrumentals that felt a little more experimental that the previous album *Cousins*. Were those tracks that were left over from those sessions?

NC: It's leftover stuff – the thing about almost every Wilco project, recording-wise, is that there is always extra stuff because Jeff always writes a lot of songs and we try to approach them in a coherent way and record them as much as our time and energy allow, so there is generally stuff left over. Even before I was in the band there was extra stuff left over from *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* that was absolutely overwhelming because of so much experimentation on everything that's recorded. Even *Cruel Country*, if I tax my tiny brain – there was stuff left over from that record and that was 24 songs. Jeff is just very prolific and I have to say that we are pretty efficient when it comes to arranging and recording in the studio. We get a lot done, but not everything gets absolutely finished, so sometimes if there is something in analyzing the leftovers department, then maybe Jeff will go in and finish it for something like an EP or something extra.

LW: Jeff Tweedy writes most of the songs. What's the process from him presenting the song to the band to

CONTRIBUTED



Larry Wheaton has a conversation with long-time Wilco guitarist Nels Cline ahead of the group's performance "An Evening With Wilco" at the Chautauqua Amphitheater this month. They discuss the band's evolution, creative processes, influences, and more.

what the fans end up hearing on the record? Is there a form that you all fall into or does each some take shape in its own way?

NC: Each song takes shape in its own way. Quite often Jeff has this very specific angle on a song or what he is looking for and sometimes he just starts playing and singing and we learn the structure of the song and start adding. Then it's a matter of sub-tracking, because there is so much. But there is no actual method or repeated [methodology] that I could point to, except for the fact that Jeff's going to have more songs than we can actually get to. Jeff doesn't repeat himself with whatever approach he wants to take – whether it's stylistically, production-wise, or instrumentation-wise, so it's sort of a case-by-case basis. Sometimes for me it's very challenging to do something that sounds fresh and very succinct. Sometimes it's hard to find an avenue into a song that might have a very familiar structure, but Jeff is seeing a novel approach. That can take a minute, despite whatever musician-ship skills I bring to the table.

LW: Wilco covered "U.S. Blues" by the Grateful Dead last time you were at the Chautauqua Institution and have played some shows alongside Bob Weir, with your collaboration on "St. Stephen" appearing on

the Grateful Dead tribute album *Day of The Dead*. What influence, if any, does the Dead have on your playing or Wilco's live performance?

NC: It's very interesting to me that we are doing some of these songs and having these experiences – I mean I played with Phil Lesh and Friends a couple of times several years ago. I am the old man in the band, so my twin brother Alex and I used to listen to the Grateful Dead since their first record and then not religiously because I kind of went into a different musical direction in my life after 1972. However the longevity and influence of the Grateful Dead's music and general approach has made them more popular than ever, which is pretty trippy. I think the sort of folk blues aspect of the music is actually rigorous and the sort of ramshackle presentation and extended freedom that they brought to their performances has become ultimately more attractive to Wilco as we get older.

I think that a lot of the material is fascinating and the songs have some very unique twists and turns – the appeal of the band is not just, shall we say, youth-originated or ageless. When you imagine growing older and moving forward in a band that plays folk and blues, you have to listen to the Grateful Dead. There is an amazing amount of vision and longevity.

It's inspiring even if you don't love everything about it – it's just so remarkable. I think that's something the whole band just started considering far more than the earlier iterations of the band.

LW: You play various styles of music, but are there different influences that you look to while performing with different artists? For instance, I could be wrong, but I hear touches of Neil Young and Richard Lloyd when I listen to you play with Wilco.

NC: I am a total mutt. I am diverse. My major thing is improvising – improvising can take many forms. My improvising you could call more of an exploration of sound; I don't always think in song forms but more in the jazz vocabulary. In some way I consider myself an American songbook jazz player, or an early fusion kind of guy. Miles Davis *Bitches Brew* and also acoustic bands like Oregon – that sort of material, that harmonic language. Then I like to rock out, and the guitar can do this, so I think I picked the right instrument to explore various modes of expression.

I think genre for me is not a consideration. I think people tack that on to anybody who moves around. It used to be considered quite suspect to play in a rock band, then play some hardcore free improvised music. That has changed thankfully and I am glad I lived long enough to see that suspicion disappear. To play in a band like Wilco and play diverse styles within a band like Wilco, and then play my own music and collaborate with improvisers from various styles is pretty much the ideal life for me. I feel very lucky that I am able to arrive at this place.

LW: I have a favorite guitar solo of yours – it's the one on "Impossible Germany." Can you tell me how you approached that one and maybe, if you remember, how many takes you did of it?

NC: That solo has become such a nightly ritual. I call it the blessing and curse of my life. It's a very long story to tell, but I will try and make it brief.

Jeff had made demos of that song prior to me joining the band and prior to Patrick joining – now we have been in the band for 22 years. I got an idea after we demoed just the song without the extended coda, to put an extended instrumental coda at the end. My idea was to have a completely worked-out guitar part in the manner of a song by Television called "The

Dreams Dream," so I came up with some melodies on the guitar that I wanted to play with Jeff and showing him a couple of melodies and showing Patrick, he grabbed a guitar and started dissecting the melodies. So a couple of hours went by, they had in the arrangement (Cline then hummed the guitar lick that repeats in the song) all that stuff, and then he said: what do you think? I said "Sounds great" and Jeff said you should just solo, so the exact opposite of my idea.

So I played a solo and another demo with the instrumental coda added, which was feeling really good. Jeff really loved the solo on the demo so when we tracked the reel for "Sky Blue Sky" he asked, almost sheepishly, whether I would mind replaying the solo because he kind of fell in love with it while listening to it in his car.

The first time we played it in Spain when *Sky Blue Sky* was a very new record, it was really early in the set-list because it was just this new song off the new album and the audience went completely insane. We were all looking at each other and didn't know what was happening. You have to remember that we are in Spain and they love guitars, it became this universal guitar part and I can't honestly say it in a self congratulatory way, I can't think of another song in the current vernacular that has an extended guitar solo song that people actually listen to, that I know about. Even in metal where guitar solos are very important, those are extremely short. So this extended drifting solo with a visual dynamic that builds – I don't hear it out there, so there is something unique about it. It's really a trip, I have to say.

Wilco will return to the Chautauqua Institution on Sunday, June 14 with tickets ranging from \$50 to \$150. It is recommended to arrive early due to the distance of parking from the venue and to go through security before entering the grounds. Visit chq.org for tickets and info.

Larry Wheaton is an avid record collector and music connoisseur, with thousands of albums to choose from, he has found a home for Wilco albums in his collection since he discovered them in the late 90s. He also frequently plays their material on his WQLN radio program Sonic Sounds, for which he has been a co-host since its inception. He can be reached at wheaton1138@gmail.com

How long should your pet live?
Help your pet live a longer, healthier life.



Nickel Plate Mills

1932 Parade St, Erie, PA 16503

www.nickelplatemills.net

Like us on facebook



Cam El-Farouki, Agent
3319 W 26th Street
Erie, PA 16506
Bus: 814-833-6663
www.teamerie.com

Drive happier.

Join the millions who protect their cars with us.
It's one more way I'm here to help life go right.™
CALL ME TODAY FOR A QUOTE.

State Farm®

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company; State Farm Indemnity Company; Bloomington, IL

1601561

Texas County Mutual; Dallas, TX

THANK
YOU,
ERIE!



We are thrilled to be voted
Best Gift Shop,
Best Boutique, and
Best Art Gallery



Art Gallery + Gift Shop **Since 1974**
Paintings, photography,
glass, jewelry, pottery & more.
10 E. 5th Street
Erie, PA 16507
www.glassgrowersgallery.com



814.453.3758 • staff@glassgrowersgallery.com

ERIE'S HIDDEN TREASURE

**"If we don't have it,
You don't need it!"**

Hardware • Paint • Plumbing
Propane • Electrical Supplies
Tools • Screen & Window Repair
Equipment Rentals • US Post Office



Over
135 years
of service
to Erie, PA!



