

The only local voice for news, arts, and culture



The Studio at St. Mary's

From parochial school to a space to create

Drag Queen Shea D'Heaux

Celebrating pride with Jemmerio Harper

Our Collective Housing Dilemma

Intersection of queerness and housing instability

The ZONE Dance Club

*PROUDLY SERVING ERIE'S
LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY FOR
OVER 25 YEARS*



EST.
1998



*In Honor of Robert Regan
Founding Owner of The Zone
1963 - 2018*

Poverty Simulation | Pride on the Bay | Alice By Heart | Guys and Dolls
U.S. Brig Niagara | Basement Transmissions | 40 Shades of Purple

FREE



INJECTABLES
PERMANENT MAKEUP
LASER TREATMENTS
MEDICAL WELLNESS
AESTHETICS
COOLSCULPT ELITE



EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE
WITH THE SIMPLY COCO
AI SIMULATOR



988 W. Erie Plaza

www.simplycocomedspa.com

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

Contributors

Jeff Bloodworth

Edwina Capozziello

Julia Carden

Anthony Carson

Nathaniel Clark

Susannah Faulkner

Chloe Forbes

Cassandra Gripp

Ally Kutz

Tommy Link

Alana Sabol

Jen Sorensen

Cara Suppa

Forest Taylor

Thomas Taylor

Bryan Toy

Amy VanScoter

Larry Wheaton

Morgan Yezzi

Cover Illustration

Gaby "Apollo" Reyes

Cover Layout

Nick Warren

1001 State St. Suite 1315

Erie, Pa., 16501

contact@eriereader.com

The Erie Reader is published monthly and distributed at over 350 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, 1001 State St., Suite 1315, Erie, Pa, 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct sales inquiries to 814.314.9364. For editorial inquiries, email contact@ErieReader.com.



CONTENTS

JUNE 5, 2024

Finding Pride Through Generations - 4

How the Ozarks and Erie’s LGBTQIA+ history has evolved

Will the Flagship Niagara Sail Again? - 8

The future of Erie’s most-beloved icon looks murky

Our Collective Housing Dilemma - 11

The intersection of queerness and housing instability

Residents Feel the Pinch of Poverty in Simulation - 14

Locals at a loss in lifelike lose-lose scenarios

Inside Erie’s Beloved Queer Club, The Zone - 16

The ‘everyone is welcome here’ bar celebrates more than 25 years

The Studio at St. Mary’s: A Space To Create - 18

How Erie’s first parochial school became an inspiring art and community safe-space

Gem City Style: June 2024 - 22

Celebrating Pride with Jemmerio Harper/Shea D’Heaux

Spotlight on Erie - 24

Remember what the dormouse said, feed your head: *Alice By Heart* at Dramashop, Great American Book Sale, Pride on the Bay, 40 Shades of Purple, and more!

The Erie Cookbook Revisited: Self-Pickled Chillie Sauce - 32

A robust Victorian-era condiment

Movie Reviews - 33

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga and *The People’s Joker*

Local, Original Comics - 34

The latest from Anthony Carson, Bryan Toy, Tommy Link, Brad Pattullo, and John Bavaro

Album Reviews - 37

Fresh cuts from Billie Eilish, Maniacal Device, Royek, and elias, if only

Crossword Puzzle - 39

The latest stumper from David Levinson Wilk

From the Editors

Finding your Zone

It’s the human condition: we all want to be loved and accepted for who we are.

For some, that kind of love and acceptance comes easily — those lucky enough to have an empathetic, stable, and supportive “family of origin.” Countless others have to search outside their biological family units to find true family for themselves; those deep friendships and connections that provide what one’s genetically-related family chooses not to — support, acceptance, and non-judgmental, unconditional love. “Family of choice” or “found family” are often safety nets for marginalized groups of people — veterans, those facing addiction recovery, and, most often, those within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Enter places like The Zone, as featured gorgeously on our cover this month by guest artist Gaby “Apollo” Reyes. The Zone exists as Erie’s only Queer bar, and for a quarter of a century, has been a welcoming place where LGBTQIA+ folks in Erie can find their family — a place of true acceptance, love, and judgment-free fun.

In order to find family, one has to know where to look for support — as Susannah Faulkner points out in her op-ed this month, many LGBTQIA+ citizens of Erie who cannot find a source of support from family end up becoming unhoused at a higher rate, winding up at overflow shelters, many of which are not designed to be welcoming to them — especially those in the trans community. This kind of structural social problem requires broad spectrum governmental solutions and community support — which can come by way of municipal plans and financing with nonprofit collaboration.

Erie’s own Tyler Titus is the human embodiment of these sources of community support — through their position within Erie City Council as well as their impactful nonprofit Compton’s Table. Read about the organization’s upcoming 40 Shades of Purple event, which aims to support the work of the nonprofit that “curates safe spaces for Queer and gender nonconforming people.”

Pride can’t happen if those who should be proud are not given the support they need to survive and thrive. As we move forward as an LGBTQIA+ sanctuary city, we can all offer kinship to ensure that Erie is a safe space, that Erieites are found family, and that everyone is given the opportunity to find their zone.

Finding Pride Through Generations

How the Ozarks and Erie's LGBTQIA+ history has evolved

By: Jeff Bloodworth

Even at a young age, Eva Jentzsch understood "Pride." In 2010, the five-year-old asked, "Mom, are you and Danielle going to get married?" Amy, her mom, sighed and explained, "in this country, girls can't marry other girls." Eva's universe collapsed. She demanded of Amy, "No! How do you know that? Who told you that?"

Fourteen years later Amy Pezzani still giggles at her daughter's innate Pride. But the 52-year-old knows her daughter's incredulity was also blissful ignorance. Today, Amy is proof positive of LGBTQIA+ advances. The chief executive officer of a Fort Collins, Colorado food bank had once subsisted on food stamps and hid her true self. That world, for her, at least, is history. She's out, successful, and has "zero shits left to give."

Amy's story demonstrates the necessity of Pride and why we celebrate it.

In 1990, Amy left St. Louis for college without much sense of her sexual orientation. Sure, she crushed on a girl in high school and was fully immersed in St. Louis' queer scene. But she, from all appearances, played the part of the straight girl. Besides, in her conservative Catholic family "I could be anything, but I couldn't be gay." And she surely chose just about the worst place in America to explore her sexuality — the Ozarks.

Covering northern Arkansas and southern Missouri, the Ozarks Plateau is home to poverty, Pentecostals, and prejudice. Second only to Idaho in hate groups, the Ozarks is where I met Amy. We attended college together at Missouri State University. Located in a city about the size of Erie, Springfield was no college town. The Pentecostals set the cultural tone.

Similar to Springfield, in Erie it was the Catholic Church that established the cultural barometer. Like the Pentecostals, the Holy Mother Church was not tolerant. In the 1980s, the Church reaffirmed that same-sex relations remained "intrinsically disordered." In this milieu, laws against same-sex dancing and drag shows, much less sexual relationships, kept Erieites closeted. Life for LGBTQIA+ in Erie was much as it was in the Ozarks. Craig Morton, a Springfield native, admitted to me "I never thought I'd be out. I had never even met a closeted gay man."

But small acts made cracks in the wall. In 1987, Pope John Paul II said of AIDS patients, "God loves you all, without distinction, without limit." For many queer Catholics, this was an earth-shattering affirmation. And by the early 1990s, signs of progress emerged, even in Erie. In 1991, activists, led by Michael Mahler, formed the Erie chapter of the League of Gay and Lesbian Voters. The very next year, the League helped defeat a "gay baiting" Republican in a 1992 state assembly race.

Such LGBTQIA+ activism was still unthinkable in the Ozarks. In 1990, the year Amy and Craig started college, the KKK burned a cross at the "gay park," located less than a mile from Missouri State University.

CONTRIBUTED



Much has changed since Amy Pezzani (left) and her partner Danielle (right) fell in love – when Amy's daughter Eva (center) was young, she lamented that Amy and Danielle couldn't get married. While much legislative progress has been made, the road remains long and arduous ahead of LGBTQIA+ folks in the Trump era.

The Grand Dragon assured local journalists, "We have nothing bad to say about [African Americans]." Instead, he admitted, "we have a lot of bad to say about gays."

Despite the hate, Amy searched. She told me, "When something is oppressed and you can't be yourself, the subculture emerges." And she craved that subculture without knowing exactly why. Eventually, she met someone, Debbie. Craig, meanwhile, took a longer path. But when he did come out, he laughed and admitted, "I exploded out of the closet." An activist, he led the university's BI-GALA organization. On national coming out day, he promoted the event by "coming out" to the Ozarks on the region's television networks. Thankfully, his parents had already grudgingly accepted this new reality. They realized, as Craig put it, "Having me gay was better than not having me at all." For Amy, the path was not so (ahem) straight.

Amy and Debbie stayed together for three years. In that time, Amy graduated, got a job, and became executive director of the largest (church-affiliated) food bank in the Ozarks. With friends, Amy was out. But at work, Amy explained to me, "in the 1990s Ozarks, you weren't allowed to be gay." To keep her job, she hid who she was. Then there were her parents. Amy

hid Debbie from them as well. Eventually her mom trapped her in a basement and demanded, "Amy, are you gay?" When she admitted she and Debbie were in a relationship, her mom replied, "I love you, but I won't accept it."

In those years, Amy came to understand the contours of her sexuality. She told me, "I don't like putting a label on who I am. Throughout my life, I've been attracted to the whole person first and sometimes the person is biologically male and sometimes female." She eventually married a man. They moved to Colorado and had a baby, Eva. Her husband, sadly, struggled with his marriage vows. Amy, left a single mom, moved on. Amy jokes that she lacks "a type." But when she encountered Danielle, she thought to herself, "I must know this woman."

Unlike Amy, whose presentation matches her gender, Danielle's does not. Outdoorsy and a sports lover, Danielle wears her short hair combed to the side. Her preferred outfits consist of pants, button-down shirts and sweater vests. This caused problems even in liberal Boulder, Colorado. One night, the University of Colorado senior walked across campus and three men attacked and beat her. Campus police ignored it. A few credits short of graduation, Danielle packed her bags and moved to Seattle, Washington. It

LECOM HEALTH

Welcomes



**Neeru
Agarwal, D.O.**
General Surgery

Now accepting patients

LECOM Health Millcreek Surgical Specialists

(814) 868-2170

- laparoscopic inguinal and ventral hernias
- laparoscopic cholecystectomies
- hernias with and without mesh
- all lumps and bumps
- open colectomies
- all open bowel cases

KNOX LAW WELCOMES BRIAN M. SEELINGER



Knox Law is pleased to welcome **Brian M. Seelinger**, who will focus his practice on Business & Tax, Public Finance & Bonds, and Employee Benefits.

Knox Law recognizes the important overlap between law, finance, and investments; wise lawyers and investors possess good judgment and the ability to analyze multiple sides of an issue. Brian is known for his ability to handle complex matters, tactical and strategic thinking, analytical reasoning, and attention to detail. He is a CPA and holds the prestigious Chartered Financial Analyst® (CFA) designation in addition to other professional financial designations. Brian is valued for his analytical acumen and thoughtful opinions. Most recently, he served as Senior Portfolio Manager and Vice President in the Trust Department at a publicly traded multistate bank. Before that, Brian's entrepreneurial spirit led him to a unique opportunity where he served as the COO of an e-commerce company, leveraging his negotiation skills to secure deals with high-profile companies across the nation.

Brian earned a B.S. in finance and M.B.A. from Penn State University, and his J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law. He lives in Millcreek with his family and joins a team of 40 attorneys that has been providing quality legal services to businesses, families, public entities, and nonprofit organizations for over 65 years.



Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C.

Erie | Pittsburgh | Jamestown, NY

814-459-2800 | www.kmgslaw.com



This summer:
The weather's **good.**
The water's **fine.**
Here for you when
you're neither.

LECOM
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Achievement
Center
at LECOM Health

(814) 459-2755

Corry Counseling
of LECOM Health

(814) 664-7761

LECOM
INSTITUTE FOR
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

(814) 454-3174

LECOM HEALTH
MILLCREEK COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

(814) 864-4031

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

Erie Indemnity Company
d/b/a **Erie Insurance** seeks
Senior IT Analyst in **Erie, PA**, for
driving transformational change
involving complex new
business or technical processes,
development & introduction of
new vendor partners or providers,
and/or introduction of new
technology.

Apply at:
[https://www.erieinsurance.com/
careers/opportunities](https://www.erieinsurance.com/careers/opportunities)

**Erie Resource
Management Corp.,**
headquartered in **Erie, PA**, seeks
a **Master Engineer** to create &
maintain code/configurations
as part of software development
lifecycle. Can work remotely from
anywhere in U.S. within ERIE's
expanding footprint, subject to
management approval. If working
remotely, must travel to Erie, PA
several times per year.

Apply at:
[https://www.erieinsurance.com/
careers/opportunities](https://www.erieinsurance.com/careers/opportunities).

B. B. Vincent: Good Judgement
Thursday, June 20, 2024

Strong Vincent: A Strong Case
Thursday, June 27, 2024

WQLN PBS
CHRONICLES

Season Two
Two-Part Finale
8pm on WQLN PBS

With support from

and Thomas B. Hagen

was Amy who wooed her home.

Thirteen years later, they are still together. When Amy told her mom about Danielle, her mother said, “I thought *that* was a phase.” As for Amy’s dad, his deep Christian faith proved an obstacle. But the world had changed. Both eventually came to adore Danielle. As for the rest of the family, “they think Danielle is awesome.” At home, Amy feared Eva might suffer from discrimination by having two moms. To her surprise, no parent ever seemed to care. And by junior high, Amy realized, to her delight, “Eva was cool AF because she had two moms.”

In 2020, Amy conducted an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion assessment. When a board member questioned why it was important, Amy, for the first time ever, spoke about Danielle with the group. Although she regularly mentioned Danielle in one-on-one conversations, this was different. She told her colleagues “People should not feel like they can’t bring their whole self to work. I want to create an environment where they can.” This marked a turning point. Today, Amy told me, “It felt freeing that a weight had been lifted off my shoulders now that I named it in a group. It didn’t matter to them, and this is how the world has changed for the better.”

As anyone who has lived in the Ozarks or Erie can tell you, LGBTQIA+ progress is real. In 2003, the Erie Diocese Bishop, Donald Trautman, led the nation’s charge against same-sex marriage. Twenty years later, his successor, Lawrence Persico says of such

unions: “We have to be open to others and treat others with respect and dignity.”

The advance is authentic but so is the backlash. For Danielle, her “bathroom choices are vexed with anxiety and grief.” The right wing’s conflation of pedophilia with LGBTQIA+ Americans has bled into the mainstream. Amy told me, “Danielle gets yelled at and spit at in public bathrooms all the time.” Strangers scream at her: “You are a pedophile!” Amy’s fix for this is to signal Danielle’s gender by calling out loudly to her as they enter a public bathroom, “Hey Babe, do you have a tampon for me?”

But this humor is merely a band-aid for the pain. Curious about the backlash, I called my old Missouri State history professor, Dr. Holly Baggett. Baggett has chronicled the LGBTQIA+ experience in the Ozarks. At the university, she helped secure same-sex partner benefits and the inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected class. These advances convinced her, “I thought we were rolling along.” But the Trump era has, in her mind, pushed the Ozarks backwards. In a recent school board race, LGBTQIA+ issues predominated. Her preferred candidate came in dead last. The bigots won. She terms the current atmosphere “God-awful.”

Craig, who now lives in Upstate New York with his husband, sees the backlash, too. He is, as he told me, “Pessimistically optimistic.” His Ozarks upbringing tells him “I can survive anything. I know I have resilience.” But he worries that the progress of the past

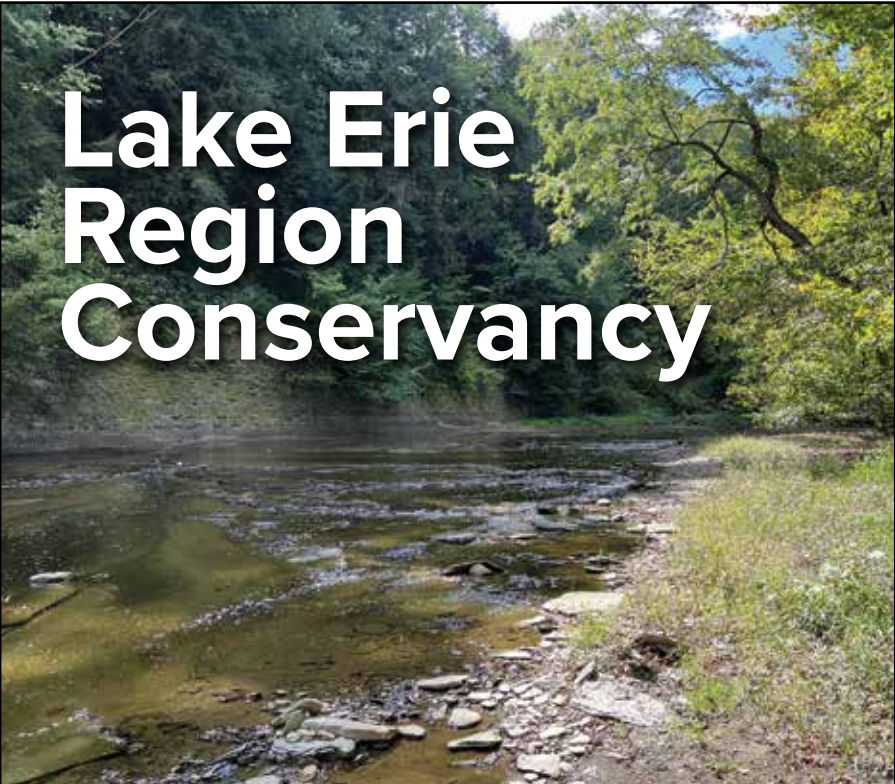
years means that for some in the LGBTQIA+ community, “Their whole life [has become] one long brunch.” He, nevertheless, believes, “Stonewall shows us that we will take quite a bit, but we’ll fight back.”

