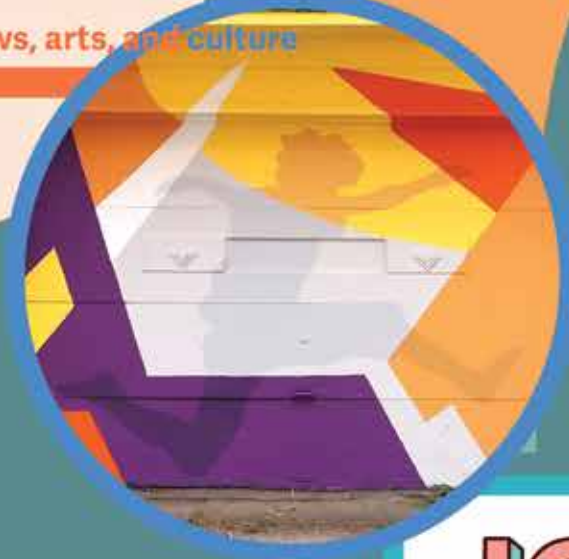


The only local voice for news, arts, and culture

# R

## ERIE READER

FEB. 2023 // Vol. 13 No. 2 // [ErieReader.com](http://ErieReader.com)



## JOURNEY TO A TRAUMA INFORMED LIFE

CO-OWNER ANGELICA  
SPRAGGINS SHEDS LIGHT



## GOOD THINGS AFOOT

HOW THE SAFER ROUTES  
TO SCHOOL PROGRAM  
PROTECTS ERIE KIDS



## BOE BLADEN

ONE OF ERIE COUNTY'S  
FIRST BLACK SETTLERS

PLUS: SONYA BYES ANTONIO HOWARD LOCAL PODCASTS JIM WINARSKI  
MUSIC AND MENTAL HEALTH KELLI O'HARA VERDICT LOVE LETTERS

# FREE!





# There's still an opportunity **TO ENROLL**

**Next Session Begins**  
on March 6th, 2023

LEARN MORE & APPLY  
TODAY AT **EC3PA.ORG**



## Put your **HEART** into it

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for adults in the United States. **Dr. Carmine D'Amico**, cardiologist at LECOM Health, recommends lowering your risk by getting your cholesterol and blood pressure checked regularly by your primary care physician, eating heart-healthy foods and exercising. **Contact your LECOM Health primary care physician today!**

**L|E|C|O|M** HEALTH

Visit **LECOMHealth.com**

**Editors-in-Chief**

Brian Graham & Adam Welsh

**Managing Editor**

Erin Phillips

**Copy Editor**

Matt Swanseger

**Contributing Editors**

Ben Speggen

Nick Warren

Jim Wertz

**Contributors**

Liz Allen

John Bavaro

Charles Brown

Jonathan Burdick

Spencer Cadden

Jordan Coon

Cypher Eiw haz

Michael Hull

Ally Kutz

Tommy Link

Aaron Mook

Brad Pattullo

Jen Sorenson

Melissa Sullivan Shimek

Cara Suppa

Forest Taylor

Thomas Taylor

Bryan Toy

Amy VanScoter

Larry Wheaton

**Photographer**

Jessica Hunter

Antonio Howard, Ceaser Westbrook,  
Brian Bonner, Steve Mik, Mwanel  
Pierre-Louis

**Cover Design**

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**

**FEBRUARY 8 2023**

**From the Editors: February 2023 - 3**

What is Love?

**Erie At Large: Real Bipartisan Leadership - 4**

Recent censure of Erie County Councilman Jim Winarski prompts reexamination of the term

**Good Things Afoot - 7**

How the United Way’s Safer Walking Routes to School program protects kids

**The True Story of Boe Bladen - 10**

Piecing together the legacy of one of Erie County’s first Black settlers

**The Journey Towards Inclusive Mental Health Services - 15**

Journey to a Trauma Informed Life co-owner Angelica Spraggins sheds light

**Cast Your Lot With Podcasting - 17**

Why it’s still worth taking a chance and finding your niche, despite crowded scene

**Music and Mental Health - 20**

Can songs really change our tune?

**Gem City Style Q & A - 22**

Sonya Byes of Chatting with Sonya and Friends

**Spotlight on Erie - 24**

Is this love that I'm feeling? I wanna know, wanna know, wanna know now! Mid-winter Reggae Fest! Love Letters at PACA! Kingdom Choir! And more!

**Book Reviews - 33**

Antonio Howard revisited, two local authors, and some romance novels for Valentine’s Day

**Film Reviews - 36**

Thoughts and predictions for the 2023 Oscars

**Local, Original Comics - 37**

From Melissa Sullivan, Brad Pattullo, John Bavaro, Bryan Toy, and Tommy Link

**Crossword Puzzle - 39**

The latest stumper from David Levinson Wilk

**From the Editors**

**What is Love?**

One of the most overlooked art forms is the children’s picture book. A well-written picture book is like the most profound poem — a few words artfully chosen to hint at a deeper message that can connect with child and adult alike. One of the more touching children’s books this writer has enjoyed recently is a book called *What is Love?* written by Mac Barnett and illustrated by Carson Ellis. In this book, a young man who lives with his dog and his grandmother asks her one day: “What is love?” She tells him that she cannot answer his question, that he must find his own answer out in the world. So he leaves and travels the world, asking various people the eponymous question. The actor tells him love is applause; the carpenter tells him love is a house; the cat tells him love is the night; the farmer tells him love is a seed.

This February issue marks the season of celebrating the one we love on Valentine’s Day while also marking the season of celebrating Black history and those members of today’s Black community who are giving their love to Erie to help make it better. So what is love to us? How would our writers this month answer the question: what is love? Charles Brown would answer: love is music, as he explores the connection between creating or consuming music and how it can serve as a remedy for a struggling psyche. Amy VanScoter would answer: love is listening, as she shares the efforts of Angelica Spraggins to bring trauma-informed therapy to those who need it most. Liz Allen would answer: love is safety, as she experiences the day to day life of a child in Erie faced with the challenge of walking to school. Erin Phillips would tell you: love is honesty, as she uncovers the true history of Erie’s first Black resident.

At the end of *What is Love?* the young man eventually returns home without finding an answer that satisfies him. He sees his warm home with the lights on, smells dinner cooking, hears his dog barking, and feels his grandmother’s embrace. In all of his traveling, he has found what love is. Love is home. Here in Erie, our home, we can find our answer to the question “what is love?” by looking around and finding it for ourselves among all those who are working hard every day to make it better for everyone. Love is home, love is here, and love is created by all the people who make it so.



## Erie at Large: Real Bipartisan Leadership

Recent censure of Erie County Councilman Jim Winarski prompts reexamination of the term

By: Jim Wertz

The Erie County Democratic Party voted on January 21 to censure Erie County Councilman Jim Winarski, a registered Democrat. All voting members were in favor of the censure, although four members present at the meeting abstained.

Winarski was elected to the 4th District County Council seat in 2021, unopposed in the general election. Earlier that year, he won the Democratic primary with a plurality of the vote in a four-way contest.

That victory made Winarski the fourth member of a Democratic majority on council when he took office in January 2022 alongside incumbents Andre Horton, Mary Rennie, and Terry Scutella. Three Republicans — Brian Shank, Ellen Schauerman, and Charles Bayle — made up the council's minority bloc, whose mandate would be the unholy task of carrying out the misanthropic agenda of the incoming county executive, Brenton Davis.

The expectation of many was that the Democratic majority would continue to lead council with the efficacy and transparency it had shown during the previous term when, at times, members of council — Democrat and Republican — would spar with the administration of Kathy Dahlkemper and, at times, with members of their own parties when the interests of the county demanded rigorous debate regardless of party affiliation.

Council leadership is elected annually by the members of council and historically the role of council president rotates amongst members of the majority party.

What happened next, however, shocked observers of the council who expected Winarski to serve as an occasional swing vote on the seven member body.

In his first votes as a member of County Council, Winarski voted against his colleague, Mary Rennie, for council president. Rennie, at the time in her third year on council, had proven herself to be deft and capable in navigating the machinations of county government and the collection of personalities that comprise the leadership throughout the county courthouse. Neither ideological or overtly partisan, Rennie appeared to many to be an ideal independent voice in what was expected to be the start of an era of inexperienced executive leadership.

Winarski instead voted in favor of Councilman Brian Shank to hold the gavel for the 2022 session. Shank had led the Erie County Trump Trains in 2020 and was an outspoken election denier before making an unsuccessful bid for county sheriff in 2021 after just one full year on council. He was an ardent supporter of Davis' campaign for county executive and was anticipated to become Davis's puppet, even if there was a minority vote on council.

With Winarski's help, Shank quickly moved from lapdog to attack dog, controlling the council agenda, the gavel, and the tone of council meetings, and ensuring that Davis would face few checks and balances in his efforts to dismantle county government.

During the first year of the Davis administration,



**Elected as a Democrat in 2021, Jim Winarski has consistently voted against Democratic interests on County Council. He was censured by Democratic leaders in January 2023 for continually aiding the agenda of Republican members of council, particularly in the election of Shank as council president twice.**

Shank led council to undo appropriations made by the previous council, to deconstruct the membership and leadership of the newly charged Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission, and advanced a host of rogue executive actions that undermine the day-to-day operations of county government.

Fast forward to January 2023, a new session of council and an opportunity to shuffle the deck chairs and elect new council leadership.

For a second year in a row, Winarski failed to support his colleague, Democrat Mary Rennie, casting the fourth vote against her leadership.

Shank was nominated to serve as council president for a second year by his Republican colleague, Charles Bayle. That nomination was seconded by ... you guessed it: Jim Winarski, who again joined the minority bloc on council to cast the fourth vote in favor of Shank.

Following a series of questionable policy votes during the 2022 session that punctuated his initial support for Shank, Winarski's vote to retain Shank as council president for a second term was a step too far for Erie County Democrats.

A motion made at the January meeting of the Erie County Democratic Party executive committee asked that the party censure Winarski for his votes on council leadership. After significant discussion the motion passed, moving a resolution from the executive committee to full body for consideration at its January 21 meeting.

It bears some importance to note that although many folks have watched with dismay as Winarski has cast policy votes against the interests of the community often supported by his Democratic constituents, those policy votes did not guide this resolution. Those votes

will have to be adjudicated by the voters of the 4th Council District when Winarski is up for reelection in 2025.

While Winarski himself has said little about the censure, the county executive has shown less restraint. In social media posts, Davis has lauded the "bipartisanship" of this County Council, which has largely supported his interests even when there is little evidence that such support is in the best interest of Erie County.

Bipartisanship means that members of opposing parties work collectively together to seek solutions and to resolve conflict. Bipartisanship is more than the effect of one rogue legislator defying his caucus in favor of minority rule.

But unfortunately, that's politics. And one vote separates stalemate and victory.

For the time being, we'll remember what real bipartisanship looked like. It was a bipartisan effort that unanimously allocated American Rescue Plan funds now rescinded by a 4-3 vote. It was a unanimous bipartisan effort that created the DEI commission, now shaken by a series of 4-3 votes.

Real bipartisanship takes more than one vote.

But in politics, particularly partisan politics, one vote matters.

So this year as we head to the polls to elect our municipal leaders at all levels of local government, remember that your one vote matters.

It might just help shape the next council majority.

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





# PLEASE REMEMBER...

## SHOVEL YOUR WALKS. A STUDENT'S SAFETY MAY BE AT STAKE!

**Shoveling your sidewalk**, or helping those who can't on their own, is a great way to be a good neighbor and help students throughout Erie County arrive to and from school safely.



When sidewalks are left unshoveled, ice accumulates and it becomes **hazardous for children** to walk down the street.

United Way is committed to ensuring all students succeed and all families thrive. Let's all help get children to and from school safely. **That's LIVING UNITED.**



JEFFERSON

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

JES Programming 2023

Winter Term

January 31 - March 29

Thursday, 2/16, 7–8:30 p.m.  
**Robert Frost, John F. Kennedy, and the Purpose of Poetry in a Democracy**  
*Lecture with Robert Hass, Ph.D.*

Friday, 2/17 – at JES, Noon–1:30 p.m.  
**Bridging Erie County's Urban and Rural Divide - Infrastructure, Resources, and Services**  
*Free Community Conversation with representatives of the Jefferson Civic Leadership Academy (JCLA) 2022*

Friday, 3/3, Noon–1:30 p.m.  
**The NWPA Innovation Beehive Network: Helping Entrepreneurs, Boosting Business**  
*Free Community Conversation & Lecture with Jake Marsh, M.P.M.*

Thursday, 3/9 – at ECAT, 7–8:30 p.m.  
**Compton's Table: Empowering LGBTQ+ Youth**  
*Free Community Conversation w/Tyler Titus, Ph.D.*

Monday, 3/6 – at Lincoln Library, Fairview, 6:00 p.m.  
**Natural Wonders of Presque Isle**  
*Free Lecture with the PA Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources*

Wednesday, 3/15 – at JES, 7 to 8:30 p.m.  
**Frank Lloyd Wright's San Francisco Office and the Story of its Remarkable Travels**  
*Distinguished Visiting Speaker Paul V. Turner, Ph.D. in Partnership with the Hagen History Center*

For a full lineup or to purchase tickets visit: [www.JESErie.org](http://www.JESErie.org)

meals on wheels erie

March 12, 2023

DESIGNER PURSE BINGO!

Join us for a fun afternoon & a good cause!

Only 100 tickets will be sold!

\$40.00/per | Reserved seating available for tables of 8+

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT MEALS ON WHEELS ERIE SENIOR MEAL PROGRAMS

VFW POST 470 - 1808 W. 26

DOORS OPEN AT NOON

BINGO STARTS AT 1:00

BINGO | BASKET RAFFLE  
 SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE!

FOR TICKETS CALL:  
 814-452-6930

CASH BAR - BRING YOUR OWN SNACKS!

6

PACK

HOUSE OF BEER

f

@

Open For Lunch at 11am!

Great Food! Awesome Beer!

DINE-IN OR CARRY OUT!

847 Pittsburgh Ave | Erie, PA | 814-454-1989

SALE EXTENDED!

500 BUSINESS CARDS

AVAILABLE ONLY FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2023

Only \$35.00\*

(of the same design)

2 Sided Full Color, 16 pt. Cover. Choice of Glossy or Matte Finish. 7-10 day turn around.

\*Printing only. Typesetting and design services are also available for an additional fee.

Helping Our Clients Look and Be Their Best!

DESIGN • PRINT

ON-BRAND MARKETING

Presque Isle Printing Services

814-833-9020

4318 W. Ridge Road Erie, PA 16506

[www.presqueisleprinting.com](http://www.presqueisleprinting.com)

f

@

WHAT DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE?