Since 1886
KRAUS
DEPARTMENT STORE

810 Parade St. • 814-453-4314
www.kraudeptstore.com
Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30-5:30 • Saturday 9-1

EVENTS

Centennial Hall Fills June Calendar with Versatile Lineup

Emo, jazz, rock, and hip-hop showcased at local venue

By: Nick Warren

BEGINNING FRIDAY, JUN. 5

When the Sun Sets and Surrender the Ghost

Friday, Jun. 5 / 6 p.m. / \$15

Midwest emo/pop-punk powerhouses Surrender The Ghost and When the Sun Sets will team up for back-to-back high-energy sets at Erie's Centennial Hall. Brought to you by local hitmakers Idlestar Productions, these two bands kick off a weekend mini-tour together in Erie dubbed the "Sunshine + Sad Songs Tour." Hot off the release of their debut album *The Cards We're Dealt*, the Chicago quartet When the Sun Sets blend modern pop production with traditional hooks. Seeking to bring attention to mental health awareness, the band relies on a positive energy both on and off stage. That same mindset frames the ethos of Columbus, Ohio five-piece Surrender the Ghost. With a string of new singles out this year following the releases of last year's *Everything is Everything EP* in 2025.

Hardo & Friends

Saturday, Jun. 6 / 7:30 p.m. / \$25

Hosted By Jay Rastik of Streets Tea Podcast, Pittsburgh rapper Hardo appear in Erie in support of his album *1600 Degrees Delux* — the 23-track album released on Christmas Eve of 2025. He will be joined by Niagara Falls MC Jamal Gasol (from Gully TV's *Pillmatic Compilation*), FTD Drama, Scrilla Santana, Erie artists RSG Milli, Ducky, Ferrari Switch Lanez, Big Gill, and DJ Hubb. Following the show, there will be an after party hosted by Club Prive'.

Cordell Winter

Friday, Jun. 12 / 6 p.m. / \$5 early bird, \$15

The nomadic rocker Cordell Winter will make an appearance in Erie, bringing the live intensity stage presence he's known for. The date will be part of his initial tour leg, as he makes his way from Florida to New York and into the Great Lakes region in support of his latest album, *Leave This World Alive*. Hardened by the road and the ups and downs of life, Winter has built his reputation on a relentless drive to tell his story. From his days living in a van and sleeping in Nashville recording studios, to being mentored by Loretta Lynn, he's crafted a true-to-life story of survival and tenacity. Making back-to-back appearances at Sturgis Buffalo Chip, Winter has supported Billy Corgan & the Machines of God, Kid Rock, and Skid Row.

Jamie Baum Septet+

Thursday, Jun. 25 / 7:30 p.m.

\$20 suggested donation

For the finale of the Harmony & Blessings Concert Series, flautist Jamie Baum will be performing with her expansive group. Having toured and record-

CONTRIBUTED



Erie's newest live music venue Centennial Hall offers up a diverse and packed slate of performances in June including, among others, (clockwise from top left) Surrender The Ghost, When the Sun Sets, Hardo, and the finale of the 2026 Harmony & Blessings Concert Series featuring flautist Jamie Baum.

ed under the "septet" moniker, NYC's Baum has expanded her personnel, ergo the "plus" sign in the name. In addition to Baum's work on flute, the group features musicians on trumpet, alto saxophone, and French horn in addition to piano, guitar, bass, percussion, and drums. The Sunnyside Records artists received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2014, and released her seventh album *What Times Are These* in 2024. Baum has regularly been listed as one of the top flautists in the world by the *Downbeat* Magazine Readers and Critics Polls.

Matthew Crays & Co./Jared Cooney with Logan B & Dirty Leaf, Kactai

Saturday, Jun. 27 / 6 p.m. doors, 7 p.m. show / \$10

The Centennial stage will be filled to the brim with local talent at the end of the month, as local songwriters Matthew Crays and Jared Cooney will both be celebrating releases. Matthew Crays & Co. will be putting out their four-song EP *Live From the Barn*, coinciding with a series of music videos from Lonelyman Productions and Everything at Once Productions. Recording and video production were paid for in part by a grant from Erie Arts & Culture and features Crays backed by Lizzy Jurich on drums, Logan Battin on keys, Abby Weech on piano, Alex "Lone Sav" Staley on bass, Dave Tamulonis on violin and guitar, and Cooney on lead guitar. That very same evening, Cooney will be celebrating the release of his new eight-song LP entitled *Icebergs*, digitally and on CD. Recorded by Matt Froehlich, the album features Cooney on guitar and vocals, with fellow Precinct Aflame members Froehlich on drums and Nick Buffalino on bass. The evening will also feature the numerous talents of Logan B & Dirty Leaf, as well as the virtuosic grooves of local power trio, Kactai, with both groups featuring members of Crays' band.

For tickets and more information, visit tickets.eriereader.com

The Fifth Annual 14th Fest

EMTA kicks off summer events with annual bash

THURSDAY, JUN. 11

The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) has teamed up with the Erie Downtown Partnership to present their fifth annual 14th Fest, celebrating the start of summer and all that Downtown Erie has to offer in the summer months.

“EMTA is excited to continue our 14th Fest tradition for the fifth year in a row,” said EMTA CEO Jeremy Peterson. “It has been an energetic opening to the summer, with local vendors and entertainment, shining a light on what we do in mid-city.”

As the name implies, the celebration will be held on 14th Street between French and Holland Streets, near EMTA’s operations facilities. “It’s a very unique location,” said Sarah Morrison, director of marketing and public relations at EMTA. “Not many events shift focus from the Perry Square area, and we’ve made strides in the years EMTA has invested in the neighborhood.”

The fest is a family-friendly event with free admission and open to the



The EMTA celebrates their fifth annual 14th Fest, a block party near the authority’s headquarters on 14th Street, featuring live music, kids activities, food, games, and more.

public. Music by local bands Geek Army and Twisted Lid will feature throughout the event, with food vendors on site including Odis 12, Kona Ice, Lavery Brewing, The BrewErie, and more.

EMTA will also be celebrating their 60th year in operation and recognizing employees that have been with the company for 20 years in a brief ceremony at the start of the event. “Each year we’ve had the opportunity to add an element that makes it unique,” said Morrison. “This year’s ceremony ties back to the mural we

had completed at the 2023 fest, featuring some of our first operators, dedicated to our staff of past, present, and future.”

Parking will be available on the surrounding streets and in parking lots in the area, but attendees are encouraged to consider using the bus system, with easy access through the myStop app to find the best route. – Ally Kutz

5 to 10 p.m. // 14th Street, between Holland and French Streets // Free admission // For more information: ride-the-e.com

Let Freedom Ring in 1776 at Erie Playhouse

Theatrical celebration of America’s 250

BEGINNING FRIDAY, JUN. 12

Two hundred and fifty years after America declared its freedom from England, we still revere our Founding Fathers. It’s important to remember that rather than mythical giants of unquestionable morality and character, these were real men and women standing on the precipice, and they possessed human flaws just like the rest of us. The 1969 Broadway musical 1776 captures something of this, and that is perhaps why it is as important a story as any in these modern times. Luckily, the Erie Playhouse’s production of 1776 will start up in mid-June, just ahead of the yearly anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

If you are a Hamilton fan and all this Revolution stuff sounds familiar, you should know the two shows are worlds apart: “Thomas Jefferson and George Washington are the only men who appear in both shows,” Richard Davis, the artistic director for the

Erie Playhouse (and the director of this production) explained. The actual signing of the Declaration, and the two months leading up to it, form the focus of the musical.

In fact, many famous names from the era appear in 1776: Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Abigail Adams, and Martha Jefferson, are among over two dozen characters total, the vast majority of them are men. While the turnout for auditions was good, Davis nonetheless had to reach out to fill all the roles.

“I am thrilled with the cast we have,” Davis said, saying that the opening number in particular is exciting. Another challenge at hand, he identified, was “creating the essence of Independence Hall and placing 24 men onstage together while making them all visible to the audience.”