Amy agrees. She sees the progress but also burns with fury over Danielle’s experiences. Her hope lies with Eva. For her daughter’s generation, Pride is normal. They expect it. Two years ago, Eva went before the State Board of Education to demand it. In 2022, Colorado considered a “Don’t Say Gay” bill modeled after Florida’s law. A 17-year-old Eva reacted the same way her five-year-old self did — with Pride.

Eva hates public speaking. From the womb, she was an anxious kid. But the Colorado bill constituted an attack on her family. Speaking to the State Board of Education, she demanded, “I have two moms. As a kid, I felt embarrassed. I want younger kids to know it is a normal and a unique experience to grow up in a household of feminine power. Love is love. When we teach our kids about LGBTQIA+ we are not talking about their sexual encounters. We are talking about their stories and perspectives. All families are always appropriate at all levels.”


We live in an era of backlash politics. Eva shows us that Pride is how to respond.

Jeff Bloodworth is a professor of American political history at Gannon University. You can follow him on Twitter/X @jhueybloodworth or reach him at bloodwor003@gannon.edu



Lake Erie Region Conservancy

Because conserving land is our legacy to future generations.



Find out more at www.LakeErieRegionConservancy.org



POT O GOLD DAIRY Farm Store

Featuring

Milk • Yogurt • Cheese

Baked Goods • Ice Cream Cones



Featuring

Home Made Batch Churned Ice Cream

Crawford County Farm Fresh

MAY – AUGUST HOURS

Monday & Tuesday 10AM–5PM

Thursday & Friday 10AM–8PM

Saturday 10AM–3PM

Wednesday & Sunday CLOSED

24074 Wilkie Rd.
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403

Will the Flagship Niagara Sail Again?

The future of Erie's most-beloved icon looks murky

By: Bryan Toy

The trouble began last July, off Gull Point, in sight of the old Hammermill smokestacks. As the U.S. Brig *Niagara* maneuvered under power to navigate the channel at the mouth of Presque Isle Bay, one of her props came loose and fell to rest on the bottom of the lake. She limped back to port under the command of her expert captain and crew, where she was moored in her familiar slip behind the Blasco Library.

There she remains, moldering, her lines slack and growing green with algae. The once majestic ship, with her 118-foot main mast, which just one year before had been the world-renowned superstar of tall ships festivals, currently looks boarded-up and forlorn. The Flagship *Niagara* no longer sails the Great Lakes and Atlantic seaboard representing Erie as a beacon of our vibrant can-do spirit. Instead, with her three miles of rigging in storage, and her deck covered with a tarp indefinitely, she seems to be a symbol of better times gone by.

Prior to 1988, there was a previous iteration of *Niagara* in Erie. She had been built in stages during the preceding decades and ended up sitting in dry dock next to State Street. At that time, a partnership between the Flagship Niagara League (FNL) and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) was formed to create a piece of living history unique to the Great Lakes. With inspiration and diligence from both the state agency and the local volunteers, the U.S. Brig *Niagara* was born. The partnership between those two organizations has been a blessing for Erie for 35 years.

In July, there were reasons to think that *Niagara* could be ready to sail again for the 2024 season. She had a seasoned captain who could get her to the Cleveland shipyard for a replacement propeller, needed repairs to her bow stem, and an out-of-water survey; all of which were needed in order to keep *Niagara's* Coast Guard certification in active status. At that time, *Niagara* also had her greatest asset — an army of committed volunteers in the FNL. These dedicated (some may even say obsessed) local lovers of history and sailing had been funding three-quarters of the ship's budget since 2009 through heroic fundraising efforts. The FNL had also been running all of the day-to-day operations of *Niagara* during that time: hiring professional crew, filling out the other positions on the ship as volunteers, and taking on responsibility for maintenance. The members of the FNL have always been the heart and soul of the ship. She could not sail without them. Indeed, their absence is what has kept her in port and may keep her in port forever.

In December, the FNL received a bombshell from the PHMC. They were informed in a letter that they were no longer to have anything to do with *Niagara*. The partnership was dissolved with no explanation. The FNL was to cease and desist all ongoing operations and to vacate the premises. None of the volunteers

PATRICK GRAB



After suffering an accident while sailing on the lake, the Brig *Niagara* has since been moored at her spot behind Blasco Library. The future of Erie's defining flagship is uncertain amidst a dispute between governing factions over funding, leadership, and agency.

who had dedicated years to *Niagara* were allowed on the property. Starting on January 1, the PHMC, who owns *Niagara*, was going to take over the ship — lock, stock, and barrel.

In theory, having the government agency that is charged by the Pennsylvania Code with sailing *Niagara* actually being the ones to sail her sounds like a good thing. In fact, for the first 20 years after *Niagara* was christened, the PHMC ran operations with the FNL as a support group. This arrangement was fine: the ship didn't have to make as much money at festivals because the budget for Pennsylvania's Flagship was covered by the taxpayers. The ship could stay closer to home as a tourist attraction and more local people could participate in educational programs. PHMC is uniquely qualified to oversee historic sites and museums. *Niagara* is both.

Niagara, however, is unique. Pennsylvania has no other museum that floats or travels internationally. As a nonprofit working on the behalf of the PHMC, our local organization can manage budgets and personnel much more efficiently than the government. It can take months for them to pay bills and even longer to get bids and contracts. The PHMC also has no one currently on staff that could be considered an expert on tall ships. The current site administrator at the Erie Maritime Museum has almost zero sailing experience, which is more than a little problematic. The PHMC states that they are in the process of hiring a captain and shipwright, both necessary for getting her back on the water, but there are no active job postings for either position. In recent years, the bud-

get for the museum and ship has been in excess of a million dollars. The PHMC has allocated \$750,000, a substantial increase over their previous \$350,000 input into *Niagara's* programs, but without the FNL's contribution, it is unclear how the state will meet expenses without drastic cuts in programs. It is ambiguous based on communications with the PHMC whether they have called for bids on the first phase of *Niagara's* repairs.

It has been said that the wheels of government turn slowly, and for whatever reason, the process of restoring the pride of Erie to its honored place as "the belle of the ball" at tall ships festivals has yet to begin. The PHMC has stated that Pennsylvania's flagship will participate in the United States Semiquincentennial in 2026. That is two summers away. Before that time, they have an awful lot of work to do. Until then, none of *Niagara's* history and sailing programs will continue to foster a love of history, train the next generation of professional sailors or indeed, change lives. In order to get the PHMC to get the process rolling, it is obvious that they will need a fire lit under their feet. Our local politicians must do whatever they can to bring pressure to bear. If enough concerned citizens besides the members of the FNL can make some phone calls and send letters to the right people, perhaps *Niagara* will sail again soon — otherwise, who knows? She may end up sitting up on blocks next to State Street like her previous incarnation.

Bryan Toy can be reached at bryantoy@hotmail.com



SAVE THE DATE: NATIONAL NIGHT OUT IS AUGUST 6

Neighbors throughout Erie County are invited to spend some quality time with each other on **Tuesday, August 6** thanks to United Way of Erie County and our partnering event organizers.

Events funded by United Way seek to promote the spirit of community and encourage everyone to play a role in supporting the education of youth in our neighborhoods.

United Way of Erie County is a **local** social impact organization on a MISSION to CRUSH POVERTY in our community. We envision a collaborative community where ALL students succeed and ALL families thrive. That's LIVING UNITED.



Join us at an event nearest you!

UnitedWayErie.org/NNO





Erie Day
School

*Celebrating 95 years
of learning by leading.*

NOW ENROLLING PRESCHOOL!



Now enrolling Preschool - Eighth Grade.
Sarah Williams | swilliams@eriedayschool.com | 814.452.4273
WWW.ERIEDAYSCHOOL.COM

SAME CAR. *Lower Payments.*



Our **Refi My Ride**[®]
special may be able to
save you money!

- ✓ 1% Rate Reduction NOW
- ✓ 1% Cash Bonus LATER
- ✓ No Payments for 60 Days



Apply online in minutes
www.riefcu.org/1160



Apply in person



Schedule an appointment
www.riefcu.org/appt

Erie Federal
Credit Union[®]

Loans subject to credit approval. Rates, terms, and conditions vary based on credit worthiness, qualifications and collateral conditions and are subject to change. Lowest rate available 1.99% Annual Percentage Rate. *1% auto loan rate reduction is applied to qualifying interest rate and interest will accrue on the loan during the first 60 days. 1% cash back amount is based on amount refinanced and cannot exceed \$500. 1% cash back amount will be paid one year after loan closing date and will be forfeited if loan is closed before one year term. Existing Erie FCU auto loans are excluded. Membership eligibility required. Insured by NCUA

*An additional .25% discount is available. To qualify for the additional .25% discount, member must have an Erie FCU checking account with direct deposit and enroll in auto pay/payroll deduction. Certain restrictions apply. Promotion subject to change and could end without notice. Promotion runs through 11/30/24.

L|E|C|O|M HEALTH

Welcomes

Carleen Cho, M.D.

Vascular and Endovascular Surgery



Now accepting patients
Institute for Successful Living
(814) 868-2200

peripheral artery disease • limb salvage • aneurysms
dialysis access • venous disease

Our Collective Housing Dilemma

The intersection of queerness and housing instability

By: Susannah Faulkner

On any given day in our home of Erie County, around 1,000 people don't know where they are sleeping each night. Last year, there was an unprecedented 15 percent increase in youth (ages 18-24) homelessness nationally. Among these young people, up to 45 percent of them identify as LGBTQIA+. As researchers, analysts, and public officials only recently have been equipped with sound data on this growing crisis, we must bring to light how our Queer community faces similar drastic disparities when it comes to housing stability as those that persist on racial lines from decades of disenfranchisement, red-lining, and discrimination.

Overall, LGBTQIA+ folks are more likely to be renters, to face housing unaffordability, and to be unhoused. Also, only 50 percent own homes as adults compared to 70 percent of non-LGBTQIA+ folks across the country. This data, all taken from a 2020 report from the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, paints a clear picture on the reality of housing for the Queer community.

Whether during my brief time serving on Erie City Council or on a random Friday night volunteering at Our Neighbors Place (Erie's best, yet unsustainable solution to an overflow shelter in the colder months), I learned about the barriers and systemic failures our unhoused neighbors face locally. When adding in the experience of being LGBTQIA+, the mountains to climb increase greatly. I had to recognize my own blind spot around how gender expansive and trans-

gender folks can feel unwelcome at shelters, since spaces there are generally separated by men and women. Out of all marginalized groups, this subgroup is the most likely to remain completely unsheltered and face sleeping outside. After we passed the state's first LGBTQIA+ sanctuary city resolution in July of last year on Erie City Council, I listened and learned from several unhoused transgender neighbors who did not feel safe in any of our local shelters. It was a stark reminder of how much work continues to be needed to address this multifaceted issue.

Several of the most memorable conversations I've had with chronically unhoused neighbors over the past two years surround their origin story of housing instability. Tragically, many pointed back to the pivotal moment when their parents and family rejected them for being LGBTQIA+. This heartbreaking reality can result in decades of remaining unhoused, and increases the chances of developing mental illness and substance use disorders. A 2022 Trevor Project report found that LGBTQIA+ youth who experience housing instability and homelessness have a 3.5 times increased rate of attempting suicide. Some of the best solutions to this tragedy include inclusive supportive services, such as the often life-saving work that happens at Compton's Table and Central Outreach, as well as promoting family acceptance of LGBTQIA+ youth. While policy change is crucial, every single person reading this can do their part to support such organizations while encouraging courageous conversations in their circles of family and friends.



Erie, like many other cities across the country, is experiencing a housing crisis. And this crisis is often exponentially worse for those in the LGBTQIA+ population. The Erie Community Foundation recently announced its Housing First plan, but our city needs a holistic approach to tackling chronic homelessness that includes street outreach, nonprofit partnerships, reliable income, and inclusivity in sheltering options.



GET YOUR GROW ON!

DISCOVER UNUSUAL & SPECIALTY:

- Annuals
- Perennials
- Houseplants
- Vegetables & Herbs
- Trees
- Shrubs
- Garden Gifts & Yard Art



12555 Fry Road
Edinboro, PA 16412
(814) 734-6700

Growing for 34 years.

More conversations and connections are desperately needed to address Erie's housing crisis at all levels. As unveiled in April, a significant and expensive public-private partnership is underway to permanently house and provide supportive services to 150 chronically unhoused Erie residents. Coordinated by Infinite Erie and the Erie Community Foundation, a Housing First Plan has been created with the goal of building a new facility for 50 residents plus the acquisition and rehabilitation of 100 housing units across the city. Executive leadership at the city and county levels are on-board, along with Hamot Health Foundation and their new venture Build Community Development Corporation. With around \$15 million dollars already pledged, the Erie Community Foundation is now tasked with raising an additional \$20 million to bring the project to life.

When I had the opportunity to ask project leadership publicly about the involvement of those with lived experience, I was met with uncertainty. We all have blind spots, but how can a \$35 million project to address chronic homelessness not involve those facing chronic homelessness in the planning process? The audience was assured that a vast network of service providers were involved. However, those closest to the pain are the ones most needed to provide solutions. As a community, we must collectively hold one another accountable when saviorism becomes commonplace. It is not too late for this partnership to improve engagement with neighbors with lived experience in our shelters, especially those who faced that brutal reality and navigated their way into permanent housing.

Fortunately, the project is heading in the right direction when it comes to embracing the housing-first model. This strategy emerged in the 1990s and proved effective in cities like Austin, Texas; Nashville, Tennessee; and Madison, Wisconsin. It includes immediate access to permanent housing with supportive services. Importantly, it embeds a practice of consumer choice and self-determination, giving chronically

unhoused neighbors options when it comes to their housing and community services. Social integration and connection is crucial, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing isolation and loneliness. There are plentiful models for Erie to refer to as this project evolves, including both Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids in Michigan. But no feedback is more valuable than the neighbors walking into Our Neighbors Place on a cold January night when they have nowhere else to go.

A 2022 Trevor Project report found that LGBTQIA+ youth who experience housing instability and homelessness have a 3.5 times increased rate of attempting suicide. Some of the best solutions to this tragedy include inclusive supportive services ... as well as promoting family acceptance of LGBTQIA+ youth.

In order to better serve our broader unhoused community, we need to build more bridges. As Mercy Center for Women's Executive Director Jennie Hagerty asserts in her Erie Times News piece back in March, Erie must do something to improve street outreach. While some new public funding is seemingly becoming available to address this, prioritizing its use for meeting people where they are at is paramount. If this includes service organizations already serving the LGBTQIA+ community, this could have profound impacts on reducing chronic homelessness for youth

rejected by their families and facing housing insecurity for the first time.

And, hopefully one day in our not too distant future, Erie will implement a Universal Basic Income (UBI) program for our neighbors facing housing insecurity. Such a program in my former home of Denver, Colorado was so successful that one-third of participants went from unhoused to permanently housed in just one year. Program evaluations saw significant increases in employment and improved mental health, too. The group with the most positive outcomes included unhoused individuals who were trusted with \$1,000 per month for one year.

Imagine if we could implement such a program in Erie. What would be the price tag for \$1,000 in direct cash assistance for our 150 chronically unhoused neighbors for one year? \$1.8 million. While additional expenses for program administration and supportive services are essential, this is a drastic drop from the proposed \$35 million project. The Housing First project will take years to complete, all while our chronically unhoused neighbors need immediate and urgent assistance.

As housing policies, projects, and programs continue to evolve locally, my wish is that Erie doesn't continue our unsettling trend of being 20 years behind. We are equipped with successful examples from across the commonwealth and the country on how to truly transform housing insecurity. Most importantly, our community is filled with dedicated and creative people committed to the cause. In the meantime and especially this Pride Month, let's ensure together that not one more Queer youth becomes chronically unhoused. Truly, it takes a village.

Data is powerful! If you are LGBTQ+ and live in PA, please take the PA Equality Project Housing Survey at paequality.com/survey/housing-survey.

Susannah Faulkner can be reached at susannah.faulkner@gmail.com

2024
**ERIE ETHNIC
MARKET TOURS**
ERIE ARTS AND CULTURE
NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA'S ARTS COUNCIL

Discover the vibrant cultures and unique businesses that make up Erie's diverse community with Erie Arts and Culture's 2024 Ethnic Market Tours!