It looks a lot like me.

KRISTY GNIBUS

Mother, teacher, community leader, survivor.

I am one in four women.

I am a victim. I am a survivor.

GET HELP GETTING OUT.

SafeNet

reclaim your life

Erie's only domestic violence agency

6 | Erie Reader | ErieReader.com

February 8, 2023



# Good Things Afoot

How the United Way's Safer Walking Routes to School program protects kids

By: Liz Allen

In Shel Silverstein's whimsical book *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, the title poem encourages children to venture beyond fixed boundaries to places where "the grass grows soft and white/the sun burns crimson bright/the moon-bird rests from his flight."

I love Silverstein's rhymes and imagery.

But at the start and end of Erie's sidewalks and at all points in between, youngsters don't necessarily find idyllic havens, especially in winter. That reality was brought home when I joined news reporters and community leaders to learn about the United Way's Safer Walking Routes to School program.

Lots of good things are afoot in Erie when it comes to keeping school children safe. In sync with Safer Walking Routes to Schools, efforts are aligning to foster a spirit of care and concern among neighbors and to beautify Erie with a stunning series of murals.

Thanks to a new \$200,000 grant to the City of Erie and a \$10,000 grant to the Bayfront East Side Taskforce (B.E.S.T.), there will be more exciting initiatives to keep walkers and bikers safe and to improve our connections with each other. Still, much more needs to be done to raise awareness about the dangers that arise when youngsters are forced to walk in streets filled with speeding and distracted drivers because too many people ignore the city's snow-removal ordinance.

On Jan. 31, representatives from United Way of Erie County, the Blue Coats, the Erie School District, and the City of Erie joined members of the media to walk 1.2 miles from United Way headquarters at 650 East Ave. to Edison Elementary School at 1921 E. Lake Rd.

To replicate schoolkids' experience, some of us slung heavy backpacks over our shoulders. But with only a trace of snow on the ground, we didn't face the harsh conditions that many children, including young immigrants, face during a typical Erie winter, including scaling mounds of hard-packed snow or slipping on ice at underpasses.

Unlike Erie children, we also didn't have to encounter a snarling, unleashed dog or pass a site where recent gun violence took a life. With the Walking School Bus program now in place at Edison and McKinley elementary, the Blue Coats — Erie's volunteer peacekeepers — accompany children on their walks home to protect them from such traumas. But requests for the Walking School Bus service outpace the availability of volunteers.

And when walkers can't navigate snow-covered sidewalks, "In many blocks we end up walking in the street," said Blue Coats founder Daryl "Brother D" Craig. "We want to see a high sense of urgency spread throughout our city in terms of our children's safety."

He described the large dog that frightened youngsters near McKinley School. "The owner of the dog said, 'Don't move,'" he recalled. "You could hear the dog start growling, its hair standing up." All it takes is a split second for a scared child to dart into the street



This eye-catching mural on 11th and Reed was created by Shaun Thurston with assistance from local artists Ileecia Moffatt and Ceasar Westbrook. It is one of 50 planned murals to serve as wayfinding markers along safer school walking routes in a program spearheaded by the United Way of Erie County and Erie Arts and Culture.

and get hit, he said. Craig continued to set the scene: "How many times did we have a school shooting right at dismissal time?" But when violence erupts after school or the kids must walk by a recent homicide scene, the Blue Coats and United Way's Community Schools program have caseworkers and caring adults ready to respond.

Still, Craig urged Erie to commit to a "DEFCON 10 urgency to keep our children safe." He pleaded for more signs to slow drivers down, especially on side streets. "This is a visual generation," he said. He also recommended enlisting volunteers to knock on doors to talk about things like the importance of clearing away snow. "Look what we did when COVID hit," he said. "We have to keep this in the public's face. You have to tell it until you show it."

The Safer Walking Route to Schools program, which also includes Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary and Strong Vincent and East middle schools, is key to the Community Schools efforts to eliminate barriers that might keep kids out of school, according to United Way President Laurie Root and Erie School District Superintendent Brian Polito. "We can't educate them if they aren't in school," said Polito.

And in a district where only 2,800 students qualify for bus transportation, that means up to 7,000 kids have to walk. Elementary students who live more than 1.5 miles from their school can take the bus; secondary students have to live two miles or more away.

Polito said the district doesn't have sufficient funding or enough drivers to bus more students. The school district is also recruiting crossing guards, who are paid \$31.94 an hour. Shifts are 45 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon, but the district will work with applicants who need flexible

schedules.

Here's another concrete way (excuse the pun) to keep walkers safe: Shovel or snow-blow your sidewalk. "Municipalities, businesses, and private citizens all have certain responsibilities when it comes to student walking safety," said Mike Jaruszewicz, United Way's senior vice president for community impact. "And while enforcement of codes and laws may not always take place or be consistent, that is not a reason for our community to just let these hazards continue, because the consequences are significant," he said.

"Children can and do slip on icy sidewalks. And children have been killed by speeding traffic." If you are able-bodied but your neighbors aren't, "Be a good



A parked car jutting into East Lake Road forces pedestrians, including children, to walk in the street. Liz Allen was part of a group including Erie police officers, media representatives, and community leaders who trekked a 1.2 mile common school walking route to experience the barriers children face in getting to school safely.





LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

## LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN

LIZ ALLEN



# 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](http://www.marylynnrote.com)**

## ERIE'S HIDDEN TREASURE

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

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



Over  
135 years  
of service  
to Erie, PA!

Since 1886

**KRAUS**  
DEPARTMENT STORE

810 Parade St. • 814-453-4314 • [www.kraudeptstore.com](http://www.kraudeptstore.com)

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30-5:30 • Saturday 9-1

**Proudly named  
Erie's Best Law Firm  
of 2022.**



MacDonald Illig's attorneys are rooted in the Erie community, and we are honored to be named Erie's Best Law Firm of 2022. We also congratulate MacDonald Illig partner Kim Oakes on being selected as Erie's Best Lawyer of 2022.

Thank you to the Erie Reader community for your continued support.

Call: (814) 870-7600  
or visit: [macdonalldillig.com](http://macdonalldillig.com)

**MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP**  
100 State St. Suite 700, Erie, PA 16507

**125** **MACDONALD**  
ANNIVERSARY **ILLIG ATTORNEYS**

TIMES CHANGE. GOOD COUNSEL DOESN'T.



BANKING & FINANCE • BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS • BANKRUPTCY & CREDITORS' RIGHTS • CONSTRUCTION • EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENTAL & ENERGY • FAMILY LAW • GOVERNMENT SERVICES • HEALTH CARE • LABOR & EMPLOYMENT • LITIGATION • MANUFACTURING • REAL ESTATE • TAX PLANNING & REPRESENTATION • TRUSTS & ESTATES • WORKERS' COMPENSATION



# The True Story of Boe Bladen

Piecing together the legacy of one of Erie County's first Black settlers

By: Erin Phillips

*Warning: this article contains multiple excerpts from newspapers and books published in the late 1800s. Some language within those quotations may be offensive.*

One of the first non-indigenous people to come to Erie County was an enslaved man.

While Pennsylvania was one of the first states to abolish slavery, the practice absolutely existed in this state and in Erie County well before slavery was officially made illegal. According to *A History of Erie County Pennsylvania* (written in 1884 by Samuel Bates): "The colored population of the county was larger, proportionately, eighty years ago than now (meaning circa 1800). Most of those who were here then were brought in as slaves, some of the most reputable families having been owners of this kind of property." These families include names that are easily recognizable for anyone with a cursory knowledge of Erie history including: Hamot, Reed, Kelso, Moorhead, Burton, and Grubb.

In the first part of her comprehensive book *Journey From Jerusalem: An Illustrated Introduction to Erie's African American History 1795-1995*, Sarah Thompson writes, "The first settlers of what would become Erie County brought with them the social conditions and maladies of the eastern U.S. They brought with them, as a matter of course and as part of their personal property, men, women, and children serving as slaves. One of the first parties of surveyors and militia included in their number a male slave."

This "male slave" was Boe Bladen, and his story (pieced together from various small fragments of remaining information) tells the harsh truth of early Erie County. As traditionally told, Boe's is a tale featuring the trope of a benevolent former-master bestowing freedom upon his slave and "allowing" him to flourish in his freedom, but Bladen's actual story is likely a lot less rose-colored.

The traditional story of Boe Bladen was recounted in the same paragraph in *A History of Erie County Pennsylvania* as quoted above: "One of the most prosperous colored men who ever lived in the county was Boe Bladen. He was born in Guinea, was brought to America on a slave ship, worked out his freedom, came to Erie and took up a tract of land in Mill Creek Township, three miles from Erie. When he died, in 1829, he owned 200 acres." Modern research shows us a less white-washed story. Bladen was actually purchased in Maryland, enslaved, and brought to Erie County by Captain John Grubb, one of the first white pioneers to settle in Millcreek Township in 1796.

While Grubb eventually changed his tune and was understood, as time passed, to be a great proponent of abolition, he was (at least for a while) a man of his times. While he granted Bladen his freedom (or Bladen purchased his freedom) shortly after arriving in Erie and likely assisted him in purchasing a 400 acre tract of farmland in Millcreek, what is often left un-



The newest exhibit at the Hagen History Center called "The Story of Us" covers the history of all people in Erie County, including early African American settlers as well as the myriad of immigrants who have called Erie home.

said is that Grubb retained Bladen's sons (Jacob and William) as indentured servants until they reached the age of 28 (his son Jacob died at age 32, allowing him only four years of life as a free man), and Bladen's wife remained enslaved likely for the remainder of her life (although it is unclear if she was enslaved by Grubb or elsewhere. She was never a resident on Bladen's property). Bladen's last will and testament states that the farmland that Bladen intended to pass onto his sons would actually be held by Grubb until his sons reached the age of 28, thereby reinforcing the supposition that Bladen's sons were held in servitude to Grubb (in accordance with the law) until that time.

According to Pennsylvania law passed in 1780, all people enslaved before 1780 *remained* enslaved for life, while their children, if born after 1780, were indentured to servitude until they turned 28 years of age. This was a gradual form of abolition that allowed for slavery's continuation, meaning slavery remained in Erie County (although largely not officially) until at least 1820, with more than half of the "Free Persons of Color" reported in census information remaining in residence within white households, and likely in some form of servitude.

Regardless of how it happened, Boe Bladen was the first Black man to own property in Erie County. His name appears on the first census conducted in Erie

County in 1800 as the head of the household along with another person named Quashi (any information on who this person was has been lost to history), and his son's name (William Bladen) appears on the land ownership map of Millcreek Township drawn in 1876. According to an Erie Times News Article published upon the death of Boe's grandson Alfred Bladen on Sept. 24, 1914, "He is the owner of what is said to have been the only farm in Erie County to remain continuously in possession of colored owners. His grandfather, Bob (sic) Bladen, came to this section with three survivors in 1796 and purchased a track of 400 acres. The original deed, on sheepskin parchment, is still in possession of the family."

Bladen was able to provide a safe place for his family (at least for those members who were free at the time) to thrive on a working farm that, according to census information, by 1860 had a total land value of \$5,000 (approximately \$180,000 today). His two sons, Jacob and William Bladen continued on the farm and eventually William's son Alfred lived and worked there until his death in 1914, after which the family seems to have left the area (which also happens to correspond with the establishment of the Glenwood neighborhood). That amounts to over 100 years of earliest recorded Erie County history and multiple generations sustaining the same property (which, at



# Thank you!

Thank you for voting us as  
Erie's Best Health Food Store  
and Best Place for  
Vegan and Vegetarian Food!



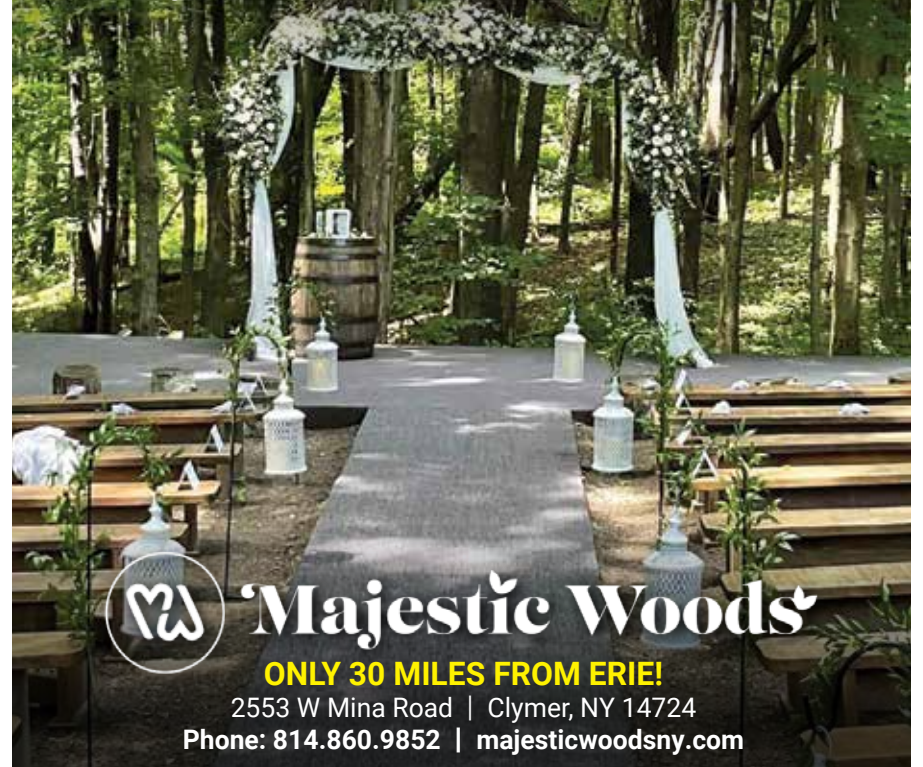
Flagship City Public Market  
&  
26th & Brown Ave.



[www.eriefood.coop](http://www.eriefood.coop)

# Majestic!

Happily ever after is closer than you think!



## Majestic Woods

**ONLY 30 MILES FROM ERIE!**

2553 W Mina Road | Clymer, NY 14724

Phone: 814.860.9852 | [majesticwoodsny.com](http://majesticwoodsny.com)

THANK YOU ERIE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

## BEST YOGA SPACE



## yogaErie



2560 W 8<sup>TH</sup> ST., ERIE, PA 16505 • (814) 520-6998 • [WWW.YOGAERIE.COM](http://WWW.YOGAERIE.COM)



THINK INSIDE THE BOX.