Still, the Playhouse rises to every difficulty, and the cast and crew are bringing to the stage a production that is as timely as ever. “1776 serves as a good reminder that creat-

NICOLE LOSSIE



In recognition of America 250, the folks at the Erie Playhouse are staying on theme for their upcoming performance of the musical 1776, featuring a thrilling local cast and well-met set-building challenges.

ing this new nation was a monumental, messy task,” Davis pronounced. Two hundred and fifty years later, it seems we’re still figuring things out. – Cara Suppa

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday shows: 7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinee: 2 p.m. // 13 W. 10th St. // \$20.40 to \$31.40 // For more information, including the full performance schedule, ticket prices, and to purchase tickets, please visit: erieplayhouse.org

The Erie Benedictines invite you to...

Saturday, June 20
6:00-9:00 pm
Glinodo Center

Celebrate 170 years of Benedictine presence in Erie! Mother Ignatia, who faced down bootleggers on the sisters' lakefront property in 1928, is the inspiration for this party!

Scan the code to purchase tickets. Drinks, live music, hors d'oeuvres, and a souvenir cup included.

Benedictine Sisters of Erie

ERTIX No. 814 ERIE READER

ERIE'S ONLY LOCAL EVENT TICKETING

SELL TIX WITH US!
Visit tickets.eriereader.com and get started today!

FOR EVENTS & TO BUY TICKETS:
TICKETS.ERIEREADER.COM

June Means Pride!

NWPA Pride Alliance parade and On the Bay events to ‘make waves’

By: Edwina Capozziello

Erie Pride Parade
SUNDAY, JUN. 14

Summer brings blooming flowers and trees, people out and about enjoying sunshine, and of course, Erie’s own Northwest Pennsylvania Pride Alliance (NWPA) Pride Parade. This year, the theme is “Make Waves,” and the event

encourages the local Queer community and allies to gather to get “loud, proud and take over State Street,” as their tagline promises.

Anyone who would like to take part in the parade can line up at 11th and State streets at noon. The March to Perry Square begins at 1 p.m. NWPA Pride invites all attendees to “bring

your joy, bring your voice as you march to be seen, heard, and celebrated.” Festivities will continue once the parade reaches the square, and things are slated to wrap up around 2 p.m.

Noon // 11th & State streets // For info: nwpapride.org

Pride on the Bay 2026
SATURDAY, JUN. 27

The “Make Waves” theme continues at the end of the month for Pride on the Bay at Liberty Park. This free event welcomes all from noon to 5 p.m. There will be local vendors and artisans, community resource booths, food trucks, live music, and a DJ. There will also be a drag show on the Amphitheater Main Stage featuring Erie native and RuPaul’s Drag Race alum, Alaska. NWPA Pride Alliance says it will be “a massive celebration of our local LGBTQIA+ community.”

Per their mission, the Pride Alliance is “committed to fostering equality,

respect, and diversity through events and organizations.” The June events are the pinnacle of that mission each year. The Pride Alliance website features a quote from artist and design-

“The rainbow is a symbol of hope. It's a symbol of peace. It's a symbol of unity. And that's what Pride is supposed to be about.”
— Gilbert Baker, artist and creator of the Pride flag

er Gilbert Baker that is perfect to motivate us all to join in the fun for a cause: “The rainbow is a symbol of hope. It’s a symbol of peace. It’s a symbol of unity. And that’s what Pride is supposed to be about.”

Noon to 5 p.m. // Liberty Park, 828 W. Bayfront Pkwy. // Free // For info: nwpa-pride.org



Celebrate Pride for two weekends in June beginning with the annual Pride Parade on State Street followed by Pride on the Bay – both events aim to “make waves” in Erie as the community is encouraged to “bring your joy, bring your voice as you march to be seen, heard, and celebrated.”

Juneteenth Events Around Erie

A week of festivities, culture, education, and more

MONDAY, JUN. 15

Juneteenth is an important date marking the end of slavery in the United States. This year, Erie and Northwestern Pennsylvania will be holding a week-long celebration in observation of the long history of oppression and the significance of June

19, 1865 – the day enslaved people in Texas were finally freed, two years after President Abraham Lincoln’s famous Emancipation Proclamation speech.

The Juneteenth Week of Events (June 15-21) will include a men’s roundtable discussion, a professional basketball game, a Black art exhibition, a charity event, a boat cruise, a block party and concert, and a gospel celebration.

On June 20, Perry Square will be filled with various Black-owned businesses selling food, clothing, accessories, and other services. There will also be a range of performances and activities for kids. The block party is open to people of all ages “looking to celebrate freedom!

Before it was known as “Juneteenth,” a combination of “June” and “nineteenth” that honors the annual day of celebration, the holiday has been called Jubilee Day, Emancipation

Day, Second Independence Day, and Freedom Day.

In addition to the week-long festivities across the community, on June 15, the Erie VA Medical Center

Juneteenth is an important date marking the end of slavery in the United States. This year, Erie and northwestern Pennsylvania will be holding a week-long celebration in observation of the long history of oppression and the significance of June 19, 1865.

Minority Veterans Program will be hosting a Juneteenth Freedom Day Celebration from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Erie VA Medical Center. This year’s theme is titled “From Freedom Promised to Freedom Lived: Honoring

Legacy, Resilience, and the Future.” Coordinator Maurice Clarke stated that the event’s purpose is to “honor the enduring contributions, resilience, culture, and military service of Black Americans and Black Veterans. Beyond reflection on history, the celebration is intended to create meaningful community connection, education, and engagement.”

The event will be composed of guest speakers, cultural elements, informational tables, and community vendors to promote unity, visibility, healing, and continued progress. – Cassandra Gripp

Freedom Day Celebration: Monday, June 15 at 10 a.m. // Erie VA Medical Center, 135 E. 38th St. Boulevard // www.va.gov/erie-health-care

Block Party: Saturday, June 20 at 11 a.m. // Perry Square, 601 State St. // For more information: eriejuneteenth.com/events



Juneteenth celebrations return to Erie with events in Perry Square featuring live music, food, and speakers alongside programming provided by the Office of Veterans Affairs which will honor the contributions, culture, and military service of Black Americans and Black veterans.

FREE
SUMMER
CONCERT
SERIES!

THE KNOB TUNES & BREWS
WED NIGHTS (JUNE-JULY: 6-9PM) IN WATERFORD, PA
FOOD | DRINKS | PET FRIENDLY | ALL AGES | FREE PARKING

SUNDAY
JUNE 21st
at 5PM

IN THE
CATHEDRAL
134 W 7TH ST
CATHEDRALOFSTPAUL.ORG

Award-winning
chocolates, coffees
and ice creams
that'll knock
your flip flops off.

ROMOLO[®]
CHOCOLATES

1525 West 8 Street, Erie, PA 16505 814.452.1933
RomoloChocolates.com



Nyesha Arrington



Darian Bryan



CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTION FOOD FESTIVAL

AUGUST 16-28, 2026

Come for the Food. Stay for Everything Else.

A two-week celebration of flavor, ideas, performance and gathering at Chautauqua — where celebrity chefs, special tastings and communal meals meet one of America's most distinctive summer destinations.

A Chautauqua experience built around food and community

- Celebrity chefs and special culinary events
- Two distinctive weeks of programming
- Food paired with concerts, lectures and culture
- Lodging and packages available
- A beautiful lakeside setting

LEARN MORE AT FOODFESTIVAL.CHO.ORG

Thomas Paquette, *Fox Creek Crossing*, 1990

Visit
Erie
GOOD LIFE. GREAT LAKE.

Erie Art Museum

JUNE 26TH, 2026

GALLERY NIGHT

Make a Night of It | Explore Erie's Art Scene For Free

erieartmuseum.org/gallerynight

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



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

Mazza Vineyards
Rt. 5, North East, PA

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

Weekly Events

SOUTH SHORE WINE COMPANY

SPARKLING HOURS

Enjoy \$1 off sparkling wines by the glass

THURS & FRI
2:30-5:30 PM

MAZZA CHAUTAUQUA CELLARS / FIVE & 20 SPIRITS AND BREWING

MUG CLUB DAY

Mug club members \$3 off first draft beer and 16 oz pours, live music 5:30-7:30

THURSDAYS
10 AM - 8 PM

MAZZA CHAUTAUQUA CELLARS / FIVE & 20 SPIRITS AND BREWING

WESTFIELD HAPPY HOUR

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

FRIDAYS
5-8 PM

MAZZA VINEYARDS and SOUTH SHORE WINE COMPANY

MAZZMOSA WEEKENDS

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

SATURDAYS
& SUNDAYS

SOUTH SHORE WINE COMPANY

SLUSHIE SUNDAYS

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

SUNDAYS

MAZZA CHAUTAUQUA CELLARS / FIVE & 20 SPIRITS AND BREWING

SUNDAY SESH MUSIC SERIES

Relaxed afternoon with live music and food truck

SUNDAYS
1-4 PM



Event details and
complete calendar
EnjoyMazza.com/Events



Live music and
food truck lineup



Celebrate National Trails Day

Sixth annual event rolls out on unique rail-trail of Corry

SATURDAY, JUN. 20

The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, Impact Corry, and Friends of the Corry Junction Greenway Trail will host a National Trails Day celebration Saturday, June 20. Free and open to all, activities will take place at the outdoor pavilion on the grounds of the Elmer C. Carrier American Legion Post 365 in Corry.