Tickets on sale now for select Saturdays July-September. Scan QR code or visit us online at erieartsandculture.org



RE/MAX LAKELAND REALTY

814-382-TEAM
remaxlakelandrealty.com



					
Chandler Mason (Broker/Owner) cmason@remax.net 814-573-6206	Anna Mason (Owner) anna.mason@remax.net 814-881-2365	Samantha Blount samantha.blount@remax.net 323-535-7349	Ben Pouliot bpouliot@remax.net 814-720-5131	Justin Perrine justin.perrine@remax.net 724-992-2816	MacKenzie Reynolds mackenzie.reynolds@remax.net 814-516-7515
					
Max Rankin max.rankin@remax.net 814-860-6139	Charles Himes charleshimes@remax.net 814-636-7451	Helen Santiago helen.santiago@remax.net 814-392-0531	Corey Barbato coreyb@remax.net 814-490-6701	TJ Speckman timothy.speckman@remax.net 814-600-4592	Natasha Baskin natashabaskin@remax.net 814-882-5841
					
					Shahed Latzo shahed.lato@remax.net 814-860-1693

11065 ST HWY 18, UNIT 6, CONNEAUT LAKE, PA 16316

1704 W 8TH ST., ERIE, PA 16505

220 W PLUM ST., STE 335, EDINBORO, PA 16412

ABC's

of Building Better Lives


Mary Lynn Rote, LPC, CADC
 Rob Giannamore, LPC • Charen Pasky, LCSW
 Jillian Rhoades, LCSW • Ashley Gleason, LPC
 Alen Melik-Adamyan, LCSW
 Samantha Marcinko, LPC • Mark Gardner, LPC
 Sara Allegretto, LPC • Marcia Anderson, LPC

COUNSELING SERVICES

Individuals | Couples | Families
 Depression | Addictions | Anxiety | Trauma
 EMDR Therapy | Personal Fitness Training
 Nutrition & Weight Management

CALL US TODAY (814) 825-2930

4320 Dexter Ave. Erie, PA 16504
 For more info, visit www.marylynnrote.com




ELEMENTAL
RHYTHM

Breathwork Helps You...

- Move through your daily life with a smile
- Get perspective on life and focus on what truly matters
- Feel more connected – to yourself, others and the present moment
- Get healthier

Exchange \$25. Classes held Wednesday at 5:45 and Sunday at 3:45
 Space is limited • Reservations only via Venmo - @vicke-marz

Contact: elementalbreathislife@gmail.com or Vicke 562-235-5968
 PRIVATE CLASSES AVAILABLE



Bed and Breakfast

401 Peach Street • Erie, PA
 (562) 235-5968 • victoriainnerie.com

Residents Feel the Pinch of Poverty in Simulation

Locals at a loss in lifelike lose-lose scenarios

By: Chloe Forbes

It's said that a rising tide lifts all boats, and that's what area organizations look to do as they change what it means to invest in the community. Its model for change uses education and engagement in combination with philanthropic efforts. Only time will tell how much it will lift the tide on the shores of Erie, though.

On May 23, more than 70 women filed into the gymnasium area of the Mercy Center for Women on East 27th Street to take part in a poverty simulation. The event, meant to help us to rethink poverty, was organized by Erie Community Foundation's Women's Fund in conjunction with Women United for Community Schools and was facilitated by GECAC (Greater Erie Community Action Committee).

To set the scene, poverty is a reality for 24 percent of City of Erie residents and 15 percent of Erie County residents, according to community survey data reported by United Way of Erie. That number refers to those individuals and families who are under the federal poverty line — \$13,590 yearly earnings for an individual and \$30,000 for a family of four.

In 2018, Business Insider reported 16501 as the poorest zip code in America. That's the commercial downtown district and West 12th Street between Liberty and Holland streets.

A study conducted by the Jefferson Educational Society in 2019 concluded that higher food availability has the power to lower poverty rates in Erie County, but residents are still facing food insecurity after multiple grocery outlets closed downtown.

Issues like gentrification, food insecurity, and housing inequalities exacerbate an already-hurting population.

Assets like GECAC's adult education testing center have found themselves on the chopping block in the past couple of years within Erie County's budget, resulting in a fight to prove their value.

The simulation was meant to give participants an understanding of what it's like to experience poverty rather than just hear about it. As each participant entered, they were given a new identity — some were children, some older residents, and some were single par-

ERIE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



A participatory audience filled the Mercy Center for Women's gymnasium to take part in a poverty simulation facilitated by GECAC, with partners from the Erie Community Foundation and Women United for Community Schools.

ents. Chairs in the center of the room represented family homes, and tables along the wall represented community services and businesses.

In their new lives, participants were responsible for getting transportation to work or school, putting food on the table, and paying bills. The simulation is not a game, though. It is based on national Community Action Agency clients. Community Action Agencies are nonprofit executors of the Community Action Program, an initiative of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act to combat poverty by empowering the impoverished.

Participants lived through four "weeks" and already had proverbial smoke blowing out of their ears. Some went to the bank to withdraw money but found they had loans to pay, while others tried to sell their furniture at the pawnshop for rent but were met by stealing accusations and police intervention.

When the school was closed for a holiday, parents had to choose between

staying at home and losing their jobs or reporting to work and having protective services take their children.

"No one wanted to help us," said participant Lori Sobin. "We didn't have anything."

In the simulation, Sobin was a 21-year-old college student who never actually made it to class because she was caring for twin girls and a newborn while her husband worked. Afterwards, Sobin was brought to tears saying she has children the age of her character and can't fathom them going through that.

After the simulation, the participants gathered to reflect on their experiences. Defeated, frustrated, helpless, hopeless, angry, stressed, and lonely were among the most common responses.

"I mean when we came home, we were kicked out of the house. That shocked me. You leave and think everything is fine, then you come home and you were evicted," participant Clara Gore said of her experience in the simulation.

Others quickly understood poverty to be a structural failure, not a personal

one. Participant Katie Ruffa role-played a mother with a husband, a disabled father-in-law, and a teenage daughter who gave up after-school sports and activities to earn extra income.

Ruffa was one of many who were frustrated at the lack of information surrounding resource access.

"We all pulled together and we made it work, but so many families don't have that," she said. "As well as the fact that we weren't struggling with mental illness or addiction, and we had a second to try to plan and strategize, but if you don't have that, where do you even begin?"

Kim McCaslin, GECAC's vice president of operations, noted that "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps" isn't a helpful or relevant concept when someone is doing everything they can to make ends meet only to be consistently knocked down by systemic barriers.

"How many of you really felt that you had good conversations — you could put away savings for the future, plan



Organizers of the recent poverty simulation, including vice president of GECAC Kim McCaslin (center), set up real-life scenarios where participants walked in the shoes of someone facing poverty – and for most attendees, the simulation was eye-opening.

on what you were going to do?” McCaslin asked. “How many of you took time to take care of your children? Did you read them any books?”

Laughter erupted because it was humorous how far-fetched that expectation was when they were in survival mode. Known as “tyranny of the moment,” those who face vast adversity in poverty are often unable to plan for the future because they are immersed in the problems of the day at hand.

Many found their efforts of the day unfruitful after filling out insurmountable paperwork and finding they were still ineligible for financial support — as none of the roles in the simulation fell under the poverty level — or they didn’t have all the required documentation and had to use their transportation passes to get back home then wait in line again.

Linda Corso, chair of the grants committee and member of the steering committee for the Women’s Fund, said it was an eye-opening experience.

“Getting bounced around from place to place, there’s no real navigational center where you can learn everything you need to do, so you go to one place and it’s frustrating, then you go to another place,” she said. “So I think it gives us a better understanding of the organizations that are coming to us and asking for money.”

Many were shocked to learn they didn’t meet the poverty guidelines, to which McCaslin explained that people who are slipping through the cracks

are just as important. Someone could make \$5 more than the poverty level and be left without resources.

To solve the issue, McCaslin said it takes a multi-faceted approach. Advocacy and funding are two of those community actions that could assist in stabilizing impoverished residents and providing resources.

At the Mercy Center alone, resources go beyond housing to include a network of ongoing support and educational opportunities thanks to partnerships in the community. GECAC offers digital literacy courses, Second Harvest Food Bank provides food, and NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness) of Erie County and the Crime Victim Center are available to help, in addition to others.

“No one does it perfectly, but together we can do a lot more,” Jennie Hagerty, executive director of the Mercy Center, said.

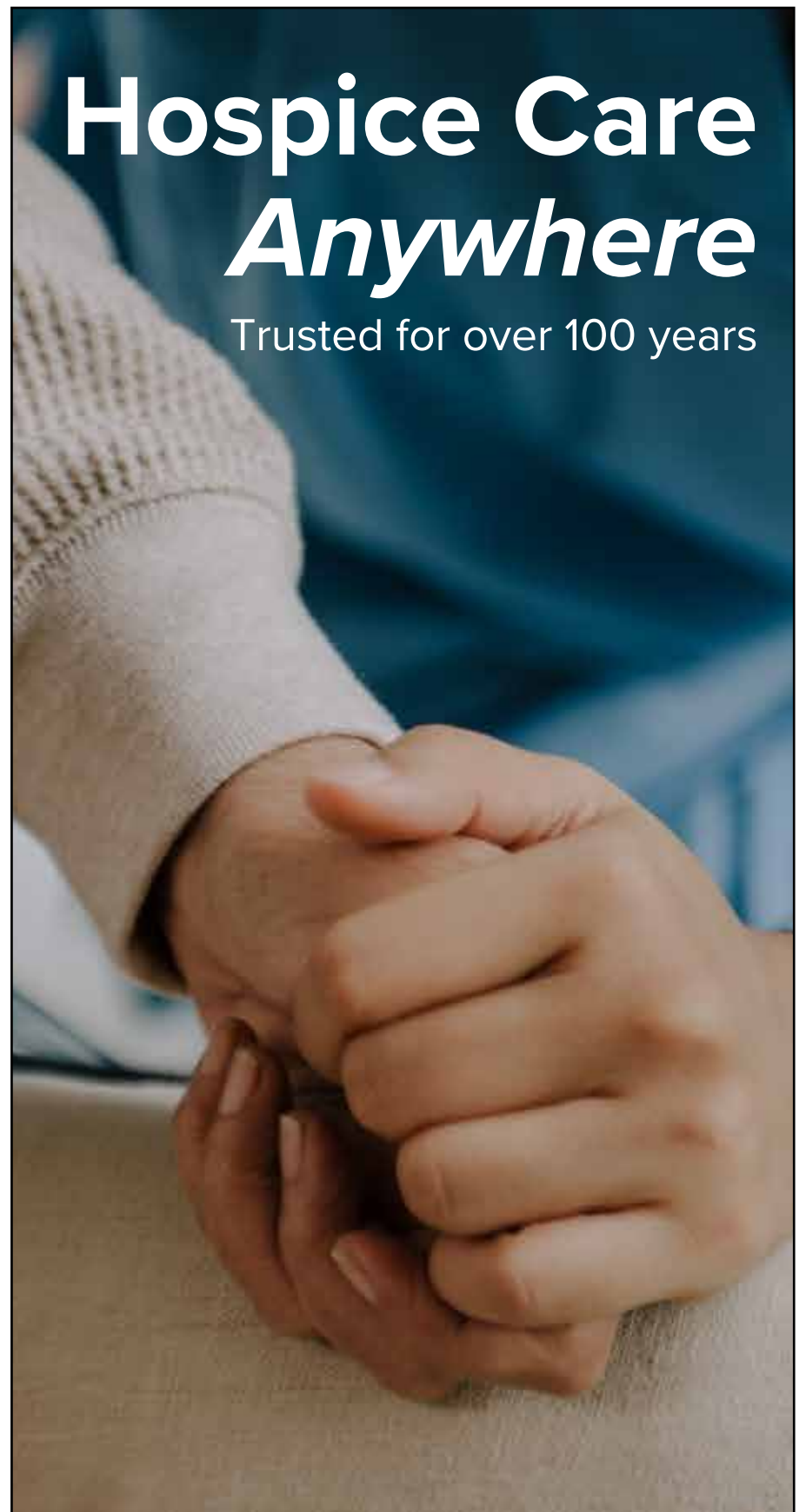
The participants came from area businesses, medical providers, education institutions, and nonprofits, proving that everyone has a part to play in the community. Although there are organizations in Erie dedicated to reducing poverty, every person must play a part.

“Everybody has their own niche and makes a difference in this community, but as you can see today, more needs to be done,” McCaslin said.

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

Hospice Care Anywhere

Trusted for over 100 years



L|E|C|O|M HEALTH
VISITING NURSES ASSOCIATION

(814) 454-2831

The VNA of Erie County is an affiliate of
LECOM Health and Allegheny Health Network

Inside Erie's Beloved Queer Club, The Zone

The 'everyone is welcome here' bar celebrates more than 25 years

By: Julia Carden

Amidst the slow decline of gay and queer bars nationwide, The Zone Dance Club in Erie has been a lively hub for the LGBTQIA+ community since 1998. Well-known for its welcoming aura, The Zone provides safety and entertainment, including drag performances and weekly programming. "We are the only Queer social space in the area," manager Anthony Gressley said. "While we target the Queer community, we welcome everyone."

Erie has been home to many gay and Queer bars throughout our history, including The City Squire, Embers, the Silver Slipper, Washington Grill, and the Midtown Lounge. "Erie has had its share of gay bars, usually three at a time. It's only since The Zone that there has been only one," said Harry Miller, a contributor to the Erie Gay News.

The Zone has a deep history in Erie, beginning when former owner Bob Regan, who passed away in 2018, opened the club in Nov. 1998. Regan transformed The Embers into The Zone, which was originally located on State Street in Downtown Erie. Six years later, after outgrowing the space, The Zone moved to its current location at 113 W. 18th St.

"The Zone is important because it has stood the test of time. So many Queer bars have come and gone but The Zone has remained," show director Tom Widdowson said. The Zone celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2023.

The Zone is the only Queer bar between Cleveland and Buffalo and serves a wide audience, playing a crucial role for those in the rural areas of Northwestern Pennsylvania. "Within city limits, it's very welcoming," Gressley said. "You venture outside of the City of Erie and it becomes questionable. That's why The Zone plays a key role — because we don't discriminate."

Widdowson has been performing drag at The Zone for seven years. In addition to his role as a show director and bartender at the dance club, he performs as one of Erie's premier drag queens, Rebecca Mae, most Friday nights and in additional shows like during trivia night.

"Rebecca Mae is a huge part of the drag community here," said show director Josh Smolinsky, who has performed drag for over 15 years.

"Drag is a very important part of the [LGBTQIA+] community as it's pretty hard to miss a drag queen," Widdowson said. "It's one of the most visible things to say, 'Hi! We're here and we aren't going anywhere!'"

Queer spaces are essential for the well-being, empowerment, and visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community — providing safe havens, fostering supportive networks, celebrating Queer culture, and driving positive social change.

The Zone does just that. The club partners with various community organizations, including the Greater Erie Alliance for Equality and the NWPAPride Alliance to support the LGBTQIA+ community and oth-

CONTRIBUTED



The Zone Dance Club recently celebrated 25 years of serving the Erie Queer community – providing a space that prioritizes the safety, well-being, empowerment, and visibility of the LGBTQIA+ population.

er worthy causes. The club also plays a crucial role in local Pride celebrations, with deep involvement in the Erie Pride Parade and Pridefest. The bar hosts Pride-related programming throughout June.

"Pride and The Zone have a history of working together," said Gressley, who has hosted Pridefest since 2014 and has been on the NWPAPride Alliance's board since 2015. "Since I took over, we've always been involved in Pride."

This year, The Zone and the NWPAPride Alliance are hosting Pride on the Bay on Saturday, June 29 at Liberty Park and the Highmark Amphitheater. "We all basically live here during Pride," Gressley said, noting that Pride is The Zone's busiest weekend of the year.

With a core staff of about 12 employees and an additional auxiliary staff, The Zone operates like a close-knit, albeit "dysfunctional," family. "We're all rather close. Most of us have been friends for years," Gressley said. "Even new people that have recently come on board, whether it be performers or staff, they're immediately part of the family."

While The Zone frequently hosts national title holders from *RuPaul's Drag Race* like Raja Gemini and Erie native Alaska Thunderf*ck, most shows feature local performers and former winners of the highly anticipated Miss Erie pageant. "All of the local queens

and kings here, we're like a family. It's a sisterhood," Smolinsky said.

Grace Siwinski, also known as Rocky, has been performing drag for two years. They made their debut at The Zone in December 2022. After moving from Buffalo to attend Mercyhurst University, Siwinski found a sense of community at The Zone, which they describe as a "safe haven."

"The Zone is such an important space for Queer and straight-identifying community members in Erie because of how safe a place this is for everyone," Siwinski said. "It's the safest bar in Erie, and the most welcoming."

Siwinski also emphasized that The Zone is open 365 days a year, offering an "authentic" space for those who don't have somewhere to go on holidays, a common situation for many LGBTQIA+ community members.

After closing down due to COVID-19 restrictions, The Zone made a triumphant return with its famed "What The F*ck Party" in July 2021. The event combined the missed holiday celebrations from the shutdown, including Halloween, New Year's, Christmas, Saint Patrick's Day, and Mardi Gras. "It was huge. Best/worst idea I've ever had," Gressley jokes.

Greggor Mattson, a sociology professor at Oberlin

CONTRIBUTED



The Zone is open 365 days a year to serve Erie's Queer community, not just on a hopping Saturday night, but also on holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas – offering an authentic space to belong for those whose families may not be as welcoming.