THANK YOU FOR VOTING US  
**BEST PIZZERIA!**

Erie/Harborcreek  
6008 Knowledge Pkwy.  
Erie, PA 16510  
(814) 314-2799

Edinboro  
105 Erie St.  
Edinboro, PA 16412  
(814) 734-7355

[www.facebook.comJohnsWildwoodPizza](http://www.facebook.comJohnsWildwoodPizza)






THE **EXTRAORDINARY**  
WAY TO SAY

*I love you*



PANACHE SALON AND SPA • 814.838.3333



FOR THE LOVE OF CATS!  
**ONE YEAR CATIVERSARY**  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH @ 11 AM - 7PM  
30 W 8TH STREET | ERIE, PENNA  
PURRISTACATCAFE.COM





**John Adams**  
CYCLING & FITNESS  
SINCE 1959

**10% OFF** Any regular priced merchandise. Includes bikes, parts & accessories.  
Not including sales items or electric bikes.  
Expires 12/31/2023

2774 W. 12th St. • 814.833.0430 • [www.johnadamscycling.com](http://www.johnadamscycling.com)



**Erie's Best Coffee is Back!**  
FEBRUARY 26, 2023 \* 11AM-2PM  
BAYFRONT CONVENTION CENTER  
\$10 ADVANCE, \$15 AT THE DOOR  
12 AND UNDER ARE FREE  
Doug Phillips Trio - children's activities - photobooth - and more!



TICKETS/INFO:




ALL BRANCHES

SPECIAL THANKS:



Northwest Bank



REED  
PIPE TOOLS & VISES  
SINCE 1896

BENEFITS:









Bladen Road lies just south of Gore Road off of Cherry Street Extension, the only remaining reminder of the land that once belonged to the Bladen family for generations.

the time of its eventual sale, amounted to about 100 acres, as the property was sold off in parcels through the years).

“We already know the stories of immigration that have been told over and over again: the Irish, the Germans, the Italians, the French, and it’s not that they’re not important, but immigrants of color have pretty much not been covered.” — the Hagen History Center’s Jeff Sherry on the impetus behind “The Story of Us” exhibit

The farmland is now a residential neighborhood off of Cherry Street extension and all that remains is the street name Bladen Road to commemorate the homestead. Thompson (*Journey From Jerusalem*) points out that this property “lies just south of an exclusive neighborhood which in the early 20th century forbade the sale of homes to African Americans.” According to the Glenwood Association neighborhood charter established in 1913, “This property shall not be conveyed, assigned, or sold to any person of Negro or Mongolian descent, nor to any person of Hungarian, Austrian, Italian, Russian, Polish, Slavish, or Romanian descent without the consent in writing of the Company ... This property shall not be sold to any person whose occupancy would be undesirable or injurious to the general welfare of the property.” This clause was in effect until 1969 when federal courts declared these prejudices unconstitutional and unlawful. The Bladen family would not have been permitted to reside in the neighborhood developed on the land that they called home for over 100 years.

So who was Boe Bladen before he came to America? This question is much harder to answer and any answer we have comes through the lens of white experience, as there are no known primary sources from the Bladen family available. There are (as of this writing) no known portraits or photographs of Bladen or his descendants. Even his name is impossible to truly know. Boe Bladen was certainly not the name that his parents gave him in West Africa and even this given name and its spellings vary depending on the source. Just in the research I have done for this article, I have seen iterations including Boe, Bo, Boo, Bob, Bow, Bough, Belden, and Citizen Bo.

In 1880, nearly 50 years after Bladen’s death, this description of him was printed in the Feb. 28 edition of the *Erie Morning Dispatch*: “Among (Grubb’s) slaves was Bow, a fine athletic commanding looking African. He had been recently brought from the African sea-board. He claimed to be a prince or chief, and the tattoo marks on his person, and his fine clear cut regular features gave substance to his claim and stamped him as being far superior to the average African.”

These “tattoo marks” as described in the 123 year old newspaper article have, through modern historic research on Bladen’s life, come into question. According to *African Americans in Erie County: A Trail of Shared Heritage*, a project compiled by local historians Johnny Johnson, Melinda Meyer, and Chris Magoc, “Conflicting accounts hold that the markings were indicators either of his tribal identity or savage treatment by a previous owner.”

I first learned about Boe Bladen from reading the aforementioned publication (and corresponding comprehensive website, [sharedheritage.org](http://sharedheritage.org)) and was reminded of him again when I stumbled upon the Bladen family plot in the Erie Cemetery. And then, I was reminded yet again when visiting the newest exhibit on the second floor of the recent addition to the Hagen History Center, built onto the carriage house of the Watson Curtze Mansion in 2022. The new 3,000 square foot exhibit explores the cultural heritage of all people throughout history who have called Erie



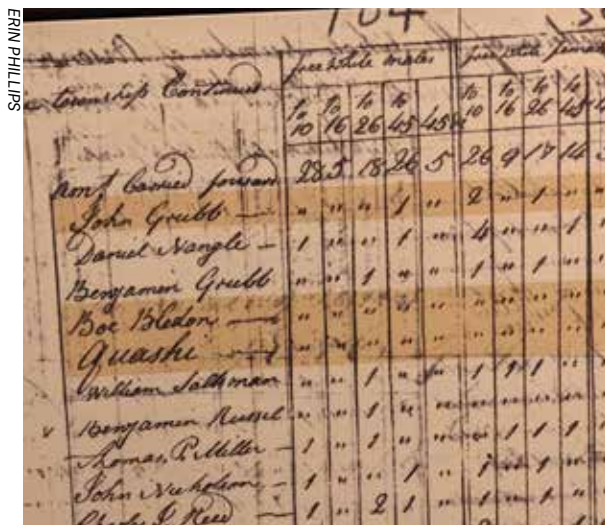
The Bladen family plot in the Erie Cemetery is located in section O-3 along Chestnut Street, just north of the hill up to 26th Street. Walking through a historic cemetery can often inspire a curiosity to learn more about local history.

home including Indigenous people as well as early Black settlers (enslaved or otherwise) and Boe Bladen’s name, short biography, and presumed silhouette are front and center on one display.

Museum educator Jeff Sherry comments, “We already know the stories of immigration that have been told over and over again: the Irish, the Germans, the Italians, the French, and it’s not that they’re not important, but immigrants of color have pretty much not been covered.” And it isn’t only the early African American citizens who are featured (and they are, including Booker T. Washington, Hamilton Waters, Rev. Ernest F. Smith, and Boe Bladen, to name a few), but additionally, the more recent immigrants that are bolstering Erie’s population and contributing to the vibrancy of our neighborhoods. Sherry adds, “We just commissioned MenajErie to make a film for us that we hope to premiere in March about the recent immigration story of Erie: those from Nepal, Bhutan and South Asia, and West Africa, who have recently come here to Erie.”

It is exhibits like “The Story of Us,” publications like *A Shared Heritage* or *Journey From Jerusalem*, articles or presentations given by local historians, or even just a glance at a historical marker or street sign, an errant gravestone, or a newspaper clipping that can spark a curiosity to dig deeper to find out more about the *real* history of our county. By collecting all the available information together, we are able to piece together a story of Black history in Erie, to sort out the facts from white-washing, and uncover the life of a man, Boe Bladen, who did his best under unconscionable circumstances to create a better life for his own children and grandchildren.

Erin Phillips feels that nothing inspires a curiosity about local history more than a cemetery walk. She can be reached (while not rambling among the grave-stones) at [erin@eriereader.com](mailto:erin@eriereader.com)



On this copy of the 1800 census (displayed at the Hagen History Center), which was the first completed in Erie County, one can see the name of Boe Bladen and an unknown occupant of his home, Quashi. Bladen was the first Black man to own property in Erie County.





# 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](mailto:hrc@eriecountypa.gov) • [eriecountygov.org/hrc](http://eriecountygov.org/hrc)



Thank you again  
for voting for  
Victoria Inn!



Distinctive Historic Bed & Breakfast,  
located in downtown Erie, PA steps from  
Gannon University, UPMC Hamot, Erie  
Insurance, and the beautiful waterfront.

401 Peach Street • Erie, PA  
(562) 235-5968 • [victoriainnerie.com](http://victoriainnerie.com)



16TH ANNUAL  
*Guess  
That Tune*  
**GALA**

**APRIL 15, 2023**

*A night on*  
**Broadway**

*With hosts*  
**SHAWN & ALMI CLERKIN**

*at the Bayfront  
Convention Center*

.....

TO BENEFIT THE  
SISTERS  
OF ST. JOSEPH  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
NETWORK

**More details at**  
[www.ssjnn.org/gala](http://www.ssjnn.org/gala)





# The Journey Towards Inclusive Mental Health Services

Journey to a Trauma Informed Life co-owner Angelica Spraggins sheds light

By: Amy VanScoter

As children, many of us were traditionally taught that America is a melting pot. As we get older, we learn to debate whether America is actually more of a salad bowl. These metaphors are often used to describe America's multiculturalism in that we are all together but we all still have distinct cultures. "Sometimes we forget that the melting pot should include services, businesses, healthcare... So if your population is diverse — and even if it's not — there should be that representation in all the spaces you encounter," said Angelica Spraggins MA, CRC, LPC, co-owner of Journey to a Trauma Informed Life. "A large part of why what we are doing at Journey is so important really has to do with being a reflection of the community that you live in," she said.

Creating representation in spaces such as the mental health community has been a goal for Spraggins. She always knew she wanted to go into private practice but wasn't quite sure how that vision would bring itself into reality until she developed a mentorship with Journey co-owner Dr. William Kohler. "I chose to join Journey after finding a mentor in Will (Kohler), taking me under his wing about how to be an actual therapist. He made sure that he was being conscious that, as a Black woman, there was a certain amount of mental fatigue I had just from existing in a place like Erie. Acknowledging some of the ways we practice therapy is not conducive to the Black experience and that some of the things I carried as a Black woman were added on to my practice and it would be a benefit," said Spraggins. "I want to help mold people who are helping other people."

Since graduating from Edinboro University with a bachelor's degree in psychology and master's in rehabilitation counseling, Rochester, N.Y. native Angelica Spraggins has made Erie her home and has continuously contributed to creating a more inclusive culture. "Once I realized Erie would be my home, my goal has been to make it feel that way," Spraggins said when receiving her 40 under 40 recognition in 2020. "My goal in making Erie a better place is to make sure people of color and members of the Queer community feel at home." Not only is Spraggins providing therapeutic services, she is also a co-founder of Erie's Black Wall Street (EBWS), a local nonprofit meant to empower Black entrepreneurship through promotion, networking, and cultivation.

It is through this same networking and cultivation that Spraggins encourages others to tend to their mental health. Reaching people about a subject like therapy can be challenging, but Spraggins says it is all a part of her regular conversations. "People always ask: 'What do you do?' and I always say: 'I'm a therapist.' I think sometimes we take this high level of intellectualizing about how to connect with people. My method I learned from my wife is just being in spaces where people are, and having honest, open, conversations and talk about my mental health, talk about my

JESSICA HUNTER PHOTOGRAPHY



Featured as a 40 Under 40 in 2020, Angelica Spraggins has gone on to co-own Journey to a Trauma Informed Life, a practice geared towards providing therapy that is as inclusive as possible to the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.

career," she explains.

Representation matters when finding a therapist who is a good fit for the client and Spraggins has these conversations and makes these connections often here in Erie. "The issue for people of color is finding someone who 'I don't have to break down who I am first and then get to the hard stuff.' It's sometimes difficult to understand but when you can see someone who reflects you, there's an ease in having that conversation," said Spraggins. "This is not just specific to the Black and brown communities, Queer communities, cisgendered, non people of color, differently-abled individuals... sitting across from someone who can have some connection to your experience takes some of that worry away from 'do I have to explain every part of who I am or can I get to the hard stuff?'" said Spraggins.

Journey to a Trauma Informed Life, LLC began in July 2019 with this in mind, founded by three therapists (Dr. William Koehler, Dr. Tyler Titus and Rachel Anysz) who saw a need for trauma-informed, culturally and LGBTQ+ sensitive mental health services in our community. Dr. William Koehler purchased the ownership shares from Dr. Titus and Anysz in 2021 to become sole proprietor. The practice has been continually evolving, moving from its West Eighth Street location to leasing space in a new building in 2022 at 201 W. 11th St. Journey has grown to a staff of 12 diverse therapists and in 2023, Spraggins became co-owner alongside Koehler. Spraggins specializes in BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities and utilizes Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Talk Therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. She also runs group therapy for Q+BIPOC individuals at Central Outreach.

The timing of Journey's growth has happened at a vulnerable time in the community. "COVID was especially devastating for communities of color, lower income communities, diverse communities, those communities that already have disadvantages in our society, were double hit when COVID came. So, how do we get through this, how do we work through anxiety, depression, social anxiety, when you're in your house away from other human beings for months at a time? That has an effect on your mental health and it is scientifically proven that isolation has devastating effects on mental health. So, coming out of COVID, I really wanted to be able to create a space for Black and brown individuals to feel safe," said Spraggins.

She goes on to explain that no matter what one has experienced in life, one has some form of trauma: "A large part of working with my clients specifically is breaking down what trauma is. I think that we have an understanding that trauma has to be gun violence or combat or physical violence. But trauma can be acute — so it can be one large instance — or complex-consistent trauma, over and over. So I really try to break down the ideologies in what we believe trauma is and when we start to ask questions about smaller traumatic events, people tend to understand," said Spraggins.

Spraggins also conducts Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training. "Journey has contracted with Family Services for quarterly training and one of the things we talk about are the messages that the community sends to people of color, diverse people in general, or differently abled people," said Spraggins. "One of the discussions we've had were the liquor stores in Pennsylvania and when you go into a liquor store, the



CONTRIBUTED



**Dr. William Kohler (left) and Angelica Spraggins became co-owners of Journey to a Trauma Informed Life after Kohler mentored Spraggins, helping her to embrace her past experiences to shape the kind of therapy she provides to the community.**

majority of liquors that are behind the counters are the ones closely correlated to the Black community. Hennessy, Grey Goose, those are the ones in the rap videos. Hennessy was one of the first sponsors of the NAACP but those are held behind the counters, not the more expensive alcohols that are on the shelves. Or when you go to Elm Street Walmart as opposed to Edinboro Walmart and there are a lot more locks on the products; what message does that send to you as

a Black or brown person here in Erie? What message does that send you about what the community believes about you or how you see yourself? Those micro-aggressions, those small signals, that's traumatic and it keeps you from being a full person or a full citizen," Spraggins explains.

"I don't ever try to convince anyone they need therapy, but what I try to do is give people a better understanding of things that are harmful that we may not recognize and how they can affect you in ways that maybe you don't want them to. Therapy can be a component to help you work through some of that, maybe you want to deal with certain circumstances differently... Maybe you being sad all the time is not just who you are as a person. It's less about convincing and more of trying to get them to see a different angle of their experiences that are impactful to them," said Spraggins.