"The event is about celebrating trails, giving back, and finding community in the outdoors," said organizer Melinda Meyer, director of programs for Impact Corry. "Corry Junction Greenway Trail is one of the few segments that is finished in the area." The 6-mile trail reuses an old rail corridor and connects Corry to the larger, regional Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Network. It's the perfect place for this summer event, but Meyer noted

it shines year-round with those on snowshoe and snowmobile clubs, as well as horseback riders, bikers and walkers.

The event will be packed with a 2-mile slow roll, 24-mile ride with BikeErie (starting at 10 a.m.), a "bike rodeo" obstacle course for kids hosted by the Rolling 2 You Mobile Repair, and a wagon ride on the trail. The Rolling 2 You Mobile Repair will also be there to address minor bike repairs on-site, so attendees are encouraged to bring their bikes to the event. There also will be walks and talks about native plants found along the trail, food vendors, raffles of gift baskets and bikes, and information tables from PennDOT, Erie County Planning Department, Erie County Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, and PA Game Commission. All proceeds from the raffles will go to the

CONTRIBUTED



The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, Impact Corry, and Friends of the Corry Junction Greenway Trail will host a National Trails Day – a day of "celebrating trails, giving back, and finding community in the outdoors."

Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance for use by the Friends of the Erie County Junction Trail.

Meyer said "The Junction" also serves as an artery with which Corry is encouraging development of a greater network of smaller trails, and improving access to quality outdoor

recreation opportunities. Happy trails! – Gretchen Gallagher Durney

10 a.m. ride, event begins at 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. // Grounds of the Elmer C. Carrier American Legion Post 365, 1460 Sciota Rd, Corry // Free // For information visit: impactcorry.org

Poetry Festival at Cafe 7-10 Returns in Rhyme

Attend to read, enjoy, and support local authors

FRIDAY, JUN. 26

Writers, artists, and storytellers of the Flagship City will gather together to celebrate the poetry of Erie with A Poetry Festival at Cafe 7-10. Celebrating the art of words and expression, the festival brings local poetry to the forefront, stanza by stanza, inviting all community members to participate as both audience members and performers. Authors and publishers will be in attendance, with the event coinciding with Gallery Night. There will be open mic opportunities for performing poets and vendors selling their related items.

"I feel like there's like a storyline in my life of falling in love with poetry," Mabel Howard, owner of Cafe 7-10, founder of Black Girl Penning, and Erie Reader contributor, explained. "The people close in my life have always been active in the poetry community, or just personally incredible writers. You're secretly inspired by the works of others, even if you don't get a chance to tell them how amazing they are at the time."

Howard had been passionate about the literary arts throughout her life, with a special emphasis on poetry. In

2015, she started an initiative in Erie called Poetry and Soul Food, with the goal of creating a non-intimidating environment for poets to workshop their writing and help those who are shy about the microphone find their voice in a safe space.

Alongside hosting weekly poetry nights at Cafe 7-10 and exchanges through Werner Books, she also hosts the Healing Art of Writing workshop for the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College. The workshop has also been successful for Howard at the Erie County Regional Recovery Hub, focusing on helping people struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. "Poetry is a way of healing; it is connection and community together."

The Erie poetry scene has gained substantial recognition over the years, with Howard's works featured in the inaugural Issue of *Iconic: The Anthology of Erie Poets*, published in collaboration between Gannon University and the Erie County Public Library. Howard hopes to expand the reach of poetry to "haikuing around the city" with tours focusing on public art. "They [could find] inspiration from seeing something beautiful on

CONTRIBUTED



Local poet, business owner, and Erie Reader contributor Mabel Howard is hosting a Poetry Festival in conjunction with the Erie Art Museum's Gallery Night. The evening will include open mic poetry, literary vendors, and generally highlighting the therapeutic nature of writing and performing poetry.

their drive to work, but they're just moving too fast to enjoy the beauty of our city."

Uplifting the work of her fellow storytellers and creating her own rhythm and rhyme, Howard hopes to continue raising awareness for the therapeutic power of poetry and all art forms within Erie. "I've worked with a lot of different types of artists. I feel like poets are overlooked in compar-

ison to other artists. And I want to correct that. All art is equally valuable. When it comes to funding for the arts, we should always help support the writers and poets. Without their words, there are no stories." – Thomas Taylor

5 to 9 p.m. // Cafe 7-10, 7 W. 10th St. // Free to attend, Vendors can register for \$20 // For more info visit: facebook.com/cafe710

WILD CHURCH

• ONCE A MONTH THIS SUMMER •

WILD CHURCH IS PRAYER ROOTED IN THE NATURAL WORLD.

JOIN US AT 4PM

FOR TIME IN THE WOODS, SHARED SILENCE, AND SIMPLE PRESENCE TOGETHER. IT IS A WAY OF SLOWING DOWN, LISTENING DEEPLY, AND FINDING THE SACRED IN WIND, TREES, BIRDSONG, AND HONEST CONVERSATION.





CATHEDRALOFSTPAUL.ORG • @ERIEPISCOPAL • SAINTMARKSERIE.ORG

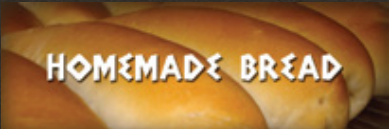


EAST

810 East 38th Street
459-1145
Mondays & Tuesdays 9AM-6PM
Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays 9AM-8PM
Sundays 9AM-6PM

WEST

3201 Greengarden Blvd.
864-5322
Mondays & Tuesdays 9AM-6PM
Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays 9AM-8PM
Sundays 9AM-6PM






CALL AHEAD FOR FASTER SERVICE.

VISIT OUR TERESA'S ITALIAN DELI FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS.

FULL MENU LOCATED AT WWW.TDERIE.COM

EVENTS

Erie Reader Book Club: June 2026

Martyr! By Kaveh Akbar

SUNDAY, JUN. 28

The Erie Reader Book Club will be reading and discussing *Martyr!* by Kaveh Akbar in conjunction with the Pride issue of the Reader.

Each June, we look for a book that not only relates to the LGBTQIA+ community in some way but also celebrates the diversity that can be found within that community and tells a compelling story. In *Martyr!*, we see this kind of story through the main character Cyrus, whose complexities and struggles are the driving force within the novel.

Each June, we look for a book that not only relates to the LGBTQIA+ community in some way but also celebrates the diversity that can be found within that community and tells a compelling story.

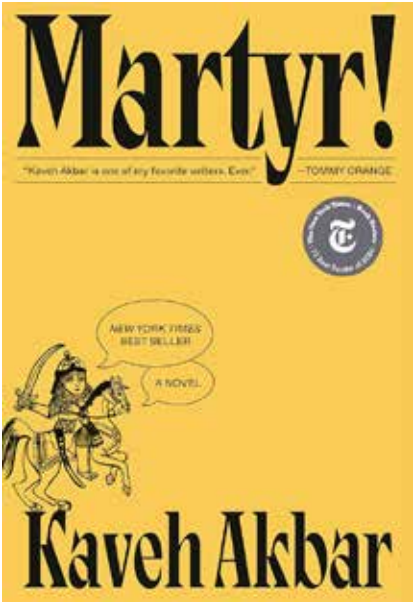
Newly sober and newly orphaned, Cyrus Shams is a young, queer poet dealing with the violence and loss that has plagued his family from Iran to America. After his mother's plane was shot down over the Persian Gulf, his father's life in the U.S. was limited by his work at a factory farm in the Midwest.