College, wrote *Who Needs Gay Bars? Bar-Hopping through America's Endangered LGBTQ+ Places* in 2023 after visiting more than 30 gay bars. He was driven to write about the significance of Queer spaces after his favorite gay bar, A Man's World in Cleveland, closed in 2013. Mattson identified the culprit for the decline in Queer bars as accessible online communities and dating apps like Grindr paired with gentrification that “pushed gay bars out of the neighborhoods they helped make hip.”

Between 2012 and 2021, 50 percent of gay bars in the United States closed their doors. Overall, there are 45

percent fewer gay bars than in 2002. This decline underscores the importance of accessible Queer spaces like The Zone that serve as vital community hubs, offering not only entertainment but also support and safety.

Unfortunately, Mattson didn't stop at The Zone during his expedition. Mattson suggests that we can learn valuable lessons from the history of gay bars, such as Seattle's Garden of Allah, which opened in 1945 as a cabaret.

The Garden of Allah illustrates a common characteristic of gay bars: their ability to attract clientele diverse in sexual orientations and gender identities. The Garden of Allah MC famously opened shows in the '40s and '50s with the greeting “Ladies, gentlemen, and the rest of you.”

While The Zone's original mission was to serve Erie's gay and lesbian community, the club has always welcomed a range of clientele. In 2023, The Zone rebranded to be more inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum.

“We created a new logo and we also rebranded as a Queer bar. That way we're more accepting of everyone — the B, the T, the Q, the I, the A, the rest of the alphabet,” Gressley said. “We've seen such an influx since the rebirth.”

Employees at The Zone have noticed a shift, with more younger customers frequenting the club. Both Widdowson and Gressley agree this trend reflects a positive change, with younger generations openly

embracing Queer culture in public spaces — a freedom that earlier generations didn't always have.

“We've become a mainstay for the younger generation,” Smolinsky said. “They're a lot more accepting because they grew up in an era where they felt more safe. Whereas, when Tony and I were growing up, we didn't have many places we felt safe. We see the younger crowd more often now — they're the future.”

The Zone faces “the same challenges as every other bar,” Gressley said. “Because we're targeting the Queer community, we do get protesters every once in a while — I find it hysterical we only have two protesters.” In the words of Rocky, on protesters of drag: “We are stronger than those who despise us.”

The most important things, Gressley says, are patience, safety, and acceptance: “That's the driving message of this bar — everyone is safe here.”

Whether it's during Pride weekend in Erie, Thanksgiving, or a casual weeknight, The Zone keeps its doors open, offering community members drinks, entertainment, and simply a third place to exist outside of home and work.

“I know the impact because whenever I tell people I work here, nine times out of 10 the response is, ‘Oh my God. I love that place.’ And I'm like, ‘Me too!’” Gressley said. “Everyone needs somewhere safe.”

Julia Carden can be reached at juliacarden91@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE!

ERIE GIVES

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13TH

THE ERIE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

ErieGives.org

Give to your favorite causes. Give Hope!

The website will be open from midnight to midnight. The phone will be open from 8am to 8pm.

814.454.0843

erie FOOD co-op

your community owned grocery store

1341 W. 26TH STREET
ERIE, PA 16508

made to order wraps and sandwiches

refreshing smoothies

vegan and gluten free options!

www.eriefood.coop

The Studio at St. Mary's: A Space To Create

How Erie's first parochial school became an inspiring art and community safe-space

By: Erin Phillips

The story of the Studio at St. Mary's, an intentional creative arts space on Erie's east side, began a very long time ago with a handful of Catholic monks and nuns.

In Erie's very early days, around 1830, St. Mary's was established as a church to serve the growing German population. About 25 years later, five Benedictine sisters were tasked by the bishop to create a parish school in Erie — thus, St. Mary's became the city's very first parochial school. Then, a few more years later in 1866, three monks from Latrobe came to Erie and oversaw the construction of the building that is still known as St. Mary's today, at 310 E. 10th St.

St. Mary's remained in Erie for over a century as an educational facility. But even when the school closed in 1994, the Benedictine sisters who were the stewards of the organization for all of its 138 years of existence couldn't just throw in the towel and abandon the children and the neighbors in the area. Enter Emmaus Ministries, a Benedictine project born in 1974 primarily as a feeding ministry. Two key Benedictine sisters, working through Emmaus, wanted to foster an intentional creative space; a writer and artist studio space, as well as a host for their programs that feed and benefit the women and children of the area through the Listening Hearts and Kids Cafe programs. This plan is how the Studio at St. Mary's was born.

It was an unseasonably warm spring day when I met up with Sister Val Luckey, the director of Emmaus Ministries, along with Amy VanScoter, an employee of Emmaus, who is also a yoga teacher and studio occupant at the Studio at St. Mary's (in addition to being a contributing writer to this publication). Together they led me on a tour through the incredible building that exists as a time capsule of parochial education in Erie, while also serving as a shining example of historic preservation, adaptive reuse, creative community collaboration, and artistic vision.

The Kids Cafe

Before we enter the building, we run into the manager of the Kids Cafe, Jane Wagner and her dog Olive, in the parking lot. They walk inside with us as we descend into the basement floor of the St. Mary's building. I'm immediately struck by the preservation of the building — it still very much retains the look, feel, and vibe of an old school with pristine wood floors, transoms over the heavy wooden doors, slate blackboards, chair rails, and, in the kitchen, a full floor-to-ceiling bank of solid wood antique cabinetry. The space is one long, wide hallway, with classrooms branching off that are all used in service to the neighborhood children who participate in the program — to get a nutritious meal after school, receive help with their schoolwork, and engage in creative activities within the cafe space and throughout the rest of the building. Wagner explains, "We currently have about 60 kids registered for the after school program. They walk here from their schools



While the building is spectacular, it is truly the people who make it so special. (Clockwise from top left): Stan Zlotkowski tucked into the room that connects to his recording studio and houses all of the necessary editing and recording equipment; Sister Val and Amy VanScoter pictured in the Infinite Love yoga studio following our tour; Master weaver Barbara Hauck gives us a crash course on using a loom; and Amy VanScoter leads children from the Kids Cafe in a beginners yoga class in her studio.

— most come from Pfeiffer Burleigh, some all the way from East Middle School, R. Benjamin Wiley, the Eagles Nest, and a few are homeschooled."

The Kids Cafe also houses a space for some of the donations that Emmaus receives — clothing, shoes, books, toys, supplies, and personal care items to meet any need the participating children may have. Wagner explains, "These clothes are for any kids who need them, and once a month, the kids can go through and take any personal care items they might need (shampoo, deodorant, feminine products, etc.). Or if someone comes in, for example, with their shoes falling apart, we can replace them."

The Kids Cafe was the execution of the vision of Sister Gus, brought to life by Emmaus in 2000. It was the first Emmaus occupant of the building when Sarah Reed Children's Center programs occupied the upper floors. Sarah Reed moved out of the building in 2014 and according to Emmaus, "With the Kids Cafe located on the bottom floor ... many vacant classrooms on the upper floors were ready to be put to use. The Studio at St. Mary's: Space to Create launched in 2015. Local artists rented classrooms-turned-art studios and the unused rooms quickly became a colorful, creative, and inspiring space. A variety of artistic areas are represented by those using the space: painting, textiles, writing, video

production, wood turning, yoga, and more."

Z3 Concepts Studio

As we exit the Kids Cafe and head upstairs to the first floor studio spaces, Sister Val notes, "We have a wide range of talents and types in the building." And as we ascend to the second floor, we meet the first of those talents: Stan Zlotkowski and his Z3 Concepts Studio.

Zlotkowski takes up a decent footprint on the first and second floors including a light-filled, corner recording and art studio, as well as a connected room housing all of his audio recording equipment. Z3 is "a full-service video production company dedicated to producing quality multimedia for today's sales, training, and marketing needs." And while Zlotkowski's day job is videography (and he is kept constantly busy with that business), he is also a drummer and runs a recording studio out of his space in St. Mary's. He's also brought a number of musicians to Erie over the years to hold workshops and tutorials in the studio. Zlotkowski reflects, "I've been here for eight years, the people who come in and out are great. It's been fun here. This is a great building."

Erie Arts and Culture

New to the building are the offices for Erie Arts and

Culture (EAC). The nonprofit is “committed to improving the lives of our region’s residents ... by leveraging the power of the arts and humanities to address the vital needs and interests of Erie and Northwestern Pennsylvania,” and within the Studio at St. Mary’s, they occupy the space that was once the principal’s office.

Anne O’Dell, director of EAC, comments, “St. Mary’s offers very affordable studios/office space and this is invaluable to small creative businesses and artists who need to keep their overhead low so they can grow and maintain a profitable business. St. Mary’s has a community feel with common spaces that we all help take care of. It’s important that people can feel like they’re part of a community inside of the building, as well as in the neighborhood where the building is.”

Listening Hearts / The Writing Studio

The space that EAC currently occupies in the building was once the hub of the Listening Hearts Program which was envisioned, created, and facilitated by Sister Mary Lou, who recently passed away in January of 2023 and was instrumental in the vision for the Studio at St. Mary’s, in particular the Listening Hearts Program. The Listening Hearts space then moved to a corner studio and has evolved to include a number of creative programs.

Listening Hearts is a therapeutic and support space that is “specially designed for women experiencing poverty, homelessness, who are in recovery, or post-incarceration.” While most of these group ses-

sions now take place at the monastery at Mount St. Benedict (an accommodation made due to mobility issues with one of the sisters), the space at St. Mary’s is still reserved for closer neighbors and needs, while also sharing the room’s use with a number of other organizations and activities. Sister Val shares, “We use this studio for Emmaus meetings, Kate Gordon runs a regular writing studio here, (Erie Karma Thegsum Choling Tibetan) Buddhists meet here once a month for meditation — it’s an eclectic space.”

Individual and Shared Artist Studio Space

Additional studios are occupied throughout the building by individual artists and are often opened up to the public for classes or select Gallery Nights. Visual artist Kris Risto and fiber artist Deb Sementelli-Hoenes share a studio space in which they create their own art while also hosting **Erie Open Figure Sessions**, which is a weekly, non-instructional, group-art study session with a live model. Risto says of the studio, “I love the space for so many reasons, but the primary reason is that it’s an old classroom. It’s the ideal location for Erie Open Figure Session to take place. It’s good-old, old-fashioned life observation in an academic setting.”

Additional individual artist studios include the office and illustration studio space of **Bryan Toy** (a regular contributor to this publication), as well as painter, muralist, and costume designer **Barb Crone**, who also occupies a corner studio. **Presque Isle Wood Turners** meet at least once a month in a shared studio space. And **LXB**

Design Studio, an advertising design partnership, also houses their office within the building.

As we ascend past Stan Zlotkowski’s sprouting seed trays in the greenhouse-like stairwell up to the second floor, Sister Val points out that the dramatic arched windows providing such beneficial light were recently replaced through a grant from Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) and notes that there was no way they would have been able to afford that work had it not been for that grant. She mentions that while some income for Emmaus Ministries comes from studio rents, the bulk of the income to fund their programs and building maintenance (Emmaus also owns the Neighborhood Art House and Soup Kitchen buildings) comes from their quarterly newsletter and Erie Gives donations.

Weaving and Spinning Studio

As we enter the second floor of the building, we are greeted by the sound of oldies hits setting the soundtrack of the bustling studio of Barbara J. Hauck. Hauck is a professional weaver and her bright corner studio is home to a dozen large-scale looms for weaving everything from a beginner rag rug to an advanced silk patterned scarf or a four-paneled heirloom bedspread (both of which I had the pleasure to watch mid-creation during my visit). Hauck holds regular classes in her studio and mentions, “I’ve been open since 2017 and haven’t been without students, and I’ve never advertised. My students always come back.”

THIS IS THE ONCE A YEAR FAMOUS EVENT YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT!
amazing deals, giveaways, and treasure! get on over here... you never know what you will find!

70th ANNIVERSARY Warehouse sale

70 GUITARS UNDER \$70 up to 70% OFF

✓ parts, pieces, scratch & dent, and rare finds
IT'S ALL ON SALE!
guitars, drums, horns, violins, pa gear, banjos, keyboards, ukuleles, & more!
UP TO 36 MONTHS SAME-AS-CASH FINANCING AVAILABLE

WORLD OF MUSIC
EST. 1954 • ERIE, PA
1355 W. 26th St., Erie, PA 16508
(814) 459-2585

1st 70 THRU THE DOOR:
THURSDAY: \$7 W.O.M. BUCKS
FRIDAY: FREE T-SHIRT
SATURDAY: \$7-\$70 VALUE MYSTERY GIFT CARD

Thursday June 6th 10AM-7PM
Friday June 7th 10AM-7PM
Saturday June 8th 10AM-5PM

3 DAYS ONLY

worldofmusicerie.com

fill out your ticket in store, the day of the giveaway, for a chance to win...

THURSDAY:
you could win a
“BABY TAYLOR”
TAYLOR BT 1

FRIDAY:
you could win
70 seconds
to spend
\$700
at 5:50pm
on Friday
★ tickets available
4pm Friday in-store
★ must be present
to win

SATURDAY:
you could win a
**FENDER
PLAYER
STRAT**

no purchase necessary
fill out your ticket
in-store, the day
of the giveaway

no purchase necessary
fill out your ticket
in-store, the day
of the giveaway

facebook.com/worldofmusicerie Instagram.com/worldofmusicerie

ERIN PHILLIPS



The building of the Studio at St. Mary's was constructed in the late 19th century and has gone through many changes over the years. (Clockwise from top left): Sister Val Luckey speaks about the history of the building at the rear entrance; Olive the dog chills out on the restored hardwood floors in the Kids Cafe; St. Mary's originally had a third floor that was lost in a fire at some point in the building's history; a room full of donations is available to attendees of the Kids Cafe.

Anyone who is interested in learning to weave (either functional pieces, art pieces, or both) are able to sign up for a class in Hauck's studio. She also has open studio hours where anyone who needs to use a loom for a project they're working on can; after all, a loom is usually not something the average person has space for in their own home. Hauck provides the necessary equipment, materials, and expert guidance for a small fee. She reflects, "My studio is all about peacefulness, embracing the process, and not being hard on yourself when you make a mistake." If you're interested in taking a weaving class, you can email Hauck at barb.hauck@gmail.com.

Infinite Love Yoga Studio
Our final stop on the tour is one Amy VanScoter has

been looking forward to: her very own yoga studio on the third floor, with an unobstructed western view of the sky flowing in from all of the windows that fully surround two walls of the room. The interior walls are lined with the same vintage chalkboards and wall-to-wall hardwood floors as all the other studios, but her floor is totally open, begging for visitors to spread out their mats and get into their practice.

For years, this space has existed as a yoga studio and VanScoter taught here when it was known as Schoolhouse Yoga. When the owner of that business, Terry Seth, decided to retire, she offered the studio to the teachers who had worked in her space and VanScoter jumped at the opportunity. "I decided I would keep it going mainly so I could have my own space to prac-

tice and not have to constantly worry about where to teach," Van Scoter reflects. She is also thrilled to be a part of the safe, collaborative, community space at St. Mary's.

She mentions, "One thing that's interesting is how we all tend to work together in the building. I am now teaching a class to the kids from the Kids Cafe weekly, Studio Z helps Emmaus and everyone in the building with media needs — there's lots of collaboration. There are weavers, wood turners, the writing studio, open figure sessions. It's a quiet, peaceful, well-kept building."

If you're interested in attending a class at Infinite Love, more information is available at infinitelove.yoga.

The building itself has seen many changes in its 150+ years of existence, both in the physical sense and the self-identifying sense. There was once an upper floor to the building that housed a gymnasium which was lost to a fire at some point throughout its history. There was also a tunnel that connected the basement of the school to the auditorium of neighboring St. Ben's school that has since been walled off. But more so than the architectural changes, St. Mary's has been constantly evolving its place in our city. From a beginning based purely in religious-based education, it has grown to embrace and prioritize the creative diversity and the ever-expanding needs of the neighborhood.

One can't help but think that this kind of growth and positive presence is exactly what the Emmaus sisters who started the Studio at St. Mary's had in mind. Sister Mary Miller, who was the director of Emmaus up until her death last May said of the Studio, "To have such a mixture of creative artists and innovative programs makes it an exhilarating workplace and, more importantly, a vehicle to bring stability, imagination, creativity, spirituality, and beauty to a downtown neighborhood."

To learn more about the artists, businesses, and programs housed within the Studio at St. Mary's visit: studioatstmarys.com

Erin Phillips, who is strongly considering picking up weaving as another in an unmanageably long list of personal hobbies, can be reached at erin@eriereader.com

Senior Living

Whole Person Care for a Lifetime



LECOM HEALTH

Erie | Corry | Millcreek | North East

Introducing our new 2024
Corvette 1LT Stingray Convertible!
Get your tickets now at
www.winavette.com!



Tickets are going fast!
\$50 per chance!



Teresa's
Italian Delicatessen



**It's time to take off
the cap and party!**

View our full menus with pricing
& descriptions at www.tderie.com.
Full catering menu is \$9 person.
Mention this ad and get 50¢ off per person on full menu.

WEST ERIE
3201 Greengarden Blvd.
814-864-5322

EAST ERIE
810 East 38th St.
814-449-1145



2425 Peach St.
www.tipsybean.cafe

Shop Jo2Go Now!

Check out our bestselling blends and origins!



Love all three?
Bundle and save:
coffee subscriptions now
available!