"Healing is different for different people and as professionals, regardless of how much education we have or how many studies we read, I always tell my clients I can't tell you how to heal — it's really up to you to tell me what you need so we operate in a manner of therapy in whatever capacity a person needs," said Spraggins.

She explains that talk therapy may not be helpful for everyone but Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, playing games, art therapy, or reiki components can be utilized. "We have to be flexible in helping people heal from things and we have to start empowering people to be able to communicate

what they need. I think a lot of people are afraid that it doesn't fit within the box of how people have told them how to heal so... I don't journal and I don't jog, so what can I do to help heal myself? If we are creative and we collaborate as professionals, the individuals seeking help and more people would feel safe," said Spraggins. She encourages people to find the right fit and remember that "if you go to a therapist, you don't have to stick with that therapist if they're not for you."

Journey offers many different pathways to healing including Talk Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, EMDR, Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), and Group Therapy: Q+ Youth, Q+ Adults, Trauma 101, and Autism/ADHD support groups, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training/Consultation (DEI). More information about these modalities can be found on their website. They have also added the following additional services this year: Yoga, Reiki (energy healing), and Meditation/ Mindfulness practices. Journey has partnered with Central Outreach to provide Q+ support groups monthly and Flow Freely for Reiki, meditation, and doula services.

You can learn more about Journey at [atraumainformedlife.com](http://atraumainformedlife.com)

*Amy VanScoter is a registered yoga and meditation instructor with a passion for wellness, and a marketing/communications professional. She can be reached at [avanscoter@gmail.com](mailto:avanscoter@gmail.com)*



For more information or to register visit:  
[autismnwpa.org](http://autismnwpa.org)  
or call (814) 455-3540



**NEW IN 2023**

**Friends & Pals Teen Social Club**  
Age 13 - 21 | Starting Thursday, Feb 2 | 6 to 7:30pm

**Skills to Pay the Bills | Life & Job Skills**  
Age 16 and Up | Starting Tuesday, Feb 7 | 6-7:30pm

**Adult Social Group | Age 21 & Up**  
Starting Saturday, Feb 11 from 11:30am to 1:00pm

**Building Connections LEGO Club**  
Grade K - 12 | Starting Saturday, Feb 11 | 9:30 to 11am

**Sensory Exploration | Therapeutic**  
Age 3 to 5 | Starting Monday, Mar 6 | 5 - 6pm

*We create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.*

3308 State St Erie PA 16508 | (814) 455-3540 | [program@autismnwpa.org](mailto:program@autismnwpa.org)

**La famiglia. Join us.**

Great pay. Great location. Great Team. Delicious perks.

**ROMOLO**  
C H O C O L A T E S

814-452-1933 ext. 224



**Drive happier.**

**Cam El-Farouki, Agent**  
3319 W 26th Street  
Erie, PA 16506  
Bus: 814-833-6663  
[www.teamerie.com](http://www.teamerie.com)

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

**State Farm®**

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company; State Farm Indemnity Company; Bloomington, IL  
1601561  
Texas County Mutual; Dallas, TX



# Cast Your Lot with Podcasting

Why it's still worth taking a chance and finding your niche, despite crowded scene

By: Jonathan Burdick

In February 2020, when my first story on the local podcasting scene was published in the Erie Reader, there were an estimated 850,000 podcasts available for one's listening pleasure. If that number seems staggering, these numbers were from before COVID-19 lockdowns. The subsequent isolation, boredom, and increased desire to connect with others led to an unprecedented amount of new podcasts flooding the market. There are now a dizzying three million podcasts to choose from and hundreds of millions of listeners worldwide.

Podcasting has been around for over two decades, but over the past three years, the scene has evolved and grown pretty significantly. While podcasting was once considered the disruptive Wild West of audio production, the charts are now dominated by established celebrities, political commentators cashing in on the outrage machine, and shows owned by massive podcasting networks like Spotify, iHeartRadio, and Barstool Sports. News organizations such as the New York Times and Fox News have even embraced it while advertisers have flocked to the medium, spending nearly \$2 billion in 2022 alone (over double the spending in 2020).

For some old school podcast purists, this signals the end of the Golden Age of Podcasting, a time when podcasts were free from gatekeeping corporate overlords, excessive advertising, and marketing buzzwords like "SEO" and "brand identity" permeating the industry. Naturally, others have argued that the Golden Age is just *beginning* — but regardless of one's perspective, the sheer number of podcasts in existence means that these independent podcasts *are still out there*. It's simply a much more crowded market and a show finding its audience (or vice versa) can increasingly be a challenge.

"We haven't really seen listener numbers increase in significant amounts and it's becoming increasingly more difficult to reach new listeners," says Britty Lea, an Erie filmmaker, artist, and founder of the Pocket Podcast Network. "Marketing a podcast is a tricky venture and it definitely provides a unique challenge — how do you share a format that's *only* audio on social media platforms that are video forward? And how do you reach new people?"

The pandemic presented unique challenges too, cutting listenership nearly in half for some of her network's podcasts due to many listeners no longer having daily commutes. John Duckworth, better known to listeners of *Idiotville* — *Erie PA's Favorite Podcast* as his podcasting pseudonym Brent N. Liberty, agrees that the pandemic was rough for their show.

"After the last [Erie Reader] article, things were really starting to happen for us," he says. "More people were finding our content and everyday seemed to bring new opportunities. Then, it was gone." He adds that while they continued recording over Zoom — which was good for their sanity as the world "crash[ed]

BURNT RED HEN



Anyone with something to talk about can start a podcast and there are a number of local resources available to help, as well as a supportive community of Erie podcasters willing to lend their expertise.

down around" them — those episodes weren't quite the same. "Returning to the studio helped restore the quality of the show."

While there have been some changes in the crew due to relocation (with occasional return guest appearances), Duckworth, co-founder Dill Spears, and regulars Jake News and Ted Brogan remain, along with two additional members: Anna Hartvigson and Ryan Louis, whose attitudes and friendship behind-the-scenes have added significantly to the show's dynamic.

Whoever is in the conversation though, their mission remains the same: serving the Erie community. "We can have Erie-centric conversations that are accessible to those who live here," Duckworth describes. "Larger cities often carry their idiosyncrasies as a badge of honor. Think of how Pittsburghers celebrate their accent, products, and steelworker past. They act as if they're part of a privileged, select group that's lucky enough to be from Pittsburgh. Much of the point of *Idiotville* is: why can't we do the same?"

Of the other 24 local podcasts mentioned in the 2020 article, less than 10 remain active. This includes *No Hugging No Learning*, *Tartan Talks*, *Dig: A History Podcast*, *Our Erie*, *Buddycast*, and *NEXT with Marcus Atkinson*. Of course, dozens of others have also been created since then, too, such as the Best of Erie 2022 winner *The Girls Night In*, the *Erie Music History Podcast*, the sports-themed *The Michael Balko Show*, WQLN's *The American Tapestry Project*, Radius Co-Work's *Radius Coffee Talk*, a local school psychologist's *Ask JenPysch*, the comedic and adult-themed *The Roster*, and *Idiotville Sports*, to name just a few.

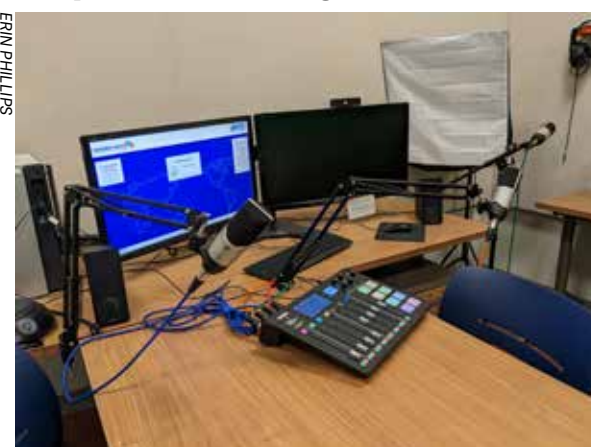
Simply put, it takes a lot of organization, dedication,

and self-promotion to keep a podcast going. It also requires a lot of unpaid time during the finite hours outside of one's *paid* job. Advertisers, after all, generally don't fork over cash without an established audience.

"I'd credit our longevity to our friendship," Duckworth says of *Idiotville*, adding that he and his co-hosts talk nearly every day and the podcast is a great excuse to hang out, even if working with everybody's unique schedules can be difficult. "It makes the labor-intensive parts of the process significantly more rewarding when you're doing it with your good friends. ... Dill and I started this show as a constructive way to give back to Erie while also having an excuse to have a beer and catch up every week."

Despite all of the challenges, Lea's Pocket Podcast

ERIN PHILLIPS



With a valid library card, anyone can reserve the Media Room at the Blasco Memorial Library, which contains all of the equipment necessary to record and produce a podcast. The library also has podcast learning resources available on their website and in the Idea Lab.





Art Gallery + Gift Shop **Since 1974**

Paintings, photography, glass, jewelry, pottery & more.

10 E. 5th Street

Erie, PA 16507

[www.glassgrowersgallery.com](http://www.glassgrowersgallery.com)

814.453.3758 • [staff@glassgrowersgallery.com](mailto:staff@glassgrowersgallery.com)



**Saturday, February 11**

**DOWNTOWN ART BRUNCH, 11am-2pm**

**Saturday, February 11**

**CRYSTAL BALL PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP**

with Brandon Borgia (Registration Required), 3-5pm

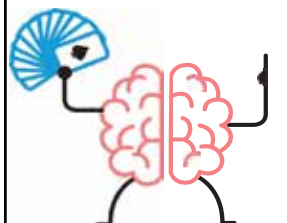
**Current Exhibit through March 13**

**YERACE BEADWORK AND RONDELS** by Barbara Thomas Yerace



## BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER

**Challenge your mental muscles and make friends.**  
**Learn the game of bridge!**



**2023 Beginner classes start:**

**Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>**

at 6:30 pm

and

**Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>**

at 9:30 am.

**Contact:**

Steven Grzegorzewski (814) 573-4743  
[steven.grzegorzewski@eriebridgeclub.org](mailto:steven.grzegorzewski@eriebridgeclub.org)

OR

Rick Klapthor (814) 566-1396  
[clubmanager@eriebridgeclub.org](mailto:clubmanager@eriebridgeclub.org)

**Where:**

Erie Bridge Club  
1221 Grant Avenue  
Erie, PA 16505  
(814) 833-1706  
(Just east of Erie International Airport)

**[eriebridgeclub.org](http://eriebridgeclub.org)**



## FEATURE

CAM ERIE



**Local podcaster Britty Lea, founder of the Pocket Podcast Network, utilizes the podcasting equipment available at CAM Erie to record a collaborative podcast with her sister called *Colt Classics*.**

Network has kept busy too.

"We have some incredible shows on the network created by folks from all across the country and we're constantly adding new podcasts to the network," Lea says. This includes their first scripted podcast, *Tia and Rio Attempt to Save Themselves (and the World)*, *PokéMakers* about a duo creating their own original Pokémon game, and one for tabletop role-playing fans called *Green Mountain Mysteries*. "[It's] a spooky and irreverent urban fantasy game of monster hunters, butts, sandwiches — and tons of great guests," explains Lea.

Another of the network's more recent shows is called *Colt Classics*, which she co-hosts with her sister Jessica. "Every episode we conceptualize a new 'bad' horse movie," says Lea. "I have a bachelor's degree in film and television and [my sister] has a bachelor's degree in equine studies. We grew up making up stories together, so this is just the polished version of all those years and years of collaboration."

There truly is a podcast out there for everybody, even in the local market.

Take *A VGM Journey*, for instance. Hosted by Alex Messenger, each of the over 120 episodes contains music tracks from the 8-bit era of video gaming to modern day with added commentary. A quick glance at episodes reveal music from video games as diverse as *Mario Kart*, *Pac-Man*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *Elder Scrolls*, and even retro sports games. The show demonstrates the diversity and complexity of music within the video game industry and instills a deeper appreciation for it.

"[I started it] because I have had a lifelong love of video game music and wanted to share my love of it with everyone," Messenger says. "It's a guarantee that no matter who listens to the show, there will be a song that they will really enjoy."

He notes how supportive and collaborative the local podcasting community has been, especially the *Idiotville* crew. Mostly though, he enjoys picking the new tracks for each episode, playing fan requests, and keeping it fresh for his listeners. He also enjoys

the fan engagement. They recently did a Secret Santa Special, for instance, where fans "gifted" each other music tracks.

When asked about the future of Erie's podcasting scene, he points out the Erie Podcast Network page on Facebook. "But I would like to see some kind of podcasting hub that could really show off the various podcasts in Erie and introduce listeners to some new shows," he adds.

Messenger acknowledges that his podcast is pretty niche, but Duckworth actually argues that being niche is positive in the independent podcasting world.

"Any independent podcaster knows that a random celebrity can grab a microphone and outperform them on downloads with no effort," he states. "The rest of us have to serve a smaller audience as well as we can. Much of that involves proving that there is a market to reach. We have the ability to reach people in a way that traditional media can't."

So, reader, what if you want to start a podcast?

"The best advice I can give someone who is interested in starting their own show is to go for it," Messenger advises. "There are many unique stories out there in Erie and there is always someone who wants to listen."

"Do it. I'm so serious, just do it," agrees Lea, highlighting local resources available such as CAM Erie, Radius CoWork, and the Erie County Library's Media Lab as well as the podcasting community which, in her experience, is always willing to help and collaborate. "Come up with your concept, plan your execution, record a couple episodes ... and then just release it! You can make a podcast about *literally* anything and if you find the right people to be on your show with you, you're making magic."

"There's a supportive community of podcasters that are willing to help," says Duckworth, who also champions CAM Erie, and stresses that Erie should be a place where creators feel supported and can celebrate each other's successes. "Doing a show like this takes a ton of work. I don't know if many who begin their podcasting journey know how much goes into it when they start. I know we didn't. ... Don't hesitate to reach out to the *Idiotville* team with any questions that you may have. Even if you hate our show, we are willing to help you."

"It's easy to forget when you're in the studio recording that there are people listening to and enjoying the work that you do," concludes Lea. "You're creating for that one person sitting in their car in the middle of traffic. Working out at the gym. Doing their laundry. Laughing at the jokes you've made. Crying at the story you wrote. Disagreeing with the points you brought up. That's what is exciting!"