After his father's death, Cyrus begins working on a "book of martyrs," a subject he finds great interest in, and

contemplates the meaning of martyrdom. The search for a family secret leads to his learning of a terminally ill Iranian performance artist living out her final days in the Brooklyn Museum and he embarks on a journey to meet her to better understand not only her final exhibition, but also his own place within his family's story.

What follows is a delightful, funny, original, and riveting tale of not only one man's journey to find meaning in his own life, but of the meaning we all try to find in our lives – through faith and art, through ourselves and through others. – Ally Kutz

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



NEW PROGRAM AT ASBURY CDC: PART-TIME PRESCHOOL

3814 ASBURY ROAD
TUES, WED, THURS
9:30 AM - 1:00 PM
LUNCH INCLUDED!

ENROLL YOUR CHILD AT CDCENTERS.ORG!




Your Time is
Valuable

Wait for Minutes, Not Hours

L|E|C|O|M
MEDICAL CENTER

Emergency Department

Average ER Wait Time: May 2026
22 Minutes



Average wait time from check-in to exam room based on data from May 1-24 2026.



**LOVE
POURS
HERE**

MON - THUR
11 AM - 10 PM

FRI + SAT
11 AM - 11 PM

SUN
11 AM - 8 PM

128 WEST 12TH STREET



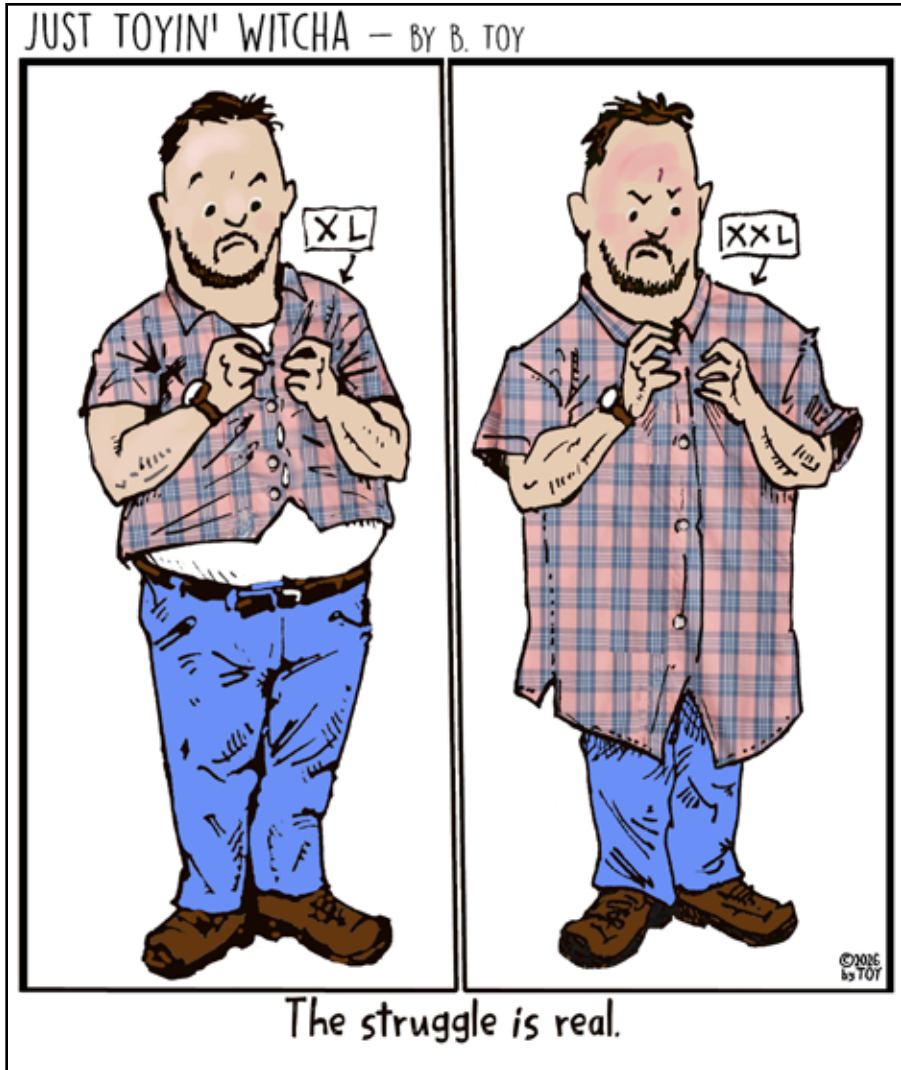
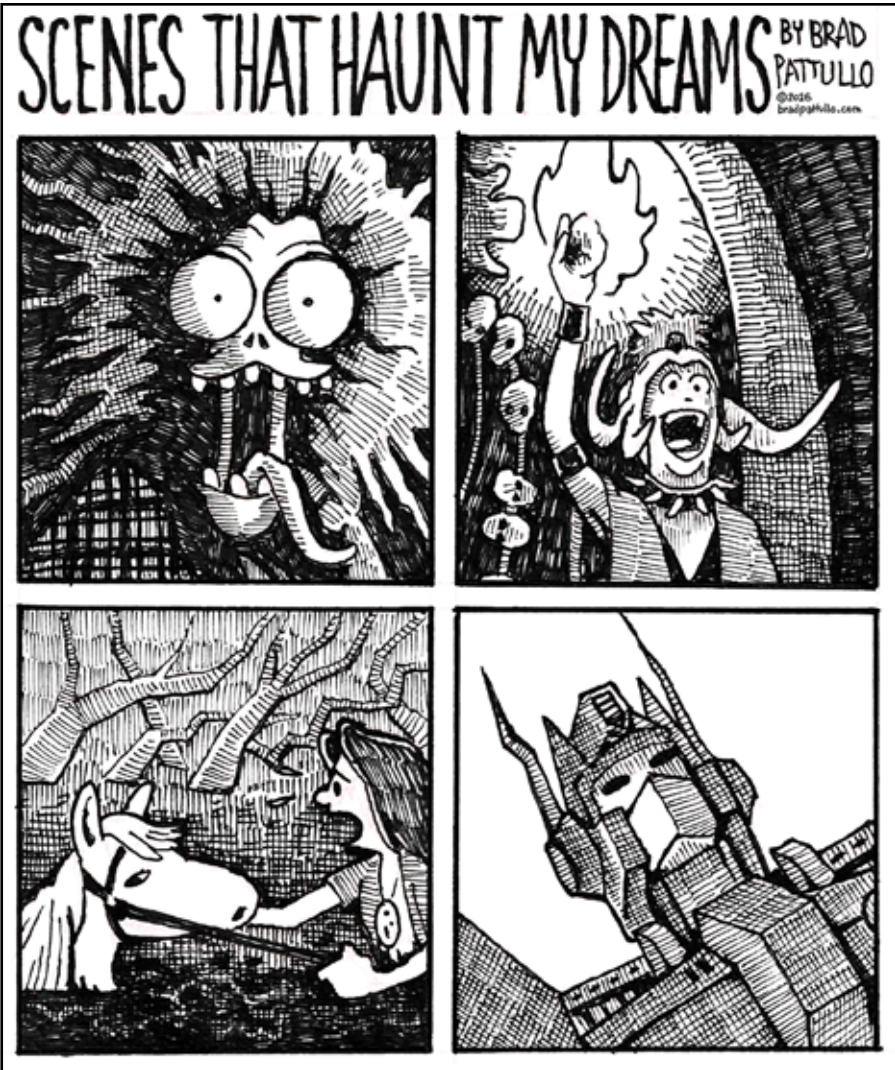
PERFORMING
ARTISTS
COLLECTIVE
ALLIANCE

2026
SEASON

**BAD AUDITIONS
BY BAD ACTORS**
BY IAN McWETHY

Fridays & Saturdays
July 10, 11, 17 & 18
7:30 PM

PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTIVE ALLIANCE
1505 State Street, Erie, PA
paca1505.org