[ejo2go.co](https://www.ejo2go.co)
[Jo2Go](https://www.facebook.com/Jo2Go)
[ejo2.go](https://www.instagram.com/ejo2go)

Gem City Style: June 2024

Celebrating Pride with Jemmerio Harper/Shea D'Heaux

JESSICA HUNTER



By: Jessica Hunter

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with regional drag performer Jemmerio Harper, better known on stage as Shea D'Heaux. In this candid interview, Shea talks about her influences, inspiration, aesthetic, and the need for more representation within the drag community.

Jessica Hunter (JH): Tell us a little bit about yourself and what led you to your career as a drag queen — Erie's Bearded Black Barbie, as you call yourself?

Jemmerio Harper aka Shea D'Heaux

(SDH): I've always been a performer. I started cheering and dancing in high school. In college I joined Pittsburgh Poison All Stars, a competitive cheer and dance team out of Pittsburgh, where we competed and won the World Championship of dance held at Walt Disney World twice! Dance was my life until COVID happened, and in quarantine, under the guidance of my friends, I picked up a makeup brush and the construction of Shea D'Heaux began. Three and a half years later and Erie can't get rid of me!

JH: Shea D'Heaux is a true STAR! What quality does your drag persona have that you wish you had in your life off stage?

SDH: Both Jemmerio and Shea are the shining stars wherever they go, but Shea has a certain allure that Jemmerio doesn't have. Shea can make you melt with just a wink and a smile. With Jemmerio, he has to charm you first!

JH: What are some things that separate you from more traditional queens?

SDH: I am a more gender non-conforming queen. I keep my beard and don't normally tuck. Drag for me has

JH: What are some things you've seen at drag shows around the region that you wish Erie would start doing?

SDH: I do a lot of performing between Erie, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Buffalo. One of the biggest things Erie lacks is diversity. I am the only queen of color and one of only two non-traditional queens. This is something that, hopefully, with the enhanced expression of inclusivity, changes in the near future. Erie has such a rich, culturally diverse community that I would love to see more Queer cultural representation.

JH: How has doing drag helped you as a person?

"I say that my drag is the culmination of all the things I was told were wrong as a kid. My femininity, my love of the dark and disturbing, video games, and Blackness were all things that I was told weren't okay or frowned upon. Now, in drag, I'm praised for all of these things. It's helped me kind of take back my power and be proud of the things that make me different." — Drag performer Shea D'Heaux

never been about fully capturing the essence of a woman, which is where more traditional female impersonation comes in. With my drag and performance style I like to highlight the beauty and sexuality of the presence of both genders. I then filter that through my twisted brain to present you with Shea D'Heaux!

JH: Where do you get inspiration for your looks? How have you evolved as a performer and costume designer since you started?

SDH: A lot of my inspiration comes from Black culture throughout history, the horror and gore genre, as well as video games and anime — all wrapped in a sexy burlesque bow. It sounds like a lot, but when you see it on stage, it all makes sense. Stage presence has never been an issue for me — when it comes to costume I tend to lean into the "less is more" mindset. I am now in my elevation era and working on experimenting with different silhouettes, patterns, and styles. So the evolution never stops.

SDH: I say that my drag is the culmination of all the things I was told were wrong as a kid. My femininity, my love of the dark and disturbing, video games, and Blackness were all things that I was told weren't okay or frowned upon. Now, in drag, I'm praised for all of these things. It's helped me kind of take back my power and be proud of the things that make me different.

JH: What is the most common reaction you get from your performances? What is the least common?

SDH: Can I say jaw-dropping? As I said before Shea is very alluring and has no issue captivating an audience. I would say the least common reaction is disappointment. Even when I'm not feeling 100 percent the performance will always be 200 percent!


Jemmerio Harper can be found on Instagram @hijemmerio / Shea D'Heaux can be found on Instagram @shea.dheaux

Jessica Hunter can be found at jessicahunterphotos.com

6:15 P.M. **First Friday Jazz Vespers**
June 7 • July 5 • August 2 • September 6
www.cathedralofstpaul.org
134 W 7th St. Erie, Pa 16501

12:15 P.M. **Third Thursday Lunchtime Series**
June 20 • July 18 • August 15 • September 19

SUMMER Music Series at the Cathedral



BEST OF ERIE
15 YEAR VETERAN
2014-2023
2024 BEAST

RUN

LET'S GO

BRING THE ENERGY AS OFFICIAL BARBER BEAST ON THE BAY CHEER ZONE VOLUNTEERS
Cheer the loudest and reign as Cheer Zone champs to take home \$500!

BARBER BEAST ON THE BAY

BARBERBEAST.ORG

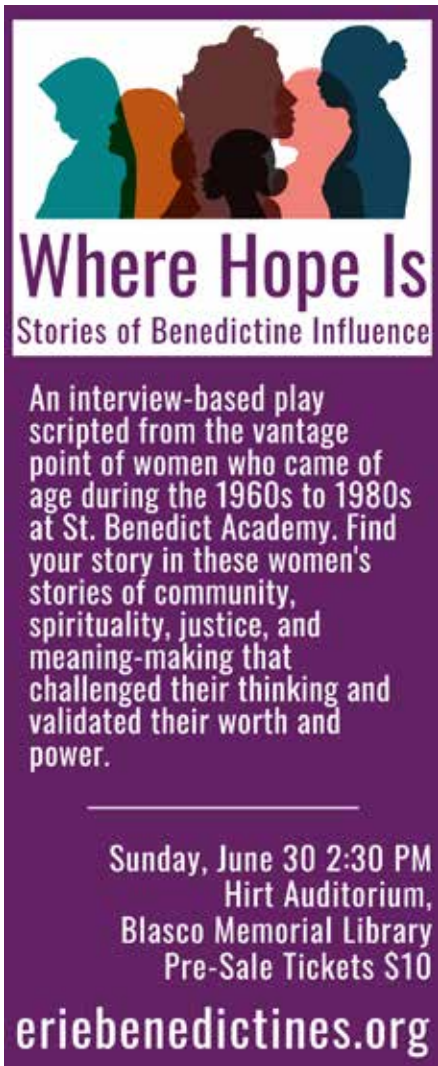
 **ERIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

You're Next!

EC3 does education your way. Choose from online and in-person classes. **Fall Session starts August 19th.**

LEARN MORE & APPLY
TUITION-FREE AT EC3PA.ORG





Where Hope Is
Stories of Benedictine Influence

An interview-based play scripted from the vantage point of women who came of age during the 1960s to 1980s at St. Benedict Academy. Find your story in these women's stories of community, spirituality, justice, and meaning-making that challenged their thinking and validated their worth and power.

Sunday, June 30 2:30 PM
Hirt Auditorium,
Blasco Memorial Library
Pre-Sale Tickets \$10
eriebenedictines.org



PURRISTA
CAT CAFE

30 W 8TH ST • ERIE, PA
PURRISTACATCAFE.COM

Blue Moon Frappe
Try our June Specialty Drink!
Proceeds go towards cats
and a local cause.

EVENTS

Dramashop Erie Reimagines Wonderland in *Alice By Heart*

Community theater's substantive sign-off from Renaissance space

BEGINNING FRIDAY, JUN. 7

Dramashop Erie is taking audiences on a trip down the rabbit hole in its production of *Alice By Heart*. First commissioned by the Royal National Theater in London, the musical takes inspiration from Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and retells the story in the aftermath of the London Blitz during World War II as Alice and her friend Alfred take shelter in an underground tube station.

The synopsis from Music Theater International expands the poignant tale with themes of first love, grief, and courage: "When the ailing Alfred is quarantined, Alice encourages him to escape with her into their cherished book and journey down the rabbit hole to Wonderland."

Dramashop showcases staging and set design that sets the musical apart from other adaptations of the novel. "Wonderland is made of found items that are icons of war, from cots to rifles and helmets. While it is a beautiful story about young love, it doesn't shy away from touching on grief and loss."

Kiizera Lee stars as Alice Spencer in her Dramashop debut, with fellow performer Alexander Aranda in the dual role of Alfred and the White Rabbit. The production is directed by Anna McJunkin, with musical direction by Julya Polaski and



In Dramashop's final performance from their space in Erie's Renaissance Centre – they're pulling out all the stops for *Alice By Heart*. This musical takes the story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and sets it during the London Blitz – themes include drama, love, grief, and coming-of-age.

choreography by Jennifer Dennehy.

With music and lyrics composed by Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater and the book co-written by Jessie Nelson and Sheik, the musical was first performed in the United Kingdom by over 30 youth theater companies as part of the National Theater's Connections program. "We're attempting to explore the power of a book and what the story has meant to this girl," Nelson describes in an interview with *Playbill* in

July 2018, "How do you return to a book the older you get? Can a book change, or do we change? Can it grow with us or do we have to leave it behind? [It's about] the power of literature in a really dark time." — Thomas Taylor

Fridays and Saturdays, June 7 - 29 at 7:30 p.m., Sundays June 23 and 30 at 2 p.m. // Dramashop, 1001 State St. // \$17 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Free Admission Day Lines Up with Family Lineage

Hagen History Center spotlights genealogical research

SUNDAY, JUN. 9

Enjoy free admission and fun at the Hagen History Center as the organization shines a light on genealogical research resources for their Family History Fair. On hand to assist with family research will be scads of knowledgeable folks from the Erie Society for Genealogical Research, multiple township historical societies, resource centers at Hagen History Center, the Erie County Public Library, the Erie County Courthouse, historical societies from Crawford, Warren, Chautauqua, and Ashtabula, lineage societies from the Daughters of the American Revolution, and more. It's a rare opportunity to have so many resources for historic, genealogical information in one place and the folks at the Hagen History Center are hoping for a great turnout.

Pam Parker, project manager for the Hagen History Center states, "We'll have

plenty of activities for kids, thanks to our interns. It is a great place to get started on family history or to find help if you are stuck."

This free day on campus will not only allow attendees to learn more about their own family history, but will also allow those curious or new to the Hagen History Center an opportunity to tour their buildings, including the historic Watson-Curtze mansion, and check out all of their educational exhibits including the Story of Us (which focuses on Erie's immigration and manufacturing history) and the stellar Frank Lloyd Wright office reconstruction.

The Hagen History Center has a number of eclectic events planned for the summer, including presentations on the history of brewing culture, Erie's sporting heritage, and culinary classes at their historic Battles Yellow House in Girard.

Visit their website for more information. — Erin Phillips

1 p.m. to 4 p.m. // Hagen History Center, 356 W. 6th St. // Free // For more info visit: eriehistory.org



Join the folks at the Hagen History Center, along with legions of family history research experts, for a free day on their campus celebrating Family History Day. Tour the campus, enjoy free kid's activities, and learn something new about your family heritage.

CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF GOODELL GARDENS AT
THE DANCE FOR PLANTS



silent plant auction

EXPERIENCE INCLUDES:
DAWNS GRAZING CREATIONS
SMOKE N' FIRE BBQ
JOHN'S WILDWOOD PIZZERIA
MOBILE MIXERS



\$100 PER GUEST
MEMBERS RECEIVE DISCOUNT



FRIDAY,
JUNE 28, 2024
6:30-10:30PM

AGE 21 & OVER
GOODELL GARDENS



GET
YOUR
TICKETS

GOODELLGARDENS.ORG/DANCE



**LITTLE ITALY
FARMERS MARKET**

331 West 18th Street

EVERY MONDAY
3:00 - 6:00 PM
JUNE 24 - SEPT 23

Featuring produce from several local farms,
including the SSJNN Urban Farm Project.

Little Italy Farmers Market doubles
SNAP, WIC and FMNP Senior Vouchers!

For more info call: 814-454-7814
Online: www.SSJNN.org
Facebook or Twitter: @SSJNN



The Friends of the Erie County Library Present...

The
Great
American
Book
Sale

Returning to the...

FLO FABRIZIO ICE CENTER AT THE ZOO

527 W 38TH ST, ERIE, PA 16509

LOCATED ON EMTA BUS ROUTE #3
ACROSS FROM THE GLENWOOD YMCA

June 16 - 20 10am - 8pm
June 21 10am - 3pm

75,000+USED BOOKS AND MEDIA ITEMS

BARGAINS GALORE!

ErieLibraryFriends.org



JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY



Robert Garland is the Roy D. and Margaret B. Wooster Emeritus Professor of the Classics, Colgate University and author of many books including *Athens Burning: The Persian Invasion of Greece and the Evacuation of Attica*.

During Global Summit XV, in 2023, Garland presented to a standing-room-only, captivated, JES crowd. Now we're bringing him back for a first-of-its-kind, week-long residency, for a series of five events, when he'll present on "What It Means to Be Human," "The Many and the One: God versus the Gods," "The Roots and Fruits of Misogyny," "A Short History of Death and the Afterlife," and much more.



ROBERT GARLAND JULY 8 - 12

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH NIGHT & SECURE YOUR SEATS FOR THE HISTORY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE SERIES

JESERIE.ORG/ROBERTGARLAND



Stacy Garrity
Pennsylvania Treasurer

Keystone Scholars

Keystone Scholars provides a free \$100 investment for your child’s future!

All children born to PA residents automatically have a Keystone Scholars account in their name with \$100 for post-high school training and education, including career schools, apprenticeships, and college.*

Claim your account today!

***Child must be born in 2019 or later.**



800-440-4000 | pa529.com/keystone

Keystone Scholars is open to Pennsylvania residents born on or after January 1, 2019, and children born on or after January 1, 2019, who are subsequently adopted by a Pennsylvania resident. The child must be a Pennsylvania resident at birth or adoption and at the time the Keystone Scholars funds are used. The child must also be the beneficiary of a PA 529 account other than the Keystone Scholars account at the time Keystone Scholars funds are used. If not used by the beneficiary's 29th birthday, the funds will be returned to the Pennsylvania Treasury Department (Treasury). Funds in a Keystone Scholars account will be invested in a PA 529 GSP account and will remain under the sole custody of Treasury until they are used for the purposes of paying for qualified higher education expenses at an institution of higher education. The Keystone Scholars program is funded without taxpayer money.

Gangsters, Gamblers, Guys, and Gals

Guys and Dolls returns to Erie Playhouse Mainstage after two decades away

PREMIERS FRIDAY, JUN. 14

Love is a gamble. At least that is what characters Nathan Detroit and Sky Masterson have determined in Abe Burrows and Jo Swerling’s musical comedy, *Guys and Dolls*.

This Tony Award-winning production brings the world of 1950s New York gangsters and “dolls” to life in a truly captivating way. The down-on-his-luck con man Detroit must find a new venue to run his dice-rolling game, craps, following the police bust of his previous location. Unable to secure the payment needed for a new place, he challenges notorious high-roller Masterson to a bet that puts a little more than money on the line.

Director Almitra Clerkin felt honored when she was approached last August at the 2024 season launch party about directing and choreographing the show: “I was thrilled. I love that golden age of Broadway musicals. It was perfect timing and everything has come together very well.”

Daniel Collette will serve as assistant director, with Heidi Sheehan as assistant choreographer.

Clerkin has held various positions including Youtheatre director, executive director, and developmental director with the Erie Playhouse.

Although she has worked on well over 300 productions in her time with the company, *Guys and Dolls* is special to her. She recounted various songs like the popular “Luck Be a Lady” that have

CONTRIBUTED



Catch the well-loved favorite *Guys and Dolls* on the LECOM stage at the Erie Playhouse this June – bringing audiences into the world of 1950s New York gangsters from the golden age of Broadway musicals.

been a staple in her own household over the years. “It has some of the best music ever written.”

Devon Yates will be conducting from the musical’s original scores by Frank Loesser.

“We have a lovely combination of theater veterans and people making their debuts in the cast,” Clerkin stated. “I have had so much fun at our rehearsals.”

Erie Playhouse’s Mainstage debut talent will include: Joel Natalie, Sr. (Nicely-Nicely Johnson), Seth Howell (Rusty Charlie), Riley Herman (Isadora), Cassey Wright (Vivienne), Ophelia Gwyndolyn (Billie), and Ryah Lambert (Gwen). — Cassandra Gripp

Fridays and Saturdays, June 14 through June 30 at 7:30 p.m. // Thursday, June 27 at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays, June 16 and June 30 at 2 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // \$19-30 // For tickets and info: erieplayhouse.org

Put Your Hands in the Air and Raise the Roof for BT Block Party

Multi-venue entertainment spectacular to help offset storm damage costs

SATURDAY, JUN. 15

Housed in one of Erie’s finest westside buildings, Basement Transmissions (BT) has become a mecca for musicians, artists, and other cultural creatives, but their roof recently required repair. That cost the organization a pretty penny, so to help pay for it, they’re throwing a Raise the Roof for BT Block Party in conjunction with OddCity Entertainment.

“This event is to raise the money back from a \$17,000 hit that Basement Transmissions took repairing roof damage from a storm,” said Cypher Eihwaz, the owner and event manager of OddCity Entertainment.

They continued, “...having entertainment venues accessible is [OddCity’s] world. Bob Jensen, the owner of BT, is a wonderfully beautiful person, and we wanted to be sure he doesn’t have to handle these finances alone.”

This two-venue party will not only take place in the Basement Transmissions building, but also next door in Lavery’s Bunker, and will feature nonstop local live music, art galleries, live painting, tattoo artists from Bayfront Tattoo, vendors hawking their wares, and food.

For a \$25 entry fee, attendees can take in a lineup that includes local rockers Gelatin Skeleton, Fastfall, Odd Atrocity, Optimistic Apocalypse, Mala Sangre, and so many more.