*You can read an ever-changing list of Erie-area podcasts at [eriereader.com/podcasts](http://eriereader.com/podcasts) and read about previous contributor podcast picks at [www.eriereader.com/category/podcasts](http://www.eriereader.com/category/podcasts)*

*Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project *Rust & Dirt*. He can be reached at [jburdick@eriereader.com](mailto:jburdick@eriereader.com)*





**In-Person & Telehealth Therapy**

**(814) 734-0199**

111 Walker Dr Unit A  
Edinboro, PA 16412

**[www.evolvepcs.org](http://www.evolvepcs.org)**



**Anxiety • Trauma • Depression**  
**EMDR • DBT • CBT • CPT**



# Become a Foster Parent!

**[FosterNWPAKids.org](http://FosterNWPAKids.org)**



**Family Services** of NWPA



**CALL 1.888.829.5680**



## FREE TAX PREPARATION

**Did you earn less than \$60,000 last year?**

Through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA), Erie FREE Taxes provides free federal, state, and local tax preparation service to Erie County residents across multiple locations!

**Please remember!**

This year, appointments are expected to fill up very quickly and are available on a first come, first served basis. Interested tax filers must make an appointment by calling **1-888-829-5680**.

**MyFreeTaxes.com**

A free online tax filing option, MyFreeTaxes.com, is also available to filers who wish to complete their own federal and state tax returns online. There is NO INCOME LIMIT to utilize MyFreeTaxes.com.

**[ErieFreeTaxes.org](http://ErieFreeTaxes.org)**

**EarnIt KeepIt \$avIt**  
United Way Erie FREE Taxes







**WE'RE HIRING DRIVERS!**

PAID TRAINING OFFERED  
COMPETITIVE SALARY  
FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE  
GREAT BENEFITS  
PAID TIME OFF



[www.ride-the-e.com](http://www.ride-the-e.com)



**Howard Hanna**  
Real Estate Services

It's important to have a  
Real Estate Agent  
you can **trust**.

When you are ready to buy or sell,  
**give me a call.**

**Susan Dunton**  
Cell: 814-449-9035  
Office: 814-833-1000  
Email: [susandunton@howardhanna.com](mailto:susandunton@howardhanna.com)



## FEATURE

# Music and Mental Health

Can songs really change our tune?

By: Charles Brown

Mental health and music have always been intertwined. With so much turmoil, war, and oppression in the world, people experience depression and anxiety on a multitude of levels. Since life reflects art (or the other way around), songs can contain these feelings of hopelessness, frustration, and ambiguity — emotions that can toy with our hearts, sending us on a downward spiral of the mind.

The beauty in this ugliness is that no matter how emotionally complex a song can be, if it can resonate with listeners, it can create a sense of peace, giving the consumer a feeling of being understood. The artists who created the tunes that we love on our playlists and the radio have had their fair share of mental disturbances too, which fuels the music that we continue to enjoy. Is music the remedy to poor mental health? Could music actually be mental health therapy through rhythm and lyrics? Let's take a deep dive into the relationship between the two.

Whether through alternative rock, country, or hip-hop, songwriters commonly use composition as a coping mechanism. The genre of blues unapologetically waves distress signals, with stories of lost love and despair. Even the methods some blues guitarists use to strum their instrument convey emotion — you can tell within the wailing that the pain is real and not just for our entertainment. The late, great B.B. King, also known as the King of Blues, was no stranger to admitting his heart wasn't well in songs such as 1969's "The Thrill Is Gone" and 1970's "Nobody Loves Me But My Mother." The legendary English rock band The Beatles, who are known for songs like "Come Together" and "I Want To Hold Your Hand," were also able to push out ballads like their 1965 hit "Yesterday," which lamented a break-up and the desire for things to return to how they were.

2022's Best of Erie award winner for Best New Band/Musician Elle Taylor uses music-making to her benefit to tackle issues that she endures internally. "It (creating music) is 100 percent a coping skill for me," says the folk artist. "In fact, I recently realized that it is more of a coping skill than anything else." Regardless of the accolades and



Local award-winning musician and lyricist Calikko uses his music as a form of therapy, writing songs has become an outlet to express difficult emotions and work through intrusive thoughts.

recognition that she has been receiving throughout her journey, Taylor was never exactly sure, as a writer, what her message was through song.

But it is clear that the creation of her music cushions her mental state. "I had never planned to write a song. I have lived with depression for so many years and writing has always helped," Taylor admits. "The hurt, fear, rejection, and shame inside of me has to leave my body somehow and so it does it in words. Now I put those words to chords."

Canadian-American songwriter Alanis Morissette, who took the '90s by storm with her unique, transparent style of songwriting confessed the same sentiments in her 2021 HBO documentary *Jagged* where she says that she would be "sick" from not releasing certain feelings in her music, trying to hold it in.

Some of the greatest musicians have internally suffered and didn't shy away from letting it be known musically. Arguably the most influential rapper of all time, Tupac Shakur (1971-1996), had a slew of songs discussing the state of his psyche. On his 1995 track "Lord Knows" from his multi-platinum studio album *Me Against The World*, Shakur's first two lines are "I smoke a blunt to

take the pain out/And if I wasn't high I'd probably try to blow my brains out." Though that may be disturbing, it's confessional and relatable for many people. In one of Shakur's most notable pieces "So Many Tears" from the same opus, the rapper explores feeling lost and suicidal, begging to get into heaven.

Another fallen soldier in the rap game, DMX, who suffered from abandonment issues and drug usage, was no stranger to pouring his emotions onto wax during his time on Earth. "I would've traded the chance of being a child with a father/over talent and being able to survive when it's harder," the Yonkers, N.Y. artist spits over the Phil Collins sampled track "I Can Feel It" from his groundbreaking 1998 debut *It's Dark And Hell Is Hot*. Philadelphia based artist RJ Payne, who is highly praised for his gritty metaphors and aggressive delivery, decided to create an EP series called *Beautiful Payne* in which he touches on the man behind the raps. Each installment provides introspection and vulnerability on a higher level than his other projects with most of them playing as a therapy session.

2011's Rock Erie Music Award Winner in the R&B/Urban category Calikko is



## FEATURE

known for expressing some of his innermost thoughts within his artistry, discussing relationships and self-reflection with slick word-play. "Being an artist of music myself, I've used it to cope with depression and even suicidal thoughts at times," Calikko confesses. "It definitely helped me get many of my emotions that I kept bottled inside out in a healthy manner."

Calikko adds that even outside of formulating lyrics, music is just a necessary joy. "When it comes to music and mental health, they complement each other very well," the artist claims. "Music is very therapeutic for the mind and the soul, as it is used on a daily basis to help with depression, anxiety, and your overall mood. You can be having a bad day and as soon as your favorite song comes on, your mood could completely change."

Music without question is a universal language that is spoken amongst billions around the globe. And with pain being just as universal, it only makes sense for music to play as an unofficial healer to humanity. A song that describes exactly how you're feeling could boost your mood because it's relatable or, it could bring you to tears for that same exact reason. The strong connection between our emotions and what we listen to is undeniable. The power of a song or even just a beat has the ability to move us.

Local music therapist Craig Stevens was kind enough to share his knowledge on how music affects people through studies and research: "Thanks to an increasingly large body of neurobiology research, music is now objectively seen as a powerful tool that can be used to influence mood, cognition, and behavior. Because music activates emotional and motivational networks

in the brain such as the limbic system, specific music therapy techniques serve as training experiences for real-world skills related to mood modification."

Stevens continues, "Music-induced Mood Vectoring — the skill of purposefully moving from an undesired mood state to a desired mood state — combined with counseling-based techniques has been shown to drive behavioral change related to therapeutic goals. Elated mood states can help remove intrusive, unwanted, and negative thought patterns. Therefore, mood induction by music may support those with depression, for example, by helping the client gain more access to positive cognitions. It turns out, happy music indeed does help generate happy thoughts and the opposite is also true."

It's helpful to know that there is a real science behind music and our feelings. We all suffer just as much as the artists of whom we are fans. From Bill Withers to Kurt Cobain, to EDM and lo-fi, music can be a trigger that could take us down paths of sadness, empathy, or bliss. What we choose to listen to has a stronger influence on our day than what we think.

Or is it all subjective? Perhaps an angry song is the reason you can smile or a happy song is the reason you're irritated. At the end of the day, music and feelings are a marriage that will forever stand the test of time. It is my hope that your playlist brings you happiness. And, as a message to all of the songwriters, may your songs heal you just as much as you want them to heal the world.

*Charles Brown can be found on Facebook and Twitter @CEEBrown814, and online at ceebrown.com*



**PERFORMING ARTISTS  
COLLECTIVE ALLIANCE**

Progressive Theatre & Community Arts Center  
1505 State Street, Erie, PA

**art/office/studio space**

ALL UTILITIES INCLUDED. DIFFERENT SIZES AVAILABLE.

**Not Living Space.**

**\$350-\$650 per month**

**Text Only please: 814-434-0687**



**JOIN OUR VIP  
REWARDS APP!**



**\$100 OFF RESTYLANE KYSSSE IN FEBRUARY**



**iAESTHETIC**  
— MED SPA —

**www.i-aesthetic.com**



Available with  
WQLN PBS  
Passport

LOCAL  
HISTORY  
COMES  
TO LIFE



CHRONICLES

STREAM  
ALL EPISODES  
\$5 per month

## FEATURE

### Gem City Style Q&A

Sonya Byes of *Chatting with Sonya and Friends*

By: Jessica Hunter

**Jessica Hunter (JH):** Please tell us a little bit about your background, as the founder and creator of *Chatting with Sonya and Friends*.

**Sonya Byes (SB):** I am the creator, owner, founder and host of Erie's local talk show *Chatting With Sonya and Friends* and founding operator of Mocha Media Management, LLC. *Chatting with Sonya and Friends* is a diverse group of professional women engaging in real, relevant, and unscripted conversations in the City of Erie.

**JH:** What inspired you to create this unique, unscripted, streaming talk show? What sets you apart from other live platforms out there?

**SB:** My inspiration for creating this space mostly derived from being a woman of color and feeling unseen, unheard, and excluded. Unheard in various areas, oftentimes in the workplace, research shows that women of color are the most likely to be ignored and misquoted in meetings. More than 40 percent of Black and Latina women reported being interrupted and spoken over in a work setting, according to Lean In and McKinsey data.

So having said that, I always wanted to create a place and a space where we could get together as women of color, not only to be seen, but to also be heard. Basically, that's where the motivation and inspiration came from. What sets *Chatting With Sonya and Friends* apart is that we are all very different. We're diversity at its finest. We each bring our own uniqueness to the table. From our professional backgrounds, family dynamics, passions, hobbies, community, etc. Therefore we offer different perspectives on an array of topics and subjects. Yet, we also have many similarities, especially as it relates to being women of color. Therefore we understand each other in more ways than one.

**JH:** What is your main mission for the show? How do you decide who your guests are and what topics to discuss on *Chatting with Sonya and Friends*?

**SB:** The main mission of the show is to provide inspiration, encouragement, education, and motivation, all by way of conversations. These are the four pillars that *Chatting With Sonya and Friends* aims to provide. We are committed to engaging with individuals, organizations, and businesses in the city and communities in which we live and serve, which

© JESSICA HUNTER PHOTOS



**Sonya Byes, the host of *Chatting With Sonya and Friends* states that she was inspired to create her show to give women of color the opportunity to be seen and heard and to bring inspiration, encouragement, education, and motivation to viewers.**

helps to determine who would best fit the guests that we're seeking out to join us on the show. Oftentimes the topics are determined by what information, resources, and support we can best provide for our viewers, again by way of conversations.

**JH:** I believe you are making leaps and bounds, truly making history in the Erie community. Can you share some examples or personal experiences to shed light on your impactful work?

**SB:** Thank you so much Jessica! Where do I even begin? It has been a very rewarding experience! I'm very grateful and humbled for the opportunity. I am also very grateful to Pam Forsyth, and the team at WICU-12 for making this all possible. I must say, what I love the most are the viewers throughout the community that I have met. I've met people in the mall, restaurants, social networking events, even via direct messaging, emails, etc. When they are eager to share with me what they've learned, what they enjoyed, how they can relate, how and where to locate certain resources, and most importantly the simple fact that *we're there* in the studio every week and how thrilled they are to see us (women of color) on TV every Sunday morning; it really does warm my heart to actually hear and know just how much representation really does matter. Of course, I've always known how important representation was, but to actually *be* the representation that the people needed to see in this space — it is truly amazing!

**JH:** How are you celebrating Black History Month and Black excellence with *Chatting with Sonya and Friends*?

**SB:** *Chatting with Sonya and Friends* celebrates Black excellence every single

day. Not just during February, which we all know and recognize as Black History Month. We take pride in knowing that our contributions as women of color extend way beyond February. Each one of us is working hard professionally, serving and uplifting our communities, we're mentoring others to some capacity, and we also make time to volunteer. So when you mention Black excellence, the women of *Chatting With Sonya and Friends* exemplifies Black history and Black excellence at the same time. We are celebrating the fact that as women of color, we are able to not only be seen but heard as well, which is a celebration in itself.

**JH:** You also have a "Galentine's Day" event coming up. Tell us about this event and what "Galentine's Day" means to you?

**SB:** Yes! We do and we're all so excited about the event. It means that we basically have a fun-filled Girls Night Out! We've partnered up with the Flagship City Food Hall to host our very first Galentine's Day Event. Galentine's Day is February 13th. It's a day when women get together to have fun and celebrate friendships with their girlfriends who make up their squads or support systems. So all the ladies in the place with style and grace put your *red* attire on, grab your girlfriends and come hang out with *Chatting With Sonya and Friends* to enjoy a night of drink specials, food specials, raffles, fun, games and karaoke!

*Chatting With Sonya and Friends* airs on WICU on Sundays at 6:30 a.m. and on Erie News Now Plus on Tuesdays at 10:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 11:30 a.m.

Jessica Hunter can be found at [jessica-hunterphotos.com](http://jessica-hunterphotos.com)





# *Loving Yourself*

Sponsored by the Ladies of The Nuova

**Sunday, February 26, 2023**

**St. Paul's Social Hall - 1617 Walnut St.**

**12:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

**Luncheon and Speakers from  
Cool Renew Medspa and  
GLOW Laser & Beauty Center.**

**Cool Renew  
MedSpa**



**Topics covered will be Body Sculpting, Facial,  
Cosmetic Procedures and Varicose Veins.**

**Plus an assortment of Vendors and Door Prizes**

**Tickets: \$35.00 per person**

**For more information and /or Tickets contact**

**Diane Nucerino (814) 431-2287**

**Reservations due by February 14th**

**Purchase Tickets: Dancewear Center, 3834 Liberty Street**



All An Act Theater Delivers Its ‘Verdict’

You be the judge of classic Agatha Christie play

CONTINUING FRIDAY, FEB. 10

Little Italy’s own All An Act theater opens its 2023 season with the debut of its 13th Agatha Christie production, entitled *Verdict*. *Verdict* is unlike most other Agatha Christie plays in that there is no typical “whodunnit”; in fact, the murder is committed on stage (also to note: the play is an original story, not an adaptation).