NEGATIVE WORLDS

"ERIE SUMMER BINGO CARD (HYPOCRITE EDITION)" BY NICK WARREN

Ice cream for two (for one)	Performatively decline a non-Smith's hot dog at cookout	Stay just long enough to post pic of friend's local band	Feign interest in heritage festival for decadent food (or day drinking)	Dine outside at a restaurant even though it's nicer inside
Remember how much you still value friend with boat	Have someone tailgate you while driving under 25 at Presque Isle (one mile plus)	Challenge someone's claim that Erie has the world's second-best sunsets	Out-of-town concert makes friend jealous	Claim to out-of-town friend that Erie has the world's second-best sunsets
Avoid seeing your ex at more than one public event	Re-evaluate fitness goals to achieve "beach body"	Become unbearably sweaty (free)	Go biking enough that it annoys your partner	See your ex at a public event enough that it annoys your partner
Wonder if you're gay enough to go to Pride events (you are, honey!)	Mojitos!	Complain about CelebrateErie lineup but still enjoy it	Mosquitos.	Remember how much you still value friend with pool
Be thankful that it's not the summer of 2020	Go kayaking without posting it on Instagram	Drop phone in water while kayaking	Wax nostalgic for the "simpler days" of the summer of 2020	Gleefully correct someone when they say "there's nothing to do in Erie"

Mabeline's Poetry Corner

GROW LOVE

By: Mabel Howard, Mabeline "The Artist"

Love conquers
Love heals
Heals the heart
Heals the soul
Soul of him
Soul of all her
Her secret hurts
Her secret pain
Pain of living
Pain of shame
Shame of addiction
Shame of eviction
Eviction from home
Eviction from the throne
Throne of the King
Throne of the Queen
Queen of the Throne
Queen of the King
King of the gates
King of the Scene
Scene so beautiful
Scene regulated
Regulated in armor
Regulated by knights
Knights with shields
Knights ready to fight
Fight off the enemy

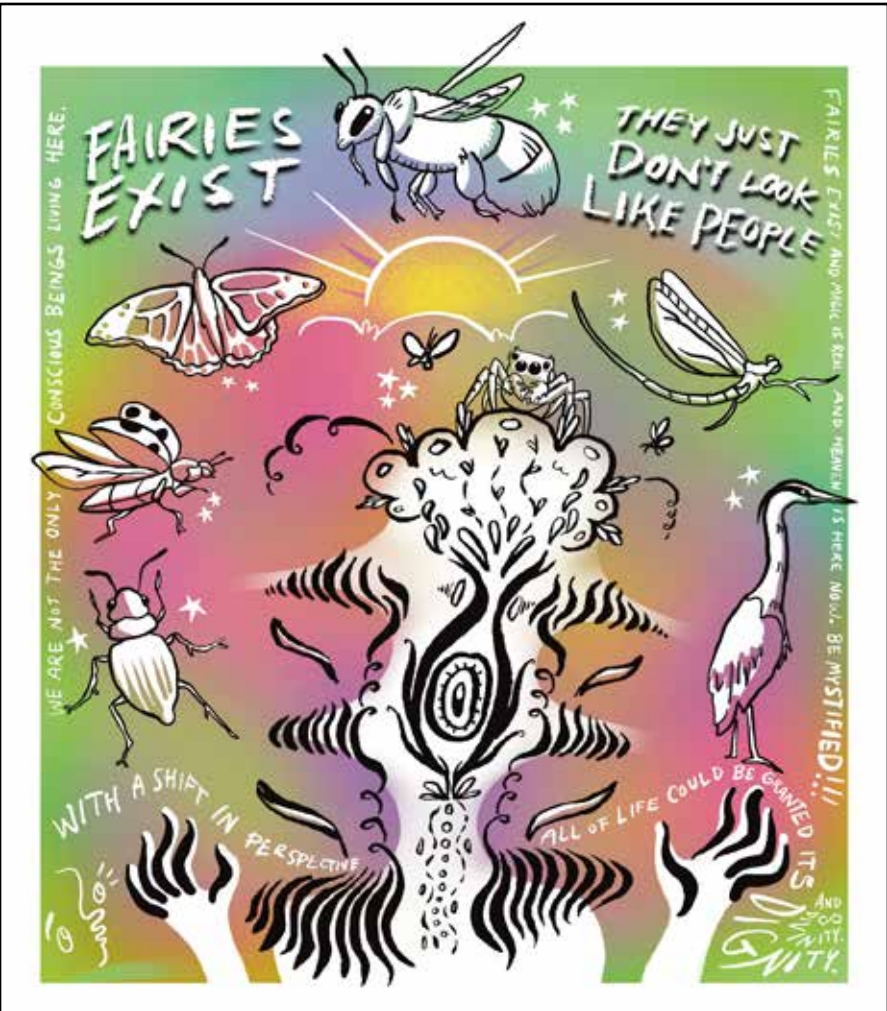
Fight off the soldiers
Soldiers of a kingdom
Soldiers of the enemy
Enemy of power
Enemy who gains
Gains the trust
Gains a larger range
Range in territory
Range in fame
Fame bringing joy
Fame bringing fear
Fear brings power
Fear ignites change
Change of the heart
Change of the view
View of the world
View what you choose
Choose to love
Choose to grow
Grow
Love

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

Open Everyday at 11am!
Great Food!
Awesome Beer!



DINE-IN OR CARRY OUT!
847 Pittsburgh Ave
Erie, PA
814-454-1989
6PACKHOB.com



Time and
Temperature
at Your Fingertips



814
452-6311

Featuring Erie's only
team of meteorologists.



Learn About

Risograph

workshops and memberships

create!

zines/posters/comics/art prints

For more info, visit

Grounded Printshop
1902 Cherry St, Erie PA
groundedprintshop.com

MOVIES

I Love Boosters Is a Little Too Cartoonish

Stylin’ and profilin’

★★★★

Rapper and activist turned filmmaker Boots Riley hit the ground running with his spectacular debut *Sorry to Bother You*, a hilarious, madcap satire that was the rare American film to deliver a genuinely anti-capitalist/leftist message. Naturally, my expectations were high for his follow-up, *I Love Boosters*, but sadly, while generally entertaining and funny, it didn’t quite meet them. The film is a joyful, candy-colored send-up of the fashion industry that takes the silliness a little too far while lacking much of the satirical bite of his audacious debut.

Corvette (Keke Palmer) and her friends work as “boosters,” people who shoplift clothes from high-end boutiques and resell them at discount prices. But when they meet another booster (Poppy Liu) who has stolen a secret Chinese teleportation device, they take their business to a whole new level, triggering a potential fashion revolution and attracting the ire of a ruthless clothing CEO



(Demi Moore) and a mysterious fashion model (LaKeith Stanfield).

Like *Sorry to Bother You*, the film has a lot of fun with its populist/anti-capitalist themes, but it lacks that movie’s edge – more cartoonish farce than absurdist satire. Also, Riley’s screenplay isn’t as sharp, with subplots that end with a whimper rather than a bang. That said, it is still very funny at times, and the actors do great work with their larger-than-life characters. The story ends on a very positive note that feels painfully naive. I was going

to criticize it for that, but that says more about my own views than the film’s. In fact, in this age, maybe a little naive positivity is exactly what we need. – Forest Taylor

Written and directed by Boots Riley
// Starring Keke Palmer, Naomi Ackie, Taylour Paige, Poppy Liu, Eiza Gonzalez, LaKeith Stanfield, Will Poulter, Kara Young, Jason Ritter, Eric Andre, Viggo Mortensen, Don Cheadle, and Demi Moore
// Focus Features // 105 minutes // Rated R

Obsession is a Simple Premise Done Effectively

Love hurts

★★★★

Some of the most effective horror film plots are derived from an extremely simple idea. It takes true skill as a filmmaker to take a simple premise and squeeze as much horror out of it as possible, and that is just the case for YouTuber Curry Barker’s feature debut, *Obsession*. The film is a deeply disturbing and, at times, darkly funny story, and while it goes a little off the rails in the end, it is a horrific answer to the question: “What if someone really loved somebody more than anything in the world?”