If you cannot attend the block party but would like to contribute to Basement Transmissions’ roof repair fund, you can do so by donating via PayPal to @bttheater or via their ticketing web-

ERIN PHILLIPS



After a storm caused major damage to the roof of well-loved all-ages venue Basement Transmissions, the musicians and artists who call the place home have banded together to help fundraise to cover the cost of repairs. With a full day of music, art, and entertainment planned – you’ll have a great time supporting a great cause.

site.

Said Eihwaz, “BT is home for so many of us, with studios downstairs. It being one of the only all-ages venues, one of the only wheelchair accessible areas as well, some bands would simply not be bands without BT!”

Basement Transmissions’ roof may not be your son, but you can help raise it come mid-June by attending their Block Party or by simply making a donation. – Cara Suppa

2 to 10 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th and Lavery Brewing’s Bunker, 128 W. 12th St., Rear // \$25 // All ages // For tickets and info: oddcityentertainment.org



Feel right at home.

When you feel at home, everything feels right. And that frame of mind can begin the moment you arrive home with an upgrade to your garage, front door and windows from Plyler.

Visit us at PlylerEntry.com or at one of our three showrooms for a free estimate.



Erie
8850 Fry Road
McKean, PA 16426
814-476-7717

Hadley
2357 Perry Highway
Hadley, PA 16130
724-253-3564

Jamestown
1884 Mason Drive
Jamestown, NY 14701
716-296-0595

PA #29639

Road Trips



Saturday, July 20 Playhouse Square



Get your tickets today!

WQTN

EVENTS

A Reader’s Paradise

The Great American Book Sale offers a week of second-hand reads

BEGINNING SUNDAY, JUN. 16

Looking for a good book, or maybe even thousands? From Sunday, June 16 through Friday, June 21, The Friends of the Erie County Library will be holding the annual Great American Book Sale at the Flo Fabrizio Ice Rink — an event filled to the brim with bestselling books, rare finds, and more.

The sale includes approximately 70,000 to 80,000 donated books, CDs, and puzzles from the community and library discards. The event is the group’s largest fundraiser of the year, with proceeds going towards supporting Erie County Library programs and events. Last year, the event raised \$77,379 after expenses.

“It’s nice to be able to enable the wonderful librarians and staff that are working at the library to put on these amazing programs that the community enjoys,” Friends board member Sara Baugh said.

Baugh reflected fondly on her experience going to the Great American Book Sale when it was held in the Villa Ele-

mentary School gymnasium, “It used to be a very exciting event that I would look forward to as a kid because it was really fun. It was really hot in there because it was the middle of the summer and it smelled like books.”

The first day of the sale has the largest selection and attracts a crowd, Baugh said. “I’ve sat right inside the door for the last couple of years when we open the doors, because it’s really exciting.”

The other days offer perks as well, including special deals later in the week — like being able to fill a bag with books for a flat rate of \$2. The Collector’s Corner at the event boasts rare editions and antique books, too.

Baugh explained that finding books at the event is like a treasure hunt, “You can find some pretty off-the-wall, strange books, so it can be a lot of fun. People enjoy that aspect of it.”

The Friends of the Erie County Library will not be accepting book donations during the sale. — Alana Sabol



If a regulation size ice-skating rink full to the brim with used books for sale sounds like your idea of paradise – you’re in luck. The Great American Book Sale, which benefits the Friends of the Erie County Library, is returning to the Flo Fabrizio Ice Arena in June.

Sunday, June 16 to Thursday, June 20 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday, June 21 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. // No entry fee // Flo Fabrizio Ice Center, 527 W. 38th St. // For more info: erielibraryfriends.org

Prepare for a Perfectly Purple Party, People

40 Shades of Purple fundraiser doubles as 40th birthday celebration for non-profit founder

FRIDAY JUN. 21

The gravity of turning 40 is not lost on Tyler Titus. “I will be turning 40 years old, a number that many transgender individuals never get to see due to various systematic barriers that cut our lives short,” says the Compton’s Table founder and chair. But the non-profit organization whose mission is “to create a thriving Queer community in Northwestern Pennsylvania where Queer individuals are seen, valued, and affirmed” has been working to change that statistic.

On June 21, the Erie Art Museum will be host to 40 Shades of Purple as both a fundraiser for Compton’s Table and a celebration of Titus turning 40, in grand style. The color scheme is purple, gold, and white; cocktail attire is suggested and there will be heavy hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar. The event will be hosted by Rebecca Mae (Erie’s 40 under 40 drag queen) and will feature a silent auction, DJ, and music by Matt Texter.

Titus says they hope to raise \$15,000-\$20,000 for the nonprofit at this event. “This would cover our next name change clinic, our Open Mic Nights, give us seed money for our rental and emergency assistance funds that we use to keep Queer young adults in safe housing, and

help cover our overhead costs.”

Titus wants party-goers and general donors alike to know that “We know the importance of representation and we know the pain of being forgotten.

“We know the importance of representation and we know the pain of being forgotten. The need far exceeds our capacity, but we refuse to give up or back down. Erie needs Compton’s Table and Compton’s Table needs Erie’s support.” — Tyler Titus, Compton’s Table founder and chair

The need far exceeds our capacity, but we refuse to give up or back down. Erie needs Compton’s Table and Compton’s Table needs Erie’s support.” Titus adds, “We are a completely volunteer-based organization so every dollar raised goes directly back into the programs we offer and remain free to those who use them.”

As if that weren’t encouragement enough to party for a cause, Titus promises to be wearing “one perfectly purple outfit you won’t want to miss.” — Edwina Capozziello

6:30 to 10 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5th St. // \$40 // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com



With a two-fold purpose, 40 Shades of Purple will celebrate the 40th birthday of Compton’s Table founder Tyler Titus and act as a fundraiser for the organization. Hosted by Rebecca Mae, funds raised through ticket sales and at the event will help to provide vital support for Erie’s Queer youth.

SUMMER SPECIAL!

3 MONTHS
UNLIMITED YOGA FOR **\$150**
SPECIAL ENDS MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2024

VISIT WWW.YOGAERIE.COM FOR FULL DETAILS

KEVIN PARIS @
THE PAT CRAWFORD JUKEBOX
MONDAY, JULY 8, 2024

VISIT WWW.YOGAERIE.COM FOR FULL DETAILS



yogaErie

Erie's Original Power Yoga Studio

Shops at the Colony
2560 West Eighth Street
Erie, Pennsylvania 16505
814-520-6998
www.yogaerie.com

Time for a refresh?

REFACING
REDOORING
NEW CABINETS
ORIGINAL TUNE-UP
CABINET PAINTING

Schedule your free
consultation today!

814-616-5219

kitchentuneup.com



It's easier than you think!



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

1601561

Texas County Mutual; Dallas, TX

Roma's
ITALIAN KITCHEN

NOW OPEN!

**WEST 12TH STREET &
PENINSULA DRIVE • ERIE, PA**

FOLLOW US & STAY UPDATED!

f Roma's Italian Kitchen

📷 romas_erie

🌐 romaserie.com

**Chef-Created Italian Specialties
Extensive Carry-Out Menu
Bar & Private Dining
Indoor & Outdoor Dining**



PUMP for CHARITY and STACK & SAVE

Howdy neighbor! Pump for Charity is in full swing, and we need your help to make this a record-breaking year. To donate, pull up to any Country Fair pump, enter your Club CITGO Alt ID, and pay with a CITGO gift card. You'll get 13¢ off per gallon, and we'll donate 2¢ on your behalf to Erie Gives!

Working together for our community—Country Fair, Erie Gives, and you! Pump for Charity today at participating Erie County locations.



 countryfairstores.com

Country Fair

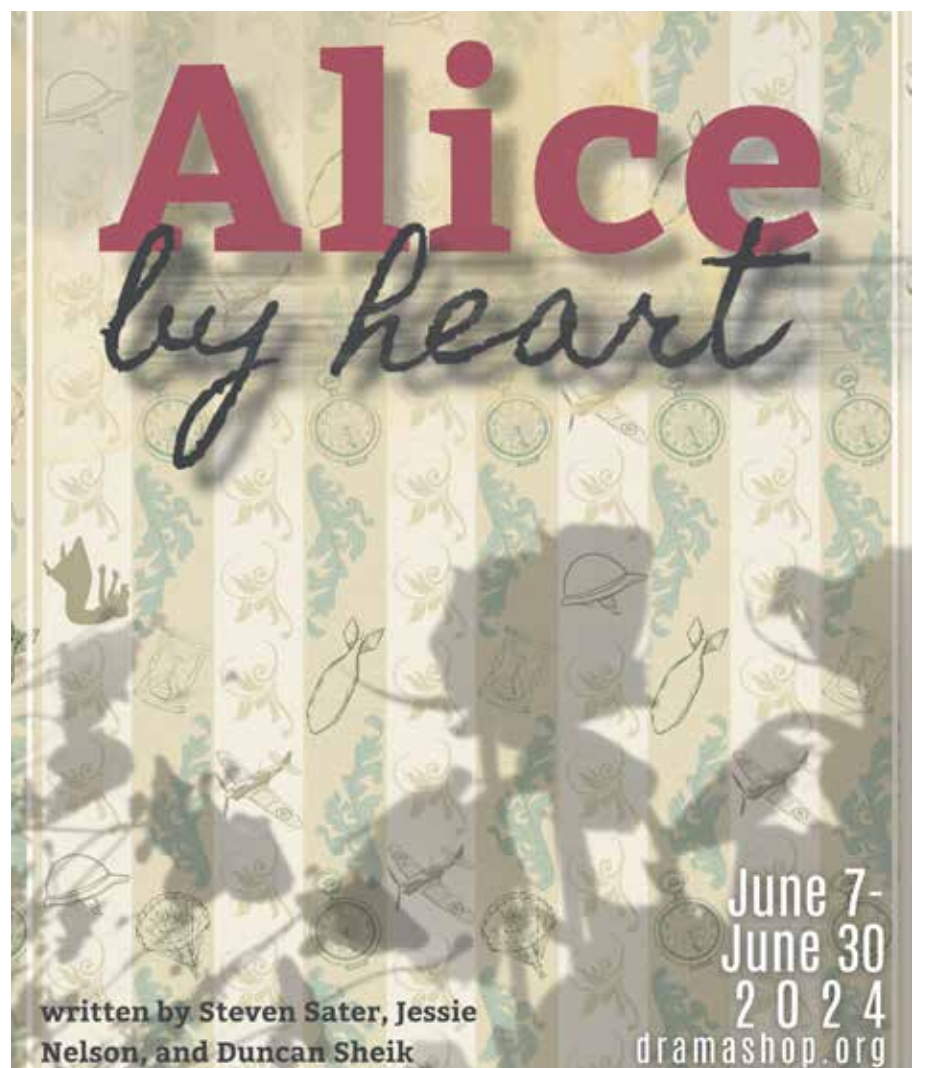
CATHOLIC CHARITIES Counseling and Adoption Services

Serving the community for over 70 years.

We offer individual, family and couples counseling to help people overcome stressors and difficulties in their lives. Our licensed therapists use strength-based practices to help people manage the problems that they may be encountering.

**Services include Mental Health
Substance Abuse Counseling
and Group Therapy**

ACCEPTING NEW CLIENTS
329 West 10th Street • Erie, PA 16502
814-456-2091 • www.cccas.org



Erie Pridefest’s New Bay-ginning

The biggest pride celebration in the city is on the move

SATURDAY, JUN. 29

Each June, Erie Pridefest attracts thousands to the downtown area to celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community. But this year, the festivities are on the move.

“For many years, Perry Square has served as the home of Erie Pridefest,” organizers said. “After much consideration, NWPAPride Alliance has decided a new venue would better serve the growing safety needs of the largest one-day festival in the city.”

“This event is hosted by a group of volunteers that work year-round to make these events happen, and I’m excited for everyone to see the new layout and enjoy the beautiful experience of Pride on the waterfront.” — Alex Sphon, president of NWPAPride Alliance

With the new location set for Liberty Park and the Highmark Amphitheater, it only made sense that the change of venue also brought a change of name to the local celebration: Pride on the Bay 2024.

The event will feature more than 100 locally-based organizations and food vendors, including big names like Erie Insurance, Adagio Health, and Central Outreach Erie, to name just a few. Performances will also take place throughout the day, including Ada Vox from American Idol along with numerous other local drag performers.

“This event is hosted by a group of volunteers that work year-round to make these events happen, and I’m excited for everyone to see the new layout and enjoy



Erie’s main Pride celebration is switching venues this year to allow the event to be bigger and better than ever. Liberty Park and Highmark Amphitheater will host Erie’s Pridefest for anyone wishing to support and celebrate our LGBTQIA+ population.

the beautiful experience of Pride on the waterfront,” said Alex Sphon, president of NWPAPride Alliance.

Gates at Liberty Park will open at noon, with a welcome and kickoff on the Erie Insurance Mainstage set for 1 p.m. Free shuttle services will be provided by EMTA from 10:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. from the Intermodal Transportation Center and the Thomas C. Hoffman Bayfront Hub (located at West 12th and Lincoln Avenue).

With the venue change for Pride on the Bay 2024,

the Pride Parade down State Street has been moved to Sunday, June 30, the day after the celebration at Liberty Park.

Both the event and the parade are free to attend with all ages welcome.
— Ally Kutz

Gates open at noon // Liberty Park and Highmark Amphitheater, 828 W. Bayfront Pkwy. // Free // For info visit: nwpapride.org

Interview-based Theater Makes Its Debut in Erie

Where Hope Is: Stories of Benedictine Influence reflects a snapshot-in-time

SUNDAY, JUN. 30

Putting the stories of women first, and in their own words, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and Jenn Bokoch Gillett, an artist and playwright, will present the interview-based play *Where Hope Is* at the end of June.

This is believed to be the first time interview-style theater has been performed in the Erie area. The play is a historical snapshot of the 1960s through 1980s, reflecting Benedictine Sisters’ influence in Erie based on the more than 60 interviews Gillett conducted with St. Benedict Academy (SBA) alumnae, Benedictine sisters, and others whose lives were shaped and are still being shaped by the sisters.

“It is incredibly powerful every time a woman is given the time and space to tell her own story,” said Gillett. “Through the interviews I have been reminded that people generally want to do good. What that looks like can change from generation to generation but everyone I spoke with wanted to leave a positive impression both on the world and in their interactions with

others,” she said.

These decades cover anti-war protests, grape boycotts, and the civil rights and women’s movements. The Benedictine sisters were there speaking up, speaking out, and in so doing, shaping the lives of the young women at SBA and throughout the City of Erie. Their story is one of spirituality, community, and passionate commitment to justice for those denied a place at the table.

Gillett is a documentary theater-maker residing in New York. Her mother and her aunt were both SBA graduates and she grew up hearing stories about their experiences. Gillett, along with the show’s director Ashley Renee Thaxton-Stevenson and six actors, will travel to Erie from New York to present the play. While they are here, they will also present a theater workshop to children at the Benedictine Sisters’ Inner-city Neighborhood Art House. — Amy VanScoter

2:30 p.m. // Hirt Auditorium, 160 Blasco St. // \$10 // For more info: eriebenedictines.org



Creator Jenn Bokoch Gillett (left) interviews Benedictine Sister Pat Lupo last summer in preparation for a one-of-a-kind theater event coming to Erie at the end of June entitled *Where Hope Is*.

LIVE
THEATRE

Presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection.

GETTING OUT

by Marsha Norman

Directed by
Betsy Butoryak

Assistant Director
Teresa Testrake

Rhonda Longo • Ashley Meyer • Joe Sample • Char Newport • Coreen Scott • Aaron Holman
Wayne Gardner • Jeff Rodland • Susan Parry • AJ Holman • Teresa Testrake • Lizdel Collado-Monohan

PA
CA

Purchase tickets at paca1505.org

June 06 - 16, 2024

[Thu, Fri, Sat] Doors: 7:00pm • Show: 7:30pm
[Sunday Matinee] Doors: 1:30pm • Show: 2:00pm

Performing Artists Collective Alliance
1505 State Street, Erie, PA • (814)616-PACA • paca1505.org

Northwest

ECGRA

The Erie Community Foundation

Erie Insurance

ERIE READER

!

It's Urgent.

It's also convenient.

NOW OPEN

Urgent Care Erie
Summit Towne Centre
7200 Peach Street
814-877-4110

Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. • 7 days a week

UPMC

URGENT CARE

FOOD

The Erie Cookbook Revisited:
Mrs. Rindernecht's Self-Pickled Chillie Sauce

A robust Victorian-era condiment

By: Morgan Yezzi

noticed this recipe because of the title: Green Tomato Soy Chillie Sauce. It was submitted to the 1881 Erie Cookbook by a Mrs. W.F. Rindernecht, whose husband owned a "first class" grocery store on Fifth and State specializing in "imported goods in glass" such as pickles, preserves, jams, etc.

Initially I thought this might be an early ketchup recipe, but there is a recipe for "catsup" later in the chapter which put my theory to rest. What, then, was this elixir? I worried as I cooked my way through the recipe that the direct hit of ground cinnamon would be mealy and overpowering, but the profuse amount of vinegar and salt mellowed out the spice. Forty-five minutes later, the tomatoes, peppers, and onions became coated in a tangy glaze and to my surprise, the cloves completely softened. Sinus problems this summer? Mrs. R's Chillie Sauce. Heartache? Mrs R's Chillie Sauce. Sauce it on eggs, fried bologna, or use it as a chili starter — this "self-pickled" chillie sauce is the condiment of the summer!