David W. Mitchell, the director of *Verdict* and co-owner/artistic director of All An Act said, “Last year’s *Love from A Stranger* was more of a psychological thriller; I was looking for something that wasn’t typical Christie material. *Verdict* fits the bill.”

*Verdict* follows the story of Karl Hendryk, a professor who escaped persecution in his home country (for harboring the family of a political dissident) with his wife and her cousin to settle in London as an academic. His wife Anya is ailing and unhappy with her life in London, while Hendryk has an unspoken attraction to Anya’s cousin (and caretaker). However, when a young woman named Helen enters the scene and murders Anya, making it look like a suicide, Hendryk’s life is blown open and he finds himself at the center of a melodrama.

Mitchell explained, “Even though there is a murder, the play is more about relationships, ideals, and morality, and how our own morality and ideals can affect those around us. Sometimes forcing others to sacrifice on our behalf. It’s a story about being human.”



Agatha Christie’s *Verdict* marks the 13th production local theater group All An Act has featured from the timeless author’s catalog; however the action in this play is less about “whodunit” and more about relationships and morality.

*Verdict* features Robert Yates, Lisa Simonian, Larry Lewis, Sue Hansen, Tori Snyder, Amanda Hill, Chad Santos, Michael Graham, Wayne Gardner and David Strazisar, and runs every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in February. — Cara Suppa

Fridays & Saturdays: 7:30 p.m., Sundays, 2:30 p.m. // All An Act, 652 W. 17th St. // Adults: \$18, Seniors: \$15, Students: \$15, Children (6-11): \$5 // For more information, including AAA’s Covid policy, please visit: [allanact.net/now-playing](http://allanact.net/now-playing)

Mid-Winter Reggae Fest at Basement Transmissions

Warm up with some island sounds

SATURDAY, FEB. 11

The Mid Winter Reggae Fest is here to help you forget about those dreary winter days and get into the summer mood. Five bands will be performing reggae and reggae-inspired music throughout the afternoon to warm you up. To keep your feet moving in between bands, DJ Solid Gold is going to spin traditional island music in the style of rocksteady, ska, dub, roots, and dancehall. If you need a break from all that dancing, you can peruse some art and crafts from local vendors Georgia Buchner, Dylan Freeman, Jen Jen, and Joshua Makowski.

Kicking off the first Mid-Winter Reggae Fest is Naughty Frog, a three-piece reggae/punk band from along Lake Erie, with members located in both Buffalo and Erie. Next up is Land of Panda, the Akron, Ohio four piece that plays traditional reggae music. Lopka Roots keeps the party going; he is a singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist from Hawaii who brings a big island sound. Higher Vibration is a band from Erie, whose members originally started playing in a metal band, but veered towards their common love for reggae (however, their metal roots sometimes sneak into their music). Ending the event is FUBAR, a traditional style ska/reggae



The lineup for the Mid-Winter Reggae Fest at Basement Transmissions includes Land of Panda, psych/reggae rockers from Akron, Ohio. They are one of five reggae/reggae-inspired bands on the bill.

band from Irwin, Pa. who have played shows with The Toaster, Bumpin’ Ugliers, HR (Bad Brains), Tropicadelic, and many others. They also recently played in the final Pittsburgh stop of the Vans Warped Tour.

The idea for this event came from Basement Transmission owner Bob Jensen last February on a typical winter Erie day: “It was so miserable outside that I thought to myself how nice it would be to have just one summer day right then. It was like a brain blast: we need to have a Mid- Winter Reggae Fest.” Now, one year later, his idea has come to fruition with five great reggae-inspired bands playing on one bill. — Larry Wheaton

Doors at 5 p.m., music at 5:30 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$12 // All ages

Love Letters a Valentine’s Day Event at PACA

The Performing Arts Collective Alliance presents a special performance of the Gurney play

TUESDAY, FEB. 14

A deeply-loved piece of theater, A.R. Gurney’s *Love Letters* tells a personal story of two lovers that just never got the timing right. In a special one-night-only performance of the play, PACA has been perhaps more mindful of dates, with a Valentine’s Day event.

Reading their decades-long exchange of love letters aloud, the characters Melissa Gardner and Andrew Makepeace Ladd III, retrace their relationship from grade school to their twilight years and beyond.

Starring Sue Lechner and Charlie Corritore, this production is directed by Betsy Butoryak. “I follow their friendship over 50 years, which started when they were in second or third grade,” Lechner explained. She noted that while there are perhaps small differences, her and Corritore’s friendship has had a similar longevity, reasoning that “if you look back at

Charlie’s and my friendship, we were in our early 20s when we first met, so that friendship has gone on for about 50 years.”

With the scripts essentially being a part of the play itself in the form of the letters, no memorization is needed. “You’re trying to make it exciting. Try to make it real, try to make it honest,” Lechner added.

A deeply heartfelt work that traces a unique connection, *Love Letters* is funny, wistful, and moving, the perfect choice for a Valentine’s Day performance.

There will be a special opening reception featuring drinks from Mazza Winery, Lavery Brewing Co., and Blind Tiger Spirit-Free Cocktails, along with hors d’oeuvres. — Nick Warren

Opening reception at 6 p.m., show starts at 7:30 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St., Second Floor // \$45, \$80 for couples (includes opening reception) // For tickets and info: [paca1505.org](http://paca1505.org)



Performers Charlie Corritore (left) and Sue Lechner play the characters of Andrew Makepeace Ladd III and Melissa Gardner, who catalog their lengthy relationship by reading their lifelong epistolary record aloud for PACA audience members this Valentine’s Day.





Thank you for voting  
us Erie's Best Bar!

1109 State Street | Erie, PA | 814-453-6454 | plymouthtavern.com



**EAST**

810 East 38th Street

**459-1145**

Mon-Sat 11am - 8pm

Sun 10am - 6pm

**WEST**

3201 Greengarden Blvd.

**864-5322**

Mon-Sat 11am - 6pm

Sun 9am - 2pm



HOMEMADE BREAD



PEPPERONI BALLS



RICOTTA KNOTS



CATERING

NOW SERVING OUR FULL MENU.  
CALL AHEAD FOR SAFER, FASTER SERVICE.

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

FULL MENU LOCATED AT [WWW.TDERIE.COM](http://WWW.TDERIE.COM)

MERCYHURST  
INSTITUTE FOR ARTS & CULTURE

SPRING 2023  
MIAC LIVE SEASON



KELLI  
O'HARA

Thursday, March 2 | 7:30 p.m.  
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

[miac.mercyhurst.edu](http://miac.mercyhurst.edu)  
814-824-3000



# Time and Temperature

at Your Fingertips

814 452-6311

Call it for

YOUR WEATHER  
AUTHORITY

JET 24 abc

Call it for the  
**MEMORIES!**

Sponsored by

**GLOW**  
LASER & BEAUTY CENTER

**MERCYHURST**  
INSTITUTE FOR ARTS & CULTURE

**SPRING 2023  
MIAC LIVE SEASON**



**THE KINGDOM  
CHOIR**

**Tuesday, Feb. 21 | 7:30 p.m.**  
**Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center**

***miac.mercyhurst.edu***  
**814-824-3000**



## EVENTS

### Erie Arts and Culture's February Creative Crowd Meetup

Inspiration and collaboration at Grounded Print Shop

TUESDAY, FEB. 14

What is it that can inspire us to create something original? Something that can take our ethos, our ideas, our point of view and translate it into art? The creative process is always fascinating to witness and, for many creative minds, challenging to their confidence. It is often through the encouragement and validation of creative peers that one's ideas can truly develop. It is with this thought in mind that Erie Arts and Culture has created and sustained their Creative Crowd monthly meet-ups which allow local artists the chance to network, create connections, and get inspired by other creative minds.

Creative Crowd monthly meet-ups are designed to provide a friendly and casual space to foster stronger personal and professional connections within the creative and cultural sector. Erie Arts and Culture has been hosting these events within local artistic spaces since February of 2021 and the program takes place regularly on the second Tuesday of every month at a rotating host site. This month's meet-up will be held at Grounded Print Shop, which is an interdisciplinary, contemporary print and papermaking shop/artist residency located in Erie's Little Italy neighborhood.

The parameters for being part of a Creative Crowd are very loose. In fact, these events are open to anyone who would like to participate, be inspired, and meet others who will support them through their creative endeavors. Each event in 2023 will be hosted by three artist co-hosts: Precious Thompson, Jess Royer, and Kelvin Sanchez, whose work spans the genres of art including: music, video

game design, herbalism, photography, cinematography, clothing design, drawing, and graffiti. Clearly, these media cover a wide range of the creative sector, further indicating the inclusivity of the group. You do NOT have to be a "fine artist" to attend or benefit from the Creative Crowd gatherings, you simply have to have an interest in being creative and helping to foster creativity in others.

Co-host Precious Thompson comments on the benefits she has seen first hand from attending the meetups, "Creative Crowd serves as a gateway for those trying to break into the creative scene and also as a reminder for why creative and cultural endeavors are enriching for communities as a whole. I personally have connected with others who believed in my work even before I did, and have driven my career in art further than I ever thought it would go."

This month's event at Grounded Print Shop will also feature the recipients of Erie Arts and Culture's Appreciation Awards, which are given in five categories spanning the local creative world. This year's honorees include: City Gallery (Stephen Trohoske and Lena Logvina) receiving the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award, Erie County Redevelopment Authority receiving the Leadership Award, Zach Flock of Dramashop receiving the Applause Award, Lourdes Jasso of the Inner City Neighborhood Art House receiving the Carla Hughes Art Educator Award, and artist Sue Amendolara receiving the Bruce Morton Wright Artist of the Year Award. — Erin Phillips

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. // Grounded Print Shop, 1902 Cherry St. // Free // For more information: [erieartsandculture.org](http://erieartsandculture.org)



The previous Creative Crowd meet-up at Grounded Print Shop took place in June of 2022. This month's meetup co-hosted by Precious Thompson, Jess Royer, and Kelvin Sanchez will feature Erie Arts & Culture's Appreciation Award winners.



Best Romantic Restaurant



"Best Overall Dining On Lake Erie"



Highest Rated for Food - Service and Ambiance

## NEW ON OUR MENU!



### 8oz Filet Mignon & 6oz Lobster Tail

*Served with Béarnaise Sauce, Drawn Butter, Asparagus, Carrots & Loaded Mashed Potatoes*

Chef's Specials - Served Daily  
♥ VALENTINE'S DAY RESERVATIONS ♥

(FRI, FEB 10 - TUES, FEB 14)

OpenTable App | [OliversRooftop.com](http://OliversRooftop.com) | 814-920-9666

Atop Hampton Inn Bayfront | 130 East Front Street



EVENTS

Erie Philharmonic Goes to Infinity and Beyond with Toy Story

Relive Pixar classic with live orchestra

SATURDAY, FEB. 18

The Erie Philharmonic is bringing the Pixar classic *Toy Story* to the Warner Theater with orchestral accompaniment playing along to the movie. Starring Tom Hanks as Woody and Tim Allen as Buzz Lightyear with a score composed by Randy Newman, the film broke ground with its innovative computer animation as Pixar’s first feature film.

“Disney’s Pixar films are now legends in the cinema,” a Philharmonic representative explained. “Loved by audiences of all ages, these films bring touching and fun-filled stories to life through expertly-rendered digital animation that sets the standard in today’s film-making. With a whiz-bang score by Randy Newman, 1995’s *Toy Story* delights with its vivid characters and imaginative situational humor.”

Newman, who was a songwriter for artists such as Dusty Springfield and a solo performer before scoring films, penned three original songs for the film along with the score, including “You’ve Got A Friend In Me.” The warm, familiar sounds and down-to-earth songwriting style were what got him the job, as Pixar approached him to write the score to give the film emotion and heart to accompany the computer-generated animation. In the subsequent films, the emotionally-driven journeys the characters go on are punctuated by Newman’s stylistic songwriting, including “When She Loved Me,” sung by Sarah McLachlan for the second film.

The iconic music would go on to receive Academy Award nominations for Best Score and Best Song, and the album would peak at the 94th spot in the U.S. Billboard 200. Newman would go on to compose music for the film’s three se-



You’ve got a friend in the Erie Philharmonic. The orchestra will perform the score from the well-loved family classic *Toy Story* while the film plays on the big screen. It’s sure to be an experience as magical as toys coming to life.

quels along with the Pixar films *A Bug’s Life*, *Cars*, and *Monster’s Inc.* In addition to the Disney films *James and the Giant Peach* and *The Princess and the Frog*, he also composed the scores for Oscar-nominated live-action films such as *Seabiscuit* and the 2019 film *Marriage Story*.

*Toy Story* was directed by John Lasseter, with a script by Joss Whedon, Andrew Stanton, Joel Cohen, and Alec Sokolow. It premiered on Nov. 19, 1995 at the El Capitan Theater in Los Angeles, and would go on to gross \$373 million during its run, receiving critical acclaim from critics and audiences. —Thomas Taylor

Saturday 8 p.m. and Sunday 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$22 to \$56 // [eriephil.org](http://eriephil.org)

Love, Hope, and Inspiration

MIAC presents The Kingdom Choir at the Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center

TUESDAY, FEB. 21

Following their show-stopping performance of “Stand By Me” at the Royal Wedding in 2018, London’s The Kingdom Choir will bring their breathtaking artistry to Mercyhurst University’s Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center. The choir first attracted the world’s attention when they performed “Stand By Me” in front of a television audience of over two billion at the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. Since then, their infectious joy and spirit (matched only by their raw gospel spiritual style) has taken them around the world, including a debut North American tour in 2019 and performances on *Good Morning America*, *The Today Show*, *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, and more.

The Kingdom Choir is composed of extraordinary singers from all over the southeast area of England. Over the years, the group has made many public broadcast appearances on religious radio and television broadcasts in the UK. The choir has performed alongside such artists as Elton John, Luther Vandross, the Spice Girls, Andraé Crouch, the BBC Philharmonic, and Fred Hammond,

among countless other high-profile musicians.

Conductor Karen Gibson is an award-winning gospel choir leader who is credited on some of the most prestigious, large-scale choirs across the United Kingdom. Gibson is also a judge for BBC’s Gospel Choir of the Year competition. Her prevalence and expertise have carried her work across Europe and into Asia, Africa, and the United States.

Brett Johnson, director of the Mercyhurst Theatre Program and artistic director for Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) said, “The Kingdom Choir’s life-affirming artistry is sure to resonate with Erie audiences on an emotional and spiritual level. We’re thrilled to welcome this world-renowned gospel choir to Mercyhurst University.”