Baron “Bear” Bailey (Michael Johnston) is a young man with a long-time crush on his friend Nikki Freeman (Inde Navarette), but he is far too timid to ever confess his feelings. One day, he buys a trinket called “One Wish Willow,” which promises to make his deepest wish come true, and he wishes that Nikki loved him more than anything in the world. Suddenly, Nikki is completely enamored with Bear, but her romantic obsession becomes



deadlier as the days pass.

The film is almost unbearably tense at times as Nikki’s devotion becomes more and more extreme, and Barker makes effective use of shadows and unnatural movements of his actors. But the real draw of this film comes from Inde Navarette’s performance, which, much like Mia Goth in *Pearl* and Lupita Nyong’o in *Us*, is a powerhouse of emotional distress. Her eyes, voice, and erratic expressions fully convince us she’s a woman not in control of her

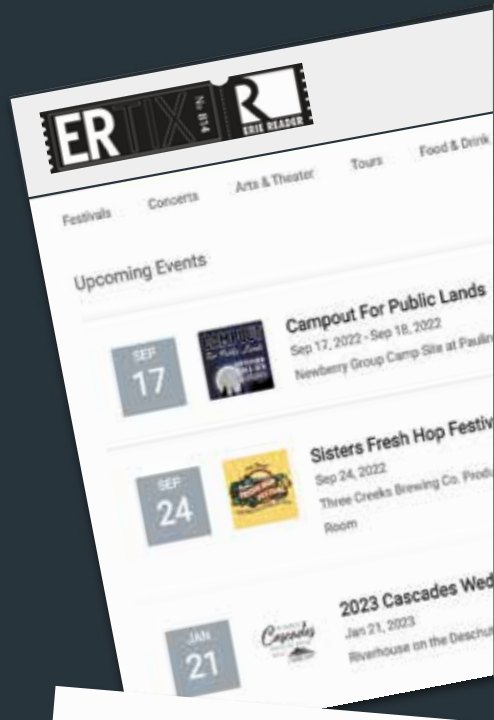
feelings. Even as the film falls into ridiculous territory, her performance and Barker’s direction cement this as one of the most unnerving horror films in years. – Forest Taylor

Written and directed by Curry Barker
// Starring Michael Johnston, Inde Navarette, Cooper Tomlinson, Megan Lawless, Haley Fitzgerald, Darin Toonder, Anthony Pavone, Justice, Anthony Casabianca, Chloe Breen, and Andy Richter
// 108 minutes // Rated R

Never Miss a Story!

The best stories and events in Erie, straight to your inbox!

Sign up today to join more than 20,000 of your neighbors who receive Erie Reader newsletters each week.



Who is this for?

- live music and comedy
- conferences
- festivals & fairs
- food & drink events
- event venues
- fundraisers
- theater
- classes & workshops
- tours
- races & walks
- non-profits

... and many more!



ERIE'S ONLY LOCAL EVENT TICKETING

ER Tix is the only ticketing platform created exclusively for Erie's local, community events. It's free, easy to use, and fully customizable with all-access ticketing features to meet your event's unique needs.

Most importantly, ER Tix is powered by the same trusted team that operates the **Erie Reader**. We let you tap into our massive audience to attract even more *local* ticket buyers!

Features

- Customizable event and organization web pages to highlight your events
- Scan & sell tickets at the door
Evnt app available on iOS & Android
- Reserved seating and general admission tickets
seating chart builder for row seating or tables
- Flexible ticket management to comp, refund, or exchange ticket orders
- Customize your tickets with your logo or sponsor logos
- Accept donations at checkout
- Exportable customer and event reporting
- Promo codes
- Schedule multiple ticket types and prices
early bird, kids, day-of
- Customizable registration questions and waivers
- Full tech support

100%
FREE
for event creators

\$1.50 + 4%*

SERVICE FEE THAT CUSTOMERS PAY

* standard online credit card fees apply

tickets.eriereader.com

The Erie Reader



Evnt Ticketing



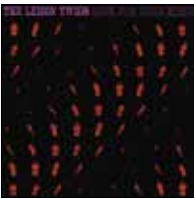


Ralphie's Gone Blind

Man's Ruin
Self-released

★★★★★

There's a certain magic in being able to create something that can stand toe-to-toe with the art you grew up on. Ralphie's Gone Blind knows this, because they did it, damn it. The punk rockers from North East have successfully crafted a full-length love letter to the music and era that helped shape them. There's the rough and tumble sounds and viewpoints similar to NYHC bands like Agnostic Front and Murphy's Law on display early in the record giving way to anthemic choruses fit for bands like the Bouncing Souls, Pennywise, or Street Dogs. The gritty and tougher sounds soon scrape away revealing a kid who just wants to sing along with his friends. One underlying key to Ralphie's Gone Blind is a sense of deeply rooted nostalgia, a longing and appreciation for days gone by – most explicitly outlined in the penultimate track "B Sides and Movie Lines." The quintet finds themselves grappling with the acceptance (or downright refusal) of middle age, while staying true to the tempos and rhythms that they hold dear. Top tracks include the titular track "Man's Ruin" and the one-two punch of emotional resonance in "Second Chances" and "Breathe Again." – Nick Warren



The Lemon Twigs

Look For Your Mind!
Captured Tracks

★★★★★

If I were tasked to name the most consistent band of the 2020s, that honor would immediately go to The Lemon Twigs – since signing to Captured Tracks in January 2023, the Long Island sibling duo of Brian and Michael D'Addario have been serving up a timeless blend of '60s- and '70s-style power pop. Over their records, the brothers have combined the best qualities of The Beatles, Beach Boys, and Rolling Stones into a package that is instantly recognizable as theirs; dedicating themselves to the craft to such an extent as to forego modern musical sensibilities and record exclusively to 16-track tape. Released in May 2026, The Lemon Twigs' sixth studio album *Look For Your Mind!* serves as a further refinement of their skills while also taking the opportunity to experiment with their medium. Expanding their recording horizons, the D'Addarios brought in their touring bandmates Danny Ayala and Reza Matin with the goal of capturing the energy of their shows on tape. As a result, the band sounds livelier than ever – sonically raucous with a heavier emphasis on electric guitars throughout songs like the title track and the infectious single "I Just Can't Get Over Losing You." The album contains a dark throughline of heart-broken lyricism, painting the picture of a person lost in the throes of an uncoupling and concluding in the tape effects-laden "Your True Enemy." At this rate, The Lemon Twigs are steadily growing toward the pedigree of their inspirations. – Nathaniel Clark



Flea

Honora
Nonesuch Records

★★★★★

One of the most recognizable bassists in rock over the last three decades is undeniably Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Flea is known for his funk rock-driven basslines containing elements of soul, jazz, and fusion. On his first solo album *Honora*, he takes a more traditional jazz approach. Six of the 10 songs were written by Flea, with help from Josh Johnson and Thom Yorke (who also sings) on the track "Traffic Lights," which feels like a jazz version of a song from his side project with Yorke, Atoms For Peace. Flea leans into jazz on tracks "Fraild" and "Morning Cry," while the songs "A Plea" and "Free as I Want To Be" both have a funk undertone with lyrics evoking unity in these divisive times. He also pays tribute to Funkadelic with a shortened version of their song "Maggot Brain," playing the lead guitar parts with his trumpet. Additional covers include the jazz standard "Willow Weep For Me," the Frank Ocean song "Thinkin Bout You," and country classic "Wichita Lineman" featuring lead vocals by Nick Cave – a track that initially feels out of place, until understanding it as a tribute to the highly influential bassist Carol Kaye from The Wrecking Crew, whose composition credits on the song are well-documented. *Honora* is pushing the boundaries of perceptions of what jazz is, taking the listener into a modern age, similar to what Miles Davis was doing on *Bitches Brew* or Herbie Hancock on *Future Shock*. – Larry Wheaton