MRS. R'S SELF-PICKLED CHILLIE SAUCE

MRS. R'S PICKLED CHILLIE SAUCE IS SURE TO PROMOTE WELL-BEING AND PROSPERITY ON YOUR KITCHEN TABLE THIS SUMMER. A PUNCHY MIXTURE OF DOUBLE-COOKED TOMATOES IN A SWEET AND SPICY VINEGAR SLURRY IS A SURE BET ON A CONDIMENT THAT WILL GET THE NEIGHBORS TALKING.

IT'S PUNCHY!

Mrs. R's Self-Pickled Chillie Sauce

Makes 2 cups

5 red tomatoes, diced

1 green pepper, diced

1 onion, diced

1/2 cup of kosher salt

2 cups white vinegar

1 tsp whole cloves

1 Tbsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp cayenne pepper

1 tsp chili powder

2 Tbsp mustard seed

1/4 cup of sugar

In a high sided skillet, combine the tomatoes, green pepper, onion, 1/2 cup of kosher salt and 1 cup of vinegar. Simmer on high heat for 15 minutes and then drain off the liquid. Return the tomatoes, pepper, and onion to the skillet with the remaining vinegar and all the other ingredients. Simmer on low for 30 minutes, making sure to stir frequently and taste often.

Notes:

This recipe can be easily doubled. I used low heat cayenne pepper. Alternatively, bash two whole cinnamon sticks with a rolling pin to use instead of pre-ground cinnamon.

Morgan Yezzi can be found at yezball.com

June 5, 2024

32 | Erie Reader | ErieReader.com

What a Lovely Day!

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga is energetic, ambitious filmmaking

★★★★★

Nine years ago, George Miller stunned the world with *Mad Max: Fury Road*, a film with more energy, creativity, and entertainment value than the next 10 Hollywood blockbusters combined. Now he's gone back to the world of his creation with the prequel *Furiosa*. He could have easily done a victory lap and simply given fans more of the same, but instead he's taken a more ambitious route.

The film is more of a character-driven epic than an action spectacle and while it doesn't reach the heights of cinematic perfection of *Fury Road*, it is still one of the most entertaining times at the movies you're likely to have all year.

The world changes for young Furiosa (Alyla Browne) after she's taken from The Green Place of Many Mothers and imprisoned by the warlord Dementus (Chris Hemsworth), who then sells her to the lord of the Citadel Immortan Joe (Lachy Hulme) in exchange for control of Gastown. As an adult (now played by Anya Taylor-Joy), Furiosa finds herself in the middle of a war between Immortan Joe and Dementus as she plots to find her own way back home.

Whereas *Fury Road* could be compared to *The Road Warrior* by telling its story through an extended action sequence, *Furiosa* is closer in feel to *Beyond Thunderdome* by focusing on world-building and character mo-



tivations. That's not to say that it isn't without its share of adrenaline-pumping, brilliantly choreographed action scenes. Miller takes his time establishing worlds and people that were previously only hinted at. The slower pace may not appeal to as many viewers, but it's perfect for those who want to explore Miller's fascinating world of fire and blood. — Forest Taylor

Directed by George Miller // Written by Miller and Nico Lathouris // Starring Anya Taylor-Joy, Chris Hemsworth, Tom Burke, Alyla Browne, George Shevtsov, Lachy Hulme, John Howard, Charles Fraser, Angus Sampson, Nathan Jones, Elsa Pataky, Josh Helman, David Field, Rahel Romahn, and David Collins // Warner Bros. Pictures // 148 minutes // Rated R

Wait 'til They Get a Load of Me

The People's Joker is the best comic adaptation in years

★★★★★

There has been an annoying trend for the last quarter century to take comic book superheroes as seriously as possible. Batman in particular seems to be stuck in a dark, drab grimness ever since Joel Schumaker was eviscerated for making the character "too gay." Let's be real for a minute, he's a guy who dresses like a bat and punches clowns. How serious can he be? Fortunately, Vera Drew understands both the ridiculousness and inherent camp/Queer sensibilities of the comic hero with her joyfully entertaining semi-autobiographical *The People's Joker* which retells the Joker's origin as her own trans coming-out story. In doing so, it may be the most daring use of intellectual property in decades.

Following Vera (Griffin Kramer and Vera Drew), a sad, lonely "boy" growing up in an authoritarian Gotham City — she breaks free of her mental prison by becoming "Joker the Harlequin" and attacking the hypocrisies of Gotham with her brand of anti-comedy. Her group of misfit supervillains eventually attract the ire of the Gotham police as well as a fascistic Caped Crusader.

Premiering two years ago at the Toronto Film Festival and then quickly shelved after Warner Brothers threatened legal action, the film has now been allowed screenings and that fact alone is cause for celebration. The story of the Joker as a trans woman's journey of self-discovery is far more fascinating than expected and Drew is clearly wearing her heart on her sleeve with this anarchic story. It's also incredibly funny — with about



700 references to every other form of Bat-media and hilarious scenes that have fun with its micro-budget. For being supposed outsiders, comic book characters have been boringly square lately. It's about time comics gave us true outsider art. Happy Pride! — Forest Taylor

The People's Joker is currently playing in select theaters. You can find upcoming screenings at thepeoplesjoker.com

Directed by Vera Drew // Written by Vera Drew and Bri LeRose // Starring Vera Drew, Griffin Kramer, Lynn Downey, Kane Distler, Nathan Faustyn, Phil Braun, Maria Bamford, David Liebe Hart, Christian Calloway, Ruin Carroll, Trevor Drinkwater, Bob Odenkirk, Tim Heidecker, and Robert Wuhl // 92 minutes // Altered Innocence // Unrated (R' equivalent)



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

Celebrating 50 Years



Time and Temperature at Your Fingertips

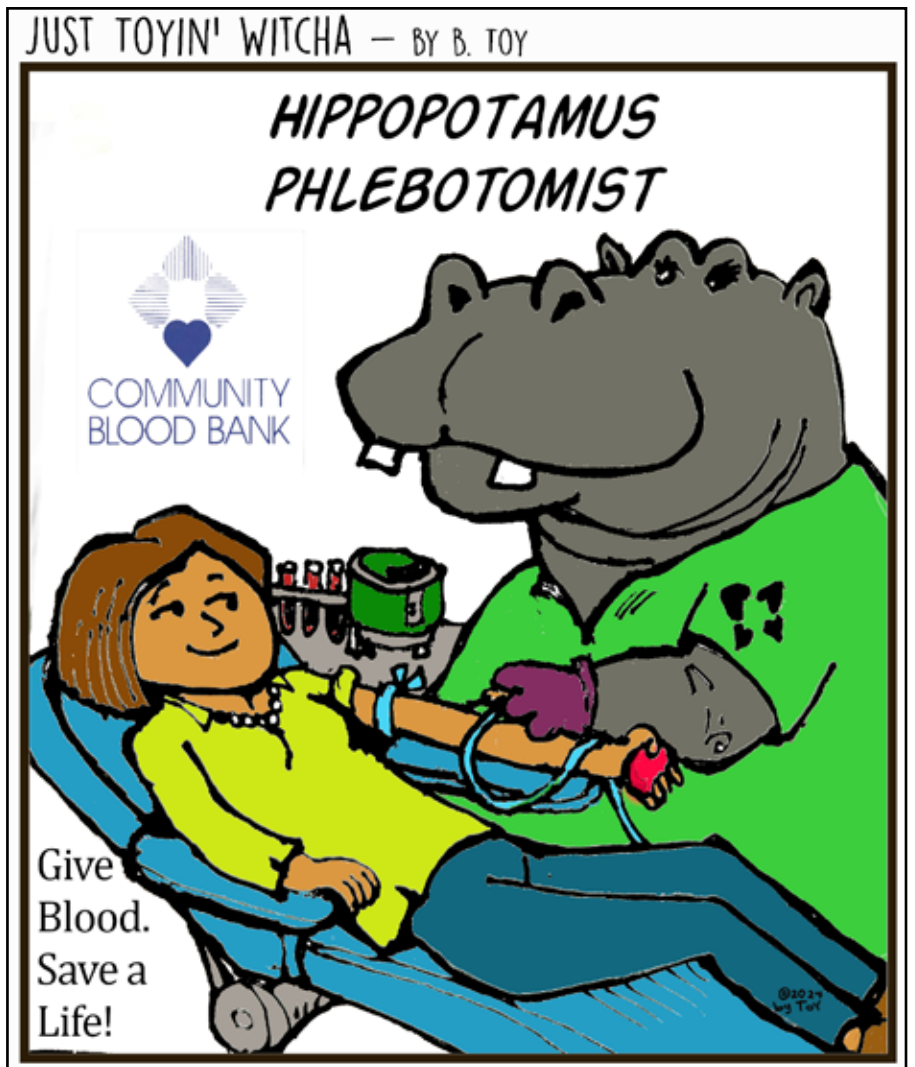
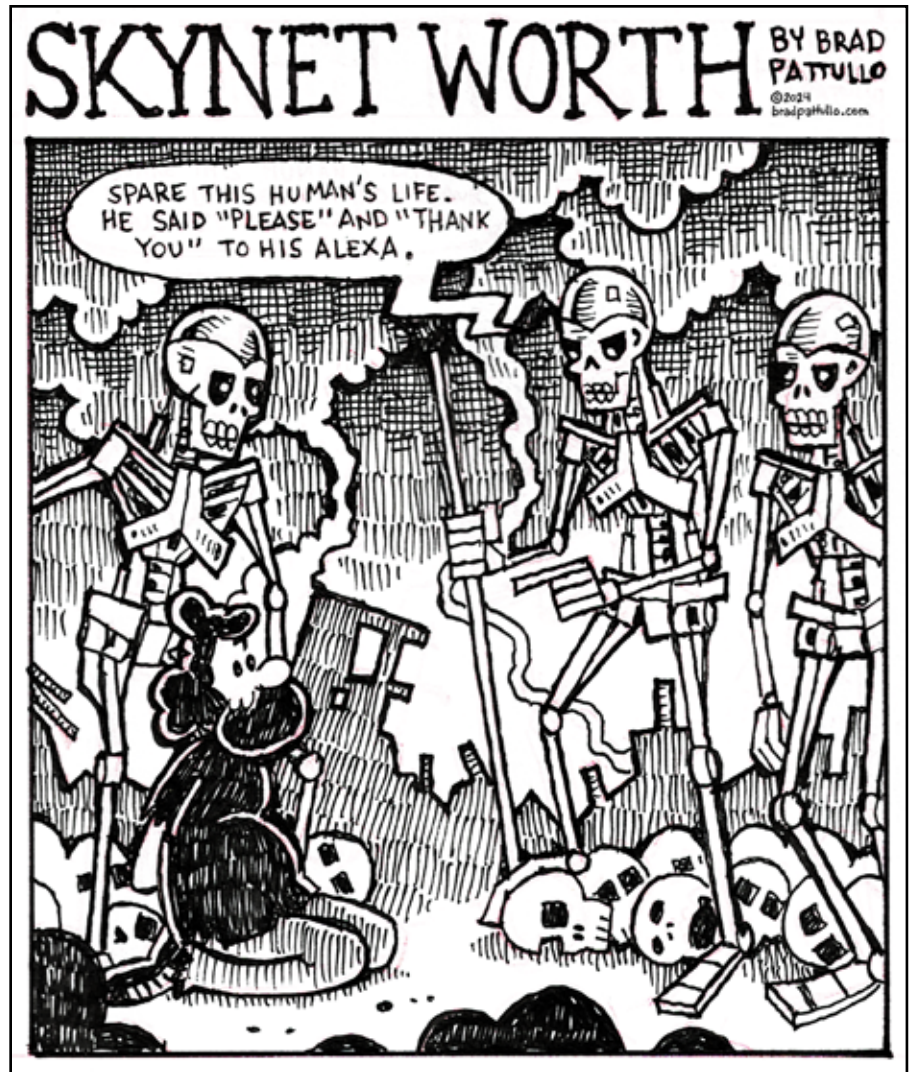
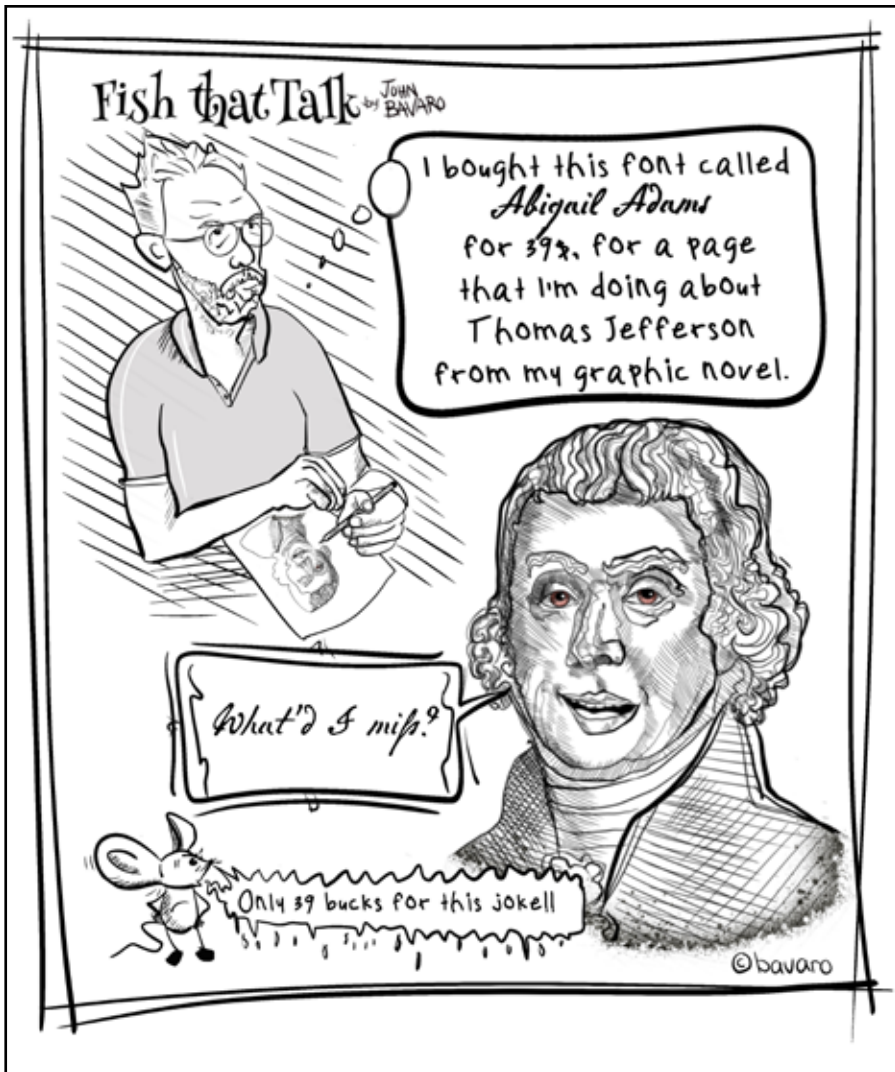
814 452-6311



Call it for



Call it for the MEMORIES!





40 Reasons to Believe in Erie

Get inspired by the stories of 40 exceptional young people who are making Erie a better place to live, work, and grow. They're the entrepreneurs, artists, activists, and visionaries who are building our future.

July 3rd. Celebrate with us.



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



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

Rupp **Limousine**



Let us do the driving.

Explore Lake Erie Wine Country and Ale Trail
with our wine, ale & distillery tours!



- Erie's Oldest & Most Trusted Limousine Service
- Public/Private Tours
- We Handle All Arrangements
- Comfortable & Convenient
- Make Memories
- Have a Blast!

“Rupp Limousine ensured the perfect wine tasting experience! Not only did they call places ahead of time to make sure they would accommodate a party of six, they even arrived early with a handwritten birthday card. I would recommend them to anyone and will definitely use them again!”

303 E. 32nd
814.452.2025
www.RuppLimo.com

Limousine Service For All Occasions

Perfect for
bachelor/
bachelorette
Events!

PA-PUC AOO101537
ICC MC 274929
All major credit
cards accepted





L A V E R Y

BREWING COMPANY

128 W 12 St

814.454.0405

M - TH 12-10 | FRI + SAT 12-11 | SUN 12-8

BEER IS FOR EVERYONE



leaf's Open Market

LOCAL PRODUCE • BREAD • PLANTS & HERBS

BAKED GOODS • FLOWERS • HONEY

OIL & VINEGAR • BEER • JEWELRY

LOCAL CRAFT VENDORS

JULY 15, 29

AUGUST 12, 26

SEPTEMBER 9, 23

10 AM - 2 PM

8th Street side of Frontier Park

Looking for More Events?

Remember to visit the Erie Reader's Online Calendar at eriereader.com/calendar

- Home to hundreds of listings each month!
- Submit your own events!
- Search by date and category!
- Updated by actual humans living in Erie!



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



Erie County Human Relations Commission

The Erie County Human Relations Commission (ECHRC) works to eliminate discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations through identification, consultation, and investigation of complaints.

- The ECHRC provides a system of equal justice for employer–employee, landlord–tenant, business–patron, and lending institution–homebuyer.