In their awe-inspiring concerts, The Kingdom Choir expertly blends gospel standards with contemporary classics for a performance that is as modern as it is soulful. —Michael Hull

7:30 p.m. // Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E 38th St. // \$20-\$45 // Tickets and information at: [miac.mercyhurst.edu/events](http://miac.mercyhurst.edu/events)



The accomplished gospel/spiritual group Kingdom Choir brings its infectious, soulful sounds to the Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts center via MIAC this month for an enthusiastic and unforgettable performance.

THIS MARCH, COME CELEBRATE OUR 6-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!



CART/HORSE DISTILLING

EVER HAVE ONE OF THOSE DAYS?

FIRST GENERATION WOMAN OWNED DISTILLERY  
12030 EDINBORO ROAD, EDINBORO, PA 16412

HOURS: THURSDAY 3 - 8, FRIDAY & SATURDAY 3 - 10  
FIND US ON FB AND INSTAGRAM: @CARTHORSEDISTILLING



Saturday, February 11 • 3-5pm

**LOW COST**  
**Rabies & Chip Clinic**

\$5 Rabies Vaccination for Dogs & Cats  
\$5 Microchips w/Lifetime Registration

Stancliff Hose Company  
328 High Street  
Waterford, PA 16441

Sponsored By  
  


Proceeds Benefit  


**PREREGISTER AT [HAPPYBARK.ORG/EVENTS](http://HAPPYBARK.ORG/EVENTS)**



Pineapple Eddie Southern Bistro

presents

February Sunday Brunch Series

**FEB 5TH, FEB 12TH,  
FEB 19TH & FEB 26TH**

Two Seatings: 11am & 1pm

Make your reservations today, seating is limited,  
tables are of 6 or less, parties will be sat when  
entire party arrives

Adult \$35/Kids 10 & under \$15/ages 2 & under free

Call 814.454.0700

Produced with special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

**LOVE LETTERS**

BY A.R. GURNEY

STARRING  
**SUE LECHNER**  
**CHARLIE CORRITORE**

DIRECTED BY **BETSY BUTORYAK**

Opening reception at City Gallery, 1503 State St.

Hot & cold hors d'oeuvres provided

**One Night Only!**

Purchase tickets at [paca1505.org](http://paca1505.org)

**One Night Only! Valentine's Day**  
**February 14, 2023**  
Reception: 6:00pm • Show: 7:30pm

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

Oh my, oh, oh,  
yes, yes, yes!

ROMOLO  
CHOCOLATES



EVENTS

The Smell That Separates Night From Day

Erie's Best Coffee convention to awaken senses and raise funds for St. Martin Center

SUNDAY, FEB. 26

February is a cold month that welcomes a cozy and loving Valentine's Day, a holiday that can warm the hearts of all the lovers out there. But what happens when Valentine's is over and the month dominated by Aquarius turns cold again? The annual answer is Erie's Best Coffee Convention hosted by St. Martin Center.

Starting in 2015, St. Martin Center CEO David Gonzalez wanted to come up with a completely original fundraising effort to help benefit programs such as their food pantry, rent and mortgage assistance, Early Learning Center, and more. Being a native of Puerto Rico, coffee has always been an important part of Gonzalez's life and he knew that Erie would enjoy this kind of event. "Everyone wins," says event organizer Jess Kruger. "We are really excited to host this event again this year after not holding one in either 2021 and 2022. We hope the community is just as excited for the return as well."

This year has a number of local coffee shops itching to serve you their best cup of joe. These include (but are not limited to): Andora's Bubble Tea, BullAndCoffee, Coffee In The Park, Ember & Forge, Pampered Palate, and Purrista Cat Cafe (sans the kitties). The shops compete for a few awards that are voted on by attendees which include: Overall Erie's Best Coffee, Best Decaf, Best Flavored, and, new this year, Best Specialty Drink.



Dark roast, blonde, espresso; drip, French press, pour over, iced; whatever your preferred coffee style, you'll get to try them all (and get a serious caffeine buzz) from various local cafes all gathering for St. Martin's Center's Erie's Best Coffee event.

A panel of celebrity judges will conduct a blind taste test for the Judges' Choice award.

Though coffee may not be for children, you can count on this as a family affair. St. Martin Center will have kid's activities, live music from Doug Phillips Trio, a photo booth, and some fun raffles. And there will be plenty of free parking. A snugly invigorating environment awaits the Erie community this winter. — Jordan Coon

11 a.m. to 2 p.m. // Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafra's Pier // \$10 advance \$15 at the door (kids under 12 free) // For tickets and info: smcerie.org

Kelli O'Hara Comes to Mercyhurst Stage

Broadway starlet brings impressive résumé

THURSDAY, MAR. 2

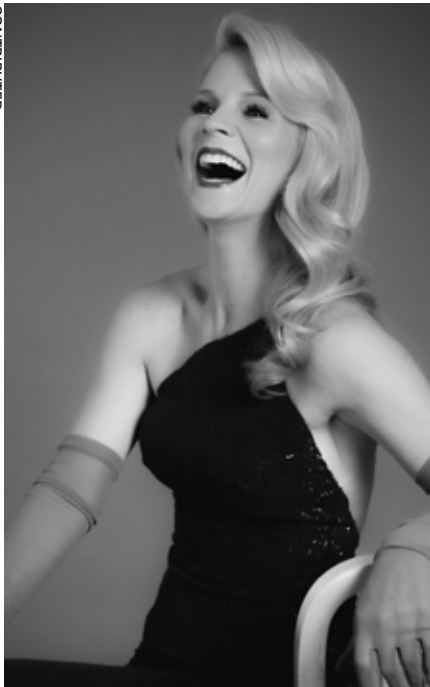
One of Broadway's best leading ladies and performers, Kelli O'Hara is set to grace the stage at Mercyhurst's Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center next month.

Known best for her portrayal of Anna Leonowens in *The King and I* — which won her the 2015 Tony Award for Best Leading Actress in a Musical as well as Grammy, Outer Critics, Olivier, and Drama League nominations — O'Hara's talents have been showcased across many productions. Other Broadway credits include *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Follies*, *Sweet Smell of Success*, *Dracula the Musical*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *The Pajama Game*, *South Pacific*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, *The Bridges of Madison County*, and *Kiss Me Kate*, along with other West End and Off-Broadway roles.

O'Hara's talents extend beyond the stage, with multiple film and television credits to the performer's name. Most notably, O'Hara played Mrs. Darling in the 2014 NBC production of *Peter Pan Live!* as well as a 10-episode stint on the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* as Jackie in its second season.

A frequent concert performer, O'Hara's productions have gained international acclaim, having performed in such locations as Carnegie Hall and Tokyo, among many others. She is also a regular on PBS's live telecasts, The Kennedy Center Honors, and often performs with The New York Philharmonic.

This event was rescheduled from its



Tony award winning performer Kelli O'Hara brings her unrivaled talent to the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center. In addition to her extensive Broadway cred, O'Hara has starred in multiple successful television shows, has performed opera, and has a burgeoning solo music career.

original date of May 5, 2022 to Thursday, March 2, 2023. All original tickets are valid for the new date, and those unable to attend the rescheduled date can obtain refunds by calling the box office. —Ally Kutz

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$30 - \$55 // For tickets and info: miac.mercyhurst.edu



2425 Peach St. [www.TipsyBean.Cafe](http://www.TipsyBean.Cafe)



"I can't believe those were gluten free!  
I'm so excited to have baked goods again!"

- Janice R.





# ST. MARTIN EARLY LEARNING CENTER IS HIRING TEACHERS

## INCREASED PAY RATE: \$17-\$20/HR

### \$1,000 SIGN-ON BONUS PAID OVER 6 MONTHS!

#### WHY CHOOSE US? HERE'S WHY:

- HEALTH INSURANCE
- FREE VISION INSURANCE
- FREE DENTAL INSURANCE
- FREE LIFE INSURANCE
- 401K W/6% EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION
- 12 PAID COMPANY HOLIDAYS
- 2 WEEKS PAID VACATION
- PAID SICK TIME
- PAID PERSONAL DAYS
- CHILDCARE DISCOUNT
- REFERRAL BONUS (FOR STAFF OR CHILD REFERRAL!)
- FMLA COVERAGE
- POTENTIAL FOR BONUSES
- STAFF MENTORING PROGRAM
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & JOB TRAINING

Resumes:

[elcresumes@stmartincenter.org](mailto:elcresumes@stmartincenter.org)

1727 State Street, Erie PA 16501

Scan code for details and to apply!

## FEBRUARY at ALTERED STATE DISTILLERY

FRIDAY FEB 3  
**Jeremy Jager and Skylar Otto-Smith**

SATURDAY FEB 4  
**Steve Trohoske's Snake Charmer Ensemble**

FRIDAY FEB 10  
**Logan Battin's Grateful Trio**

SATURDAY FEB 11  
**Roots Collider/RIZM**

FRIDAY FEB 17  
**Mardi Gras Party**  
**Kidd Kyle & the Big Deal (New Orleans Brass)**  
**La Bella Pop-up**

SATURDAY FEB 18  
**Ralphie's B-day Party**  
**w/Phunkademic**

TUESDAY FEB 21  
**Fat Tuesday Celebration**  
**w/The BluesBeaters**

FRIDAY FEB 24  
**Clever Norman**

SATURDAY FEB 25  
**Cranberry Station (Indie Rock)**

**Happy Hour**  
Every TUE-THU  
4-6

**Trivia**  
Every other THU  
7-9

**Brunch**  
Every SAT  
12-3

**Open Jam**  
Every other THU  
7-10pm

Pop-ups by  
**E Doggs Bistro**  
TUE, WED, SAT

**SPIRITS**  
FOR THE **FREE**  
**SPIRIT**

**ALTERED STATE**  
DISTILLERY

Greengarden Plaza  
1535 W 8th St, Erie, PA 16505 • (814) 790-9822 • [alteredstatedistillery.com](http://alteredstatedistillery.com)

# Midori

KENNEDY CENTER HONOREE MIDORI MAKES HER  
ERIE PHILHARMONIC DEBUT DURING A ONE-NIGHT-ONLY  
PERFORMANCE THAT CAN'T BE MISSED

SATURDAY, MARCH 25 • 8 PM

**Strauss** *Emperor Waltzes*  
**Schumann** *Violin Concerto*  
**Brahms** *Symphony No. 3*

**ERIE PHILHARMONIC** *est. 1913*

Tickets are going fast, get yours today!  
eriephil.org • 814-455-1375 • 23 W 10th Street

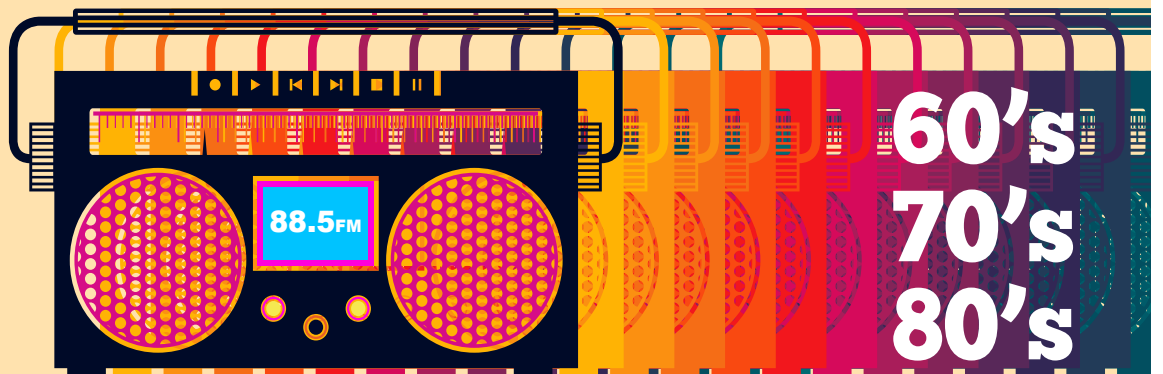


# Erie's No.1 Classic Hits Station

More than 50 minutes of music per hour!

LECOM RADIO

**WMCE**  
**88.5FM**



**THANK YOU ERIE**  
FOR VOTING US BEST BREWERY **FOR 2022!**

**ERIE**  
**BREWING**  
**COMPANY**



Knowledge Park  
6008 Knowledge Pkwy • Erie, PA 16510  
(814) 459-7741

West Side  
4102 W Lake Rd • Erie, PA 16505  
(814) 651-0611

[www.eriebrewingco.com](http://www.eriebrewingco.com)

Produced with special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc.

## BROWNSTONE

by Catherine Butterfield

Three couples transcend time...  
but not space.

Directed by: JR Fabin  
Assisted by: Marnie Foss

Starring  
Jade Mitchell ~ Julia Polaski ~ Aimee Wokutch  
Justin Karns ~ DaVona Pacley ~ Michael Haas

Purchase tickets at [paca1505.org](http://paca1505.org)

7 performances • 3 weekends  
**March 3 - 18, 2023**  
Doors: 7:00pm • Show: 7:30pm

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





## Recommended Reading: Return to the Beginnings of a Renaissance Man

Get to know Antonio Howard today by returning to his first book

By: Ben Speggen

Antonio Howard is many things. If you ask him, he'll first tell you he's Peggy's son. He'll explain that he introduces himself as such "to invoke her name in spaces where my behavior is one she can be proud of."

What's not to be proud of? He's an accomplished autodidactic artist with impressive murals best observed slowly with feet firmly planted on the ground rather than strolling by, and he's skilled in other media smaller in size and scope but equally impressive and captivating.

Antonio Howard is a community leader — having earned a Public Service Award for his service as a Youth Leadership of Erie instructor — and he's an American Bar Endowment Pardon Fellow, an organizing member of the Erie County Pardon Project, and a graduate of the Jefferson Educational Society's Civic Leadership Academy.

He's a dynamic, powerful public speaker. He is a teacher, and was the first Teaching Artist with Erie Arts & Culture in 2021, working with SafeNet and the Pennsylvania Art Education Association Counsel.

Antonio Howard is the author of three self-published books, the first of which, *When A Child Is Worth More Than the Worst Mistake He Ever Made: A Juvenile Lifer's Story*, takes us back to being Peggy's son. At the age of 15, Antonio Howard was incarcerated and sentenced to life in prison. Today, he still wrestles with the impact his life, behavior, and choices have had on his mother. To make her proud of who he is today, he tells everyone: Antonio Howard, Peggy's son.

I revisited Howard's first book, published in 2012, after attending a presentation he offered on it on a snowy, cold December night at the Erie Center for Arts and Technology. The final event hosted by the Jefferson

Educational Society in 2022, the video is available on the think tank's website, which, whether you were in the audience, watching via live stream, or missed it, I encourage you to watch.

I say that in full transparency that one of the several hats I wear is for the JES. I say that, too, because of the scores of programs I've seen, it's one that's left an indelible impression on me. I've been a part of, facilitated, and attended myriad events. I have never seen one like that. Co-presented with his wife Sarah, they offered a dynamic back-and-forth, with Sarah reading passages from *When A Child* and Antonio unpacking them for the audience.

---

**Real, raw, and riveting, *When A Child Is Worth More Than the Worst Mistake He Ever Made: A Juvenile Lifer's Story* presents Antonio Howard and his journey midstream, between his growth and his struggles, both of the past and in that moment.**

---

The passages, and much of the book, is heavy, then light. It's sad, then joyous. It's a complicated story, but told simply and powerfully. Real, raw, and riveting, *When A Child* presents the man and his journey midstream, between his growth and his struggles, both of the past and in that moment. Of its many strengths (and reasons to read) is its length. Upon a second reading, the careful choosing of each word becomes more apparent. A man with time and his thoughts — the book was published six years before Howard's sentence would be commuted — can take the time to be reflective, to turn

CONTRIBUTED



Antonio Howard signs copies of his book *When A Child Is Worth More Than the Worst Mistake He Ever Made: A Juvenile Lifer's Story* at a public speaking event hosted by the Jefferson Educational Society in December 2022.

over any given word again and again, to write them with real purpose.

Airing dirty family laundry? One might think that. But Howard's account — told in 153 pages, epilogue and acknowledgments included — presents more of an authentic reflection and meditative processing — trauma and healing by the paragraph down to the period, the man come alive on the page.

Antonio Howard is many things. An artist; a teacher; a community leader; a writer; a person formerly incarcerated with a second chance. He's today's Renaissance Man and his first book remains just as powerful and captivating 11 years later.

Ben Speggen can be reached at [bSpeggen@ErieReader.com](mailto:bSpeggen@ErieReader.com) and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpeggen. He is also the Vice President of the Jefferson Educational Society.

## Erie's Backyard Strangler: Terror in the 1960s

Justin Dombrowski continues to demonstrate tact with true crime

In June 2022, Justin Dombrowski's *Murder & Mayhem in Erie, Pennsylvania* (published by The History Press, a subsidiary of Arcadia Publishing) hit bookstores after over a decade of research on six older and mostly forgotten criminal cases from Erie's past. Less than a year later and his follow-up, titled *Erie's Backyard Strangler: Terror in the 1960s*, is on shelves as of Feb. 13, 2023 with the same meticulous attention to detail after some clear *deep* dives into the historical archives by the author.

Dombrowski is a Central Tech and Mercyhurst University graduate who studied criminal justice and interned for the Erie County Detective's Unit. Since then, his passion for raising awareness around long-forgotten local true crime cases has been evident through his stories and his

local true crime Facebook project Shadow From the Boulevard.

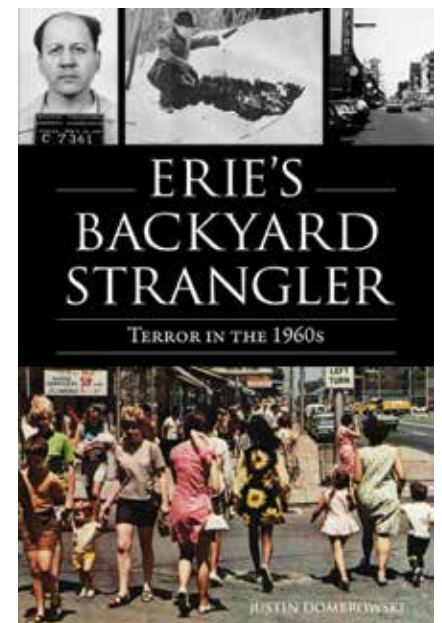
With *Erie's Backyard Strangler*, Dombrowski once again masterfully demonstrates his skill for unraveling stories from long ago and ensuring that, in particular, the victims and those who cared for them are not forgotten. Unlike his previous book, this serves as a single standalone narrative, covering a series of potentially connected murders of women by strangulation throughout the city of Erie in the 1960s. Ultimately, it is a story that would eventually escape the borders of north-west Pennsylvania and receive attention across the country.

As with any book of this nature, Dombrowski reached out to numerous historical societies, organizations, and individu-

als (which included family members of the victims) to ensure that he told a multifaceted and complex story that examines the city through a wide lens, while still feeling tragic and intimate in its scope. The inclusion of dialogue throughout — all of which is verbatim from mentioned sources — further gives it a narrative and cinematic feel that keeps the story continually moving forward. It also includes dozens of visuals of people, locations, and beautifully-designed maps which provides readers with a sense of place.

You can purchase a copy of *Erie's Backyard Strangler: Terror in the 1960s* from your favorite local book retailer or online. — Jonathan Burdick

*The History Press // 192 pages // True Crime, History*





Five New Romance Novels Just In Time for Valentine’s Day

Fresh interpretations of love, or something like it

By: Ally Kutz

With Valentine’s Day just around the corner, now is the perfect time to curl up with one of these romance novel new releases to celebrate the holiday. Whether you’re looking for a classic romance story or a specific trope, be sure to check out these titles to find your perfect fit during the season of love.

The Rom-Com Agenda by Jayne Denker

When Eli’s girlfriend Victoria leaves for Rome because she feels he’s moving too fast, he sets out with a plan to win her back. He enlists the help of his girl pals — including Leah — whose first solution is watching classic rom-coms and taking notes. Leah ends up as Eli’s main guide in all things rom-com, including meet-cutes and grand gestures, even though she doesn’t feel he needs to change at all. After taking care of her sick foster mother for the last year, she’s used to being alone — but will she feel that way while exploring the world of rom-coms with Eli?

Lunar Love by Lauren Kung Jensen

Olivia is both nervous and excited to be taking over her grandmother’s matchmaking business that takes the Chinese zodiac approach to finding people’s happily-ever-afters. But when she finds out that a new dating app is undermining the process, she can’t help but loathe Bennett O’Brien, L.A.’s most eligible bachelor and the mastermind behind the app. As the two businesses go head-to-head, Olivia and Bennett make

a deal — they’ll find each other a match, and whoever falls in love loses. Who will win in this battle of love?

Sorry, Bro by Taleen Voskuni

When Nar’s non-Armenian boyfriend proposes in one of the most lackluster settings, she realizes she needs to find someone who shares her idea of romance. In steps her mother, and in an attempt to find Nar the perfect man, convinces her to attend Explore Armenia, a month-long event in the city. But it isn’t any of the men who catch her eye, but rather Erebuni, a woman who helps Nar see the beauty of their shared culture and makes her feel seen in a way she’s never felt before. The one problem: Nar is not out as bisexual to her family, and the closing event banquet is coming up quickly. Her worlds will collide, but she’s determined to not only be brave, but to claim her happiness and be her true self for the first time in her life.

The Reunion by Kayla Olson

Liv grew up on TV — starring in a popular teen drama, she spent her formative years in front of TV audiences, trying to mirror the perfect life of her on-screen persona in her real life. But after her father’s death and a betrayal from her on-screen love interest and off-screen best friend Ransom, she retreats from the spotlight. Aside from a few small film roles, she lives life as normally as possible. Now, 20 years after the show’s premiere, the cast comes back together for a reunion special financed by a major streaming service. The old chemistry is still there, with her and Ransom falling into



old rhythms, remembering what made them click years before. But with new frictions arising among cast members and the possibility of a reboot on the horizon, Liv must figure out if it is worth delving into the past.

A Guide to Being Just Friends by Sophie Sullivan

Hailey is determined to live her life with no distractions — get her new salad shop off the ground and do all she can to make it a success. With a bad ex in her past, she’s looking forward to a future on her terms. Wes has never been about relationships — between many failed first dates and his parents’ own messy divorce, he’s looking more for someone he likes, but not someone to love. When Hailey and Wes initially cross paths, it doesn’t go to plan. But when Wes finds her to apologize for his behavior, they start up a friendship, which is all this can ever be...or can it?

The Unwanted Prophet

Local author Carolina Cruz delights with dystopian fantasy

Walking into Ember and Forge, I expected to find friendly faces and an excellent Americano, but not much else on a gray Tuesday. The barista must have recognized my look of careworn resignation and my desperation to escape a dreary Erie morning. While we idly chatted, she suggested a fantasy novel might be just the kind of medicine I needed. She pointed me toward the center counter and sitting neatly on a small display was a copy of *The Unwanted Prophet*, a brand-new independently published novel by local author Carolina Cruz.

Initially I was skeptical; while I love fantasy and the novel seemed promising, I’d never purchased an independently published book. I felt I needed the safety blanket of a major publishing house with all its resources and guarantees. But I have since learned to cast aside my aspersions: *The Unwanted Prophet* proved to punch far above its weight, surpassing countless commercial offerings through which I have painfully slogged. The author put to rest any doubts I had by pointing out that independent publishing has given her complete creative control that most authors simply do not enjoy.

I have now read through the book twice and Cruz’s creativity shines with all the freshness of something wholly new and unburdened by many of the conventions of the genre.

The novel tells the story of Quincy Sauer, a prisoner

barely surviving as an outcast of society, resigned to squalor. Quincy is a victim of circumstance and struggles with many of the difficulties we have all become familiar with in these past several years. Quincy exists in a world where, despite the provable and knowable existence of gods, the theocratic government wields an iron fist and brutalizes the people they are meant to serve. Quincy soon finds herself caught between divine machinations and the realities of an oppressive, dogmatic, and totalitarian regime.

While *The Unwanted Prophet* is an excellent example of fantasy world-building, it is the author’s character development that shines. Quincy, alongside all the characters in this world (including the gods themselves) are empathetic and complex beings. The novel forces its characters to face their own naivete, depression, anxieties, and distrust, and they work toward redemption. Ultimately, this novel asks its readers as much as it asks its characters: who are we, and what is our purpose in this world so full of death?

The author has shared that this book represents the first of what will ultimately become a trilogy, with the second book slated for release in late 2023. *The Unwanted Prophet* is available for sale at Pressed Books, Ember and Forge, and Amazon. Cruz can be reached via her website: [ninawolverina.carrd.co](http://ninawolverina.carrd.co) — Spencer Cadden

Independently published // 532 pages // Fantasy







Give A Crepe  
La Creperie  
**OPEN**  
WEDNESDAYS-SUNDAYS  
10am | 3pm  
2431 PEACH ST • 814.840.1466

**Looking for More Events?**

Remember to visit the Erie Reader's Online Calendar at [eriereader.com/calendar](http://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!





**Three awesome Erie locations for your lodging needs!**

Professionally managed by,




Scan the QR code for current package offers!

**Erie Bayfront**  
701 W Bayfront Pkwy,  
Erie, PA 16507  
(814) 455-1010



**Harborcreek**  
4995 Station Rd,  
Erie, PA 16510  
(814) 899-9099



**Corry**  
864 E Columbus Ave,  
Corry, PA 16407  
(814) 663-0001



**Free Breakfast - Pet Friendly - On-Site Bar - Free Parking - Groups Welcome**

**Soup & Sub**

**COMBO**

12 oz. Soup & Any 4" Sub  
**\$6.99**

**IT'S SOUP SEASON Y'ALL!**  
Warm up with a cup of Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup or Loaded Baked Potato and your choice of any 4" Barnbuster Sub today for only \$6.99.



**Country Fair** FRESH & LOCAL



# Once More Unto the Breach!

Thoughts and Predictions for the 2023 Oscars

By: Forest Taylor

The nominations for the 95th Academy Awards have been announced and once again, there are some pleasant surprises, some baffling omissions, and even a few head-scratching choices. All told, this year's Oscar picks are among the most interesting and exciting in years with little-known underdogs and massive crowd-pleasers getting an equal amount of attention (and a well-deserved Best Song nomination for RRR's "Naatu Naatu" which is certain to bring down the house).

This awards season could prove to be a bit of a surprise, so let's run through our nominations:

## Best Picture

The big winner this year is Daniel Kwan's and Daniel Scheinert's (collectively known as the Daniels) surprise hit *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (EEAAO) with 11 nominations, with *The Banshees of Inisherin* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* close behind with nine each. The sheer number of nominations puts these three in the spotlight as the clear frontrunners. Meanwhile, Steve Spielberg's *The Fabelmans* went from being a predicted big winner to a scrappy underdog (no nominations for either Cinematography or Editing make its chances slim), but the Academy loves Spielberg and movies about movies so we may still see an upset.

On the other hand, two gargantuan blockbusters scored big this year. Both *Avatar: The Way of Water* and *Top Gun: Maverick* ruled at the box office and that popularity could make them potential big winners. It's not likely, certainly possible. I vote for *Everything Everywhere All at Once* as the surprise winner.

## Best Director

Once again, the Daniels (EEAAO) seem to be the clear winners in this category, but it's possible that their film is a little too wild for older Academy voters and this may dampen their chances. Martin McDonagh and Steven Spielberg both made films that are more Oscars-friendly and that could lead to a rare Picture/Director split. The Daniels are still the safe bet, but I predict that Spielberg is going to pull it off and join William Wyler and Frank Capra as a three-time Best Director winner.

## Best Actor

A few surprises (yay for Paul Mescal in

*Afternoon!*) but for months it was pretty much settled that this award was Brendan Fraser's to lose. However, now that doesn't seem to be so certain. Although his performance in *The Whale* has been universally praised, the film itself has received a lukewarm reaction and that may hurt his chances. Meanwhile, Colin Farrell has seen a momentum that hasn't stopped yet. His performance in *Banshees* is great (although I prefer him in *After Yang*) and the film is one of the big frontrunners, which could lead to a win for Farrell. And then there's Austin Butler in *Elvis*. We know the Academy loves musician biopics and that could give him an edge. This one went from a sure thing to a nail-biter real fast, but I still have hope for the Fraser revival!

## Best Actress

Again, this seemed like a done deal months ago for Cate Blanchett's performance in *Tár*, but unlike Best Actor, she hasn't shown any signs of slowing down. Her only competition comes from the Michelles (Williams in *The Fabelmans* and Yeoh in EEAAO) but I don't think it will be enough. And then there's the anomaly of Andrea Riseborough. Her grassroots campaign has paid off and now she has a nomination for a film almost nobody has heard of (the indie drama *To Leslie*). Could she be the surprise upset of the year? It's the long shot to end all long shots, but you never know.

## Best Supporting Actor

And now for the easiest award to predict! Ke Huy Quan (EEAAO) has had a momentum that just will not stop and his wins in other awards ceremonies have only strengthened that momentum. The only real challenge is Brendan Gleeson's performance in *Banshees* but even that is a long shot. It's too bad because there were some good nominations this year (Judd Hirsch and Brian Tyree Henry) but Ke Huy Quan's comeback will