Taj Mahal and The Phantom Blues Band

Time
Resonatin' Records

★★★★★

Recorded over 15 years ago but just released last month, Taj Mahal isn't doing anything groundbreaking on this album. He is doing what he has done so well since the 1960s – which is everything. This Grammy-winning artist has delightfully navigated through dozens of releases by flexing his mastery of root blues, soul, reggae, and Caribbean genres. The gift isn't just Mahal's musicianship and songwriting, but also the talent and skill of The Phantom Blues Band who are more than just a backup band. Most notable and exciting is Mahal's treatment of the uplifting and unreleased Bill Withers demo "Time." The simplicity of the track blows away all the heavy dust of the day-to-day stress of our exhausted hearts. Other tracks move beyond blues to soulfully conjure shadows of Wilson Pickett, Clarence Carter, and Otis Redding – all channeled through the unmistakable vessel of Taj Mahal's smooth raspiness. With it, he makes the other cover songs uniquely his own, like Charles Sheffield's "It's Your Voodoo Working," Lovin' Spoonful's "Wild about My Lovin'," and Bob Marley's "Talkin' Blues." Mahal again reminds us there's no guilt in sitting with friends on the front porch to share a laugh and no shame in dancing barefoot in the kitchen by yourself. – Melissa Sullivan

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20									21	22				
			23				24	25						
26	27	28				29		30					31	32
33				34			35				36			
37			38			39				40				
41					42				43			44		
45				46				47			48			
		49					50		51					
52	53						54	55				56	57	58
59					60	61								
62					63						64			
65					66						67			

Across

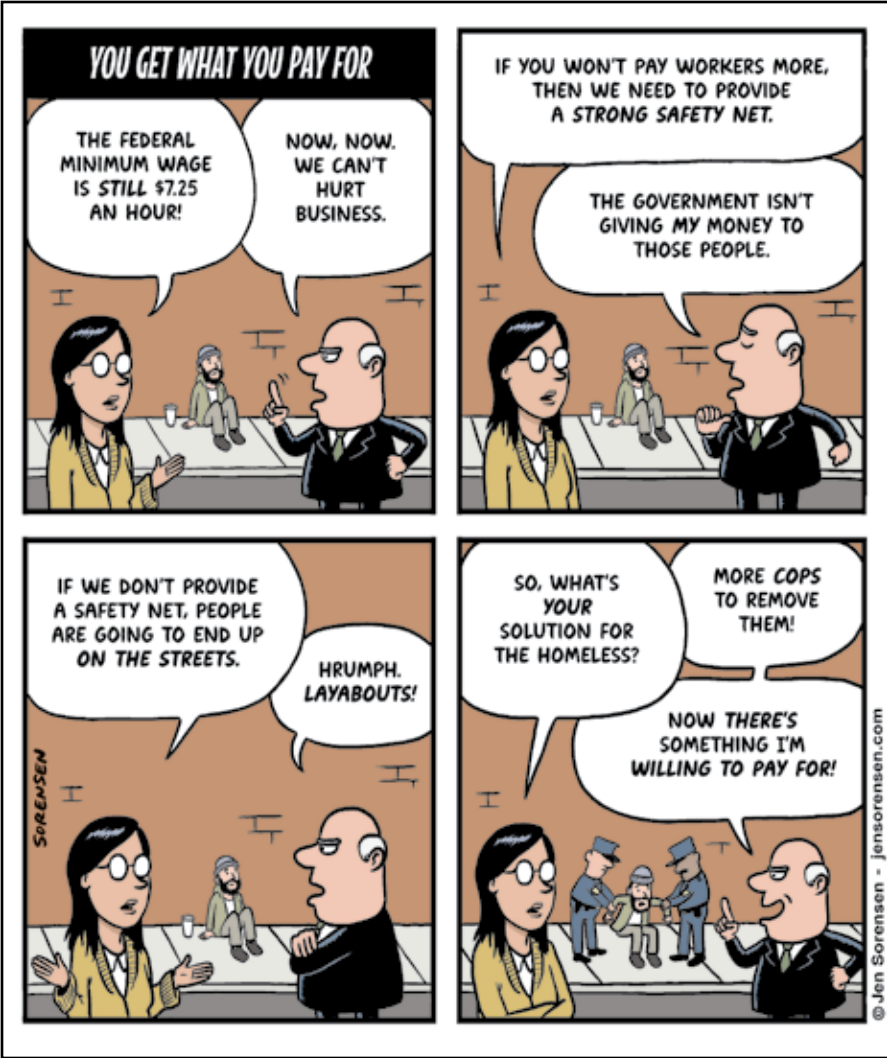
1. Positive votes
5. Barcelona appetizers
10. Haggis vendor, usually
14. Hurting
15. Without ___ in the world
16. Base for poi
17. Mennen aftershave brand
19. Strummed instruments
20. Like U.S. phone numbers (including area codes)
21. YouTube offerings
23. Royal flush need
24. Fish nets
26. Some fast food freebies
30. #42
33. Numerical suffix
34. It contains the id
36. Brand of tea once owned by Starbucks
37. Adidas rival
39. Sign of summer
40. Rachel Maddow's network, as of late 2025
41. Car sold at auction, maybe
42. Brief outline
44. Stranded material
45. Ozzy's band, for short
47. Patrick who played McDreamy

49. Become fixated
51. "Aladdin" monkey
52. 2026 Winter Olympics country, locally
54. Ingrid Bergman's "Casablanca" character
59. Golden Tempo's mother, e.g.
60. Divisive political topic
62. Env. data
63. Owe ___ of gratitude
64. "The Incredibles" fashion designer Mode
65. "California Dreamin'" singer Elliot
66. "Say ___ the Dress" (TLC reality series)
67. Grains at the shore

Down

1. Helper, for short
2. Ox connector
3. Brockovich portrayed by Julia Roberts
4. "Where the Wild Things Are" author
5. Goals
6. Three-syllable berry
7. Agreements
8. "Where ___ you going with that thing?"
9. Submissive
10. Class members
11. Flat trays for weddings
12. Vegan and kosher

- cookie
13. Chuck
18. Arm muscle
22. Ending for some pasta varieties
25. It's major when there's a G#
26. Some custard fruits
27. Offshore
28. Recycled paper products used for backing
29. Air dwellers of folklore
31. O3
32. "That's impossible!"
35. Intro to chemistry?
38. Fruit desserts
40. Bollywood's home
42. Eroded
43. Words before "exist" or "be"
46. "___ was about to say ..."
48. Heartbeats
50. Entree go-withs
52. Colorful tech product of the late 1990s
53. Sound of a big reveal?
55. Pride letters
56. Meat package letters
57. Actor Bill or director Trevor
58. Completely out of power
61. Stamp ending?



Answers to last puzzle

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

YOUR PLACE FOR Hot Summer Fun!



FRIDAYS, JUNE 5, 12 & 19 • 5PM-9PM
WIN UP TO \$10,000 CASH!

Will you take what the Boss offers or keep playing for the top prize?



SATURDAYS
IN JUNE
3PM-10PM

**WIN FREE PLAY OR YOUR SHARE OF
THE PROGRESSIVE CASH JACKPOT!**

Visit PresqueIsleDowns.com
for the current progressive cash jackpot total.
Free Play expires the same day at Midnight.



THRILLING LIVE RACING
EVERY MONDAY-WEDNESDAY
3:30PM POST TIME

Visit PresqueIsleDowns.com/Racing for full schedule.



**NEW
PLAYERS
CLUB
MEMBERS**

SPIN 5 TIMES
WIN \$100-\$2,500 FREE PLAY!
Table Games Players Get \$25 In Match Play!

One spin per visit. All spins must be made within 4 weeks from first visit.
Free Play expires the same day at Midnight. See Guest Services for details.



HAPPY HOUR SPECIALS
FRIDAYS • 5PM-7PM

50% OFF
ALL APPETIZERS
ALL DRAFT BEER • ALL WELL DRINKS

JUNE'S FEATURED
Burger
OF THE MONTH
\$18 SPINACH ARTICHOKE
BURGER
SERVED WITH ONE SIDE

Father's
Day Dining
SPECIAL
SUNDAY, JUNE 21
\$20 SMOKED
BEER CAN CHICKEN
SERVED WITH ONION RINGS

Must be 21 or older. Beverages, tax and gratuity not included.



PRESQUE ISLE DOWNS
CASINO

YOUR PLACE FOR ALL THINGS FUN!

presqueisledowns.com | 1.866.ERIE.FUN | I-90 EXIT 27, Erie, PA 16514

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, help is available. Call 1-800-GAMBLER.