ECHRC's Ordinance makes it unlawful to discriminate against protected classes that include:

- Race; Color; Family Status; Religious Creed; Ancestry; Age; Sex; National Origin; Sexual Orientation; Disability; Gender Identity; Criminal History; and Source of Income.



1001 State St, Suite 812 • Erie, PA 16501 • 814-451-7021 • hrc@eriecountypa.gov • eriecountygov.org/hrc

Billie Eilish
HIT ME HARD AND SOFT
Interscope Records
★★★★★

The sibling duo of Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell reach the pinnacle of their musical partnership on *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT*.

With numerous awards under her belt and a set lane in popular music, Eilish puts the music first on her third record. There was little marketing built up to the record's release — an oddity in the age of streaming. No TikTok snippets. No advance singles. Just the album's 44-minute runtime, meant to be ingested as a cohesive whole.

Lyrically, *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT* is pinpoint-focused on discussing the tumultuous nature of relationships. From the sexual affairs of "Lunch" to the disillusionment of "L'Amour De Ma Vie," Eilish unleashes her romantic crescendo for the world to witness.

Said form of musical expression is not new — however, the delivery is aided to perfection by O'Connell's production. His varied medley of orchestral flourishes, electronic passages, and guitar riffs provide the record a needed feeling of movement.

While concise to the nth degree, *HIT ME HARD AND SOFT* packs an emotive and musically diverse punch. One of the more unique voices in modern popular music, Billie Eilish continues to excite. — Nathaniel Clark



Maniacal Device
Kill Your Masters
Self-Released
★★★★★

Erie's elder statesmen of metal are back with 18 minutes of face-melting mayhem, all nicely delivered within 13 tracks on their fourth EP. Maniacal Device are staying true to their thrash- and speed-metal roots, while continuing lyrical themes of beer-drinking, cinema, and society. The song "Cult Band" opens up *Kill Your Masters* and serves as a hype track, telling its listeners to "Join The Cult Today" and going on to state, "We don't worship Satan / Satan worships us / We will crush you like a Metallica tour bus." This lyrical sense of humor is blended together with niche cultural references and mimics the style of their previous releases. Standout tracks include "Henry Krinkle" which is rife with references to the 1976 film *Taxi Driver* and "Butcher or the Meat" which has D.R.I.-influenced riffs and lyrics asking the age-old question "are you a leader or follower?" *Kill Your Masters* holds up as a thrash must-have for anyone who slams to Municipal Waste, S.O.D., Vio-Lence, The Accused, or Iron Reagan, and with a running time of under two minutes for each song, *Kill Your Masters* proves that it's not about the length of the songs, it's how you play them. — Larry Wheaton



Royek
Royek EP
Self-Released
★★★★★

One of Erie's crispest and easiest-to-listen-to recordings comes in the form of the *Royek EP*.

This debut three-song release from the local quintet, fronted by the eponymous Matt Royek is refreshing, honest, and just plain good.

The band formed in late 2022, consisting of Kevin Coatoam on guitar and vocals, Eric Larson on guitar, Jessica Larson on keyboards, and Jon Teater on drums. With a particular affinity for late '80s and early '90s alternative rock and jangle-pop best exemplified by REM, Royek speaks in a familiar language, and it works. In just 14 minutes, it's filled with tales of failed love and frustration finding it in complicated times.

The upbeat opener "1,000" is a personal favorite, its chime-y brightness underscoring an ultimately hopeful romantic sentiment. "Straw Hat" finds Royek at his most frustrated. Fed up with modern dating apps, he envisions himself as a literal and metaphorical scarecrow, warning others of bad decisions. "Soft Sell" is in his own words a song about "sex and real estate," a bluesy and biting story about a realtor that serves as the most driving track on the EP. — Nick Warren



elias, if only
Blow Out Your Candles
Self-released
★★★★★

Local musician and producer elias, if only has been on the scene as a hip-hop artist for years, but his latest three-song EP serves up a sonic landscape exploring themes of love, loss, acceptance, and finding yourself. Vulnerable, sharp, and genre-fluid, the tunes are inspired by soulful, alternative R&B, as well as American roots, adopting grooves and chords from early 2010s jazz and punk. Inspiration from Miguel, Frank Ocean, Doc Watkins, and Taj Mahal can be heard as well as lyrical humor and sarcasm similar to Tom Waits and Thundercat.

Blow Out Your Candles is an EP that explores a wide range of sounds and emotions including grief, anger, defeat, nostalgia, empathy, and adoration. Both tender and petty, the track "I Love You" stands out as a relatable fan-favorite that blurs the lines between love and hate — and the difficulty differentiating between the two as a relationship dissolves. Casey Corritore performs cello on the introspective folk ballad that explodes with bitterness into a punk/rap integration. An accompanying booklet featuring photography by Sarah Moody, illustrations by Bryan Gildone, and an essay by Zach Hyman all create a full experience that blends nicely with "Wind Chimes on the Porch," the EP's final track. — Amy VanScoter



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CALENDAR

The best place to promote your events online and in print.



powered by **event**

Wed 6/05

Featured



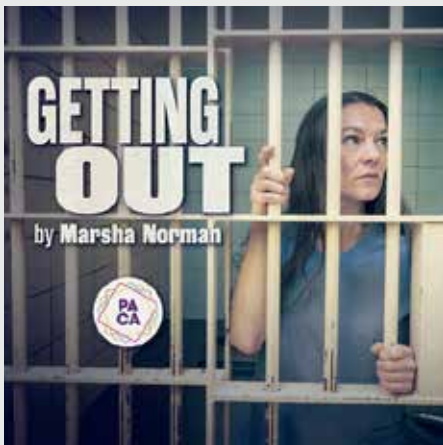
Headliner Steve Gillespie at Werner Books and Coffee
@ 8pm / \$15
Werner Books and Coffee, 3608 Liberty Street



Thu 6/06

Thankful Thursdays: Cacao + Meditative Sound Healing w/ Allison Samol
@ 5:30pm / \$25-\$40
Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street, Edinboro

Featured



Getting Out
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street



Golden Hour Photo Club
@ 8pm / Free-\$150
Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street, Edinboro

Fri 6/07

Featured



ALICE BY HEART
@ 7:30pm / \$17
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210



Getting Out
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street

Featured



Kings Rook presents HABATAT with DJ JAY After PARTY (21+)
@ 9pm / \$7
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Sat 6/08

Into the Woods 5 Miler
@ 9am / Free-\$30
4105 Asbury Road

GET LOST 5k with Northwest PA K9 Search and Rescue
@ 10am / Free-\$25
Harborcreek Community Park Clark Road Erie PA 16510

King's Rook Club EDM NIGHT! ft. Grimace and Lone Sav (21 +)
@ 9pm / \$6
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

Fri 6/14

Featured



OPEN FEED | 14JUN24
@ 5pm / \$5
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street



ALICE BY HEART
@ 7:30pm / \$17
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

Getting Out
@ 7:30pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street

Featured



Running Backwards + Shiver (Upstairs) (21 +)
@ 9pm / \$5
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Sun 6/16

Pollination Celebration - Ticket for Full Event
@ 11am / \$5-\$10
Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street, Edinboro

Getting Out
@ 2pm / \$20
PACA, 1505 State Street

Fri 6/21

Featured



40 Shades of Purple
@ 6:30pm / \$40-\$70
Join us for an unforgettable evening as we celebrate our founder's 40th birthday and the impact Compton's Table has had on Erie's queer community. Hosted by Erie's 40 under 40 drag queen, Rebecca Mae, Erie Art Museum, 20 East 5th Street. titus@comptonstable.org, 814-431-4553



40 Shades of Purple
@ 6:30pm / \$40-\$2540
Erie Art Museum, 20 East 5th Street

Sat 6/29

Featured

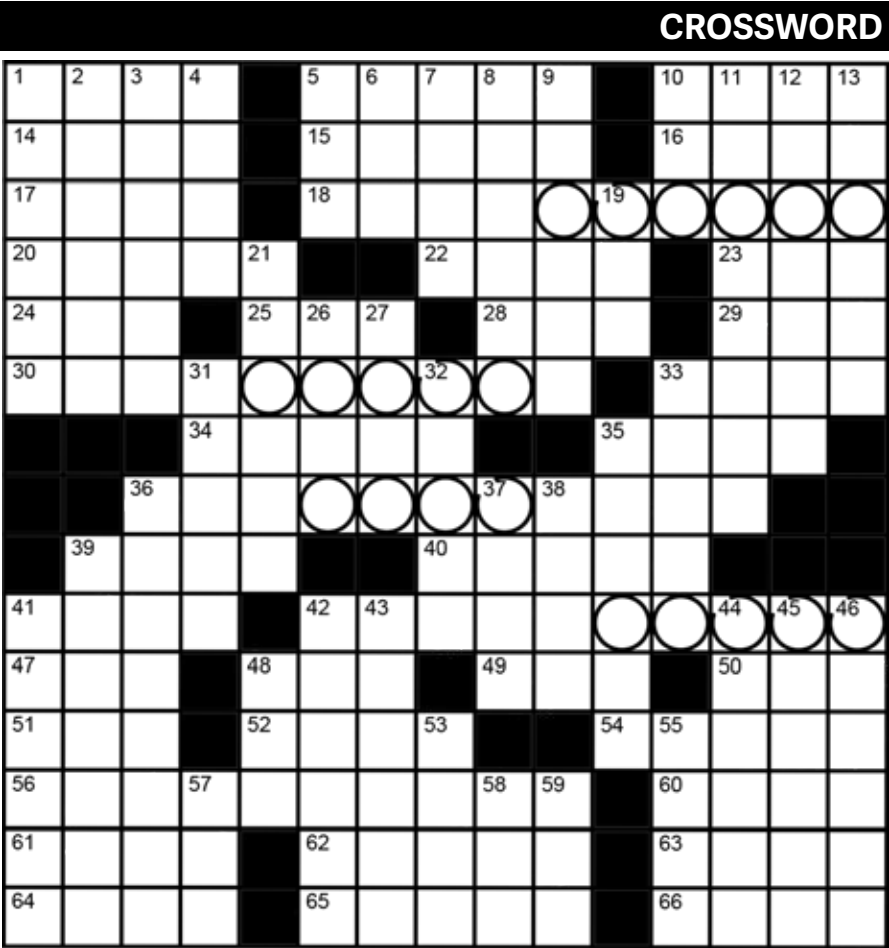


Erie Roller Derby's June Doubleheader
@ 4:30pm / \$10
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier



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

powered by **event**

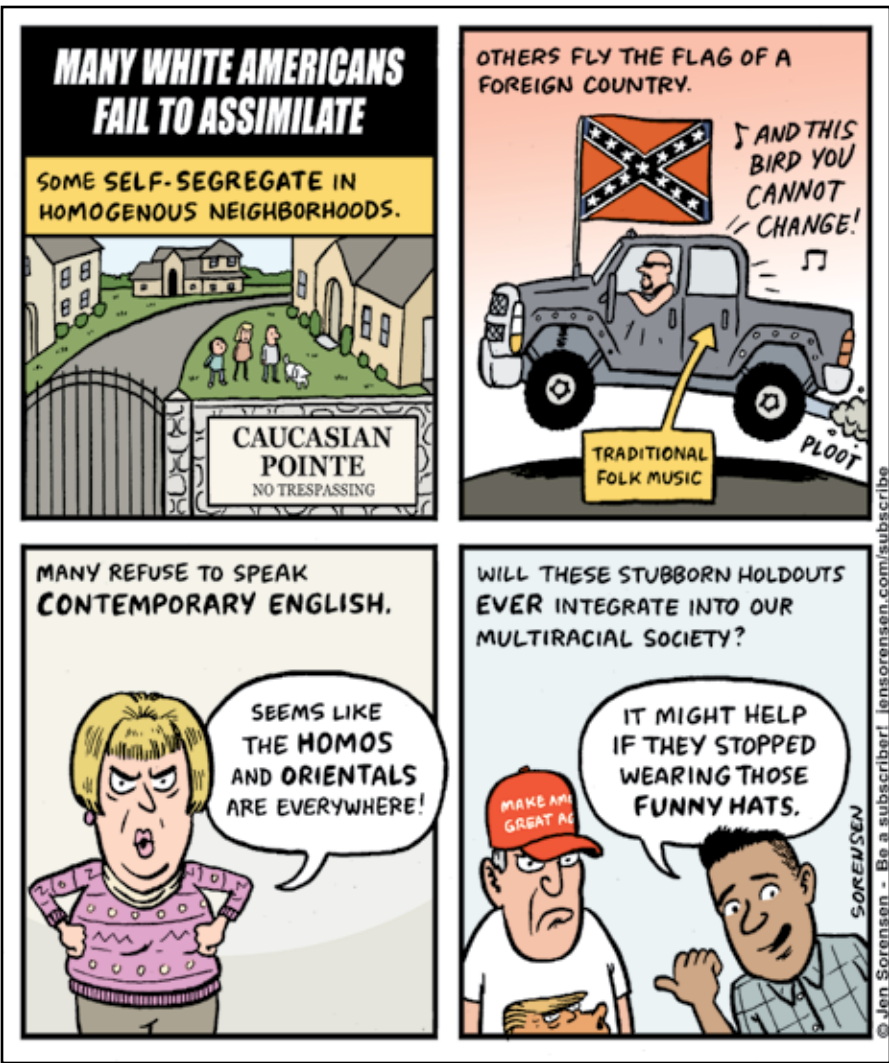


Across

- 1. Animated sort
- 5. Start of some "Jeopardy!" answers
- 10. Does a hit on
- 14. Architect Mies van der _____
- 15. "I'm ready to be dazzled by your presentation"
- 16. Vex
- 17. _____-Free (contact lens solution)
- 18. Hold that's illegal in amateur wrestling
- 20. Holy hymn
- 22. Barflies
- 23. Realm from 800 to 1806: Abbr.
- 24. German "a"
- 25. Something up one's sleeve
- 28. AARP members: Abbr.
- 29. Involuntary action
- 30. Like something that really captures the spirit of a cultural moment
- 33. Grandma
- 34. Dizzying MoMA works
- 35. Karaoke bar needs
- 36. Lead-in to a know-it-all's opinion
- 39. Protected
- 40. Resident of 123 Sesame Street
- 41. Cots, e.g.
- 42. Line that was drawn north of the South

- 47. Prefix with skeleton
 - 48. Young boxer, e.g.
 - 49. _____ Paulo, Brazil
 - 50. Green: Prefix
 - 51. Where Gal Gadot was born: Abbr.
 - 52. _____ food movement
 - 54. High-def flat screen
 - 56. Acute uneasiness ... or this puzzle's theme
 - 60. Line score in a football shutout
 - 61. French for "evening"
 - 62. Lightened (up)
 - 63. Apt. building manager
 - 64. Makes a choice
 - 65. Arduous journeys
 - 66. What soccer teams often play to
- Down**
- 1. Saint-_____ (French resort)
 - 2. "I made a boo-boo!"
 - 3. All-Star pitcher/hitter Shohei
 - 4. Playwright Simon
 - 5. Conservation org. with a panda logo
 - 6. The Rockets, on scoreboards
 - 7. Harry's Hedwig and Ron's Pigwidgeon, e.g.
 - 8. "Start from the beginning"
 - 9. Watch party?
 - 10. The Magic, on scoreboards
 - 11. Mexican restaurant

- item
- 12. Old Italian coins
- 13. Iroquois Confederacy tribe
- 19. End for prophet or priest
- 21. Bird in the crow family
- 26. Copy machine stack
- 27. Oscar winner Sorvino
- 31. Aristocratic types, in British slang
- 32. Ocular woes
- 33. Second-generation Japanese-American
- 35. Die-hard fan's cry
- 36. "What a lovely gift!"
- 37. Some cheap hotels: Abbr.
- 38. Vogue editor Wintour
- 39. Once-common Times Square establishment
- 41. "Go ahead," in Shakespeare
- 42. "Party in the back" hairdo
- 43. Lacking + or -, electrically
- 44. Crossed off the list
- 45. Squid relatives
- 46. House rejection
- 48. Three-pronged Greek letter
- 53. Like a sage
- 55. It's a thing in Mexico
- 57. QB targets
- 58. Shriek after a squeak
- 59. 1960s campus activist grp.



Answers to last puzzle



YOUR PLACE FOR Hot Summer Fun!



**FRIDAYS IN JUNE • 5PM-10PM
WIN CASH & PRIZES!**



**SATURDAYS
IN JUNE
3PM-10PM
CATCH CASH
AND PRIZES!**



**EVERY MONDAY-WEDNESDAY
★★★ PLUS THURSDAY, JULY 4 ★★★
LIVE RACING • 3PM POST TIME**

Visit PresqueIsleDowns.com/Racing for full schedule.



**OPEN DAILY
MONDAY-THURSDAY • 2:30PM-9PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY • 11AM-10PM
SUNDAY • 11AM-9PM**

**JUNE'S FEATURED
Burger
OF THE MONTH
\$16 GREEK BURGER
EVERY DAY IN JUNE**

Father's Day
FATHER'S DAY DINING SPECIAL
SUNDAY, JUNE 16 • 11AM-9PM
\$22 Honey Bourbon Glazed Sirloin

Must be 21 or older. Tax and gratuity not included.

**HAPPY HOUR
SPECIALS
FRIDAYS • 5PM-7PM
50% OFF
ALL APPETIZERS
ALL DRAFT BEER
ALL WELL DRINKS**



**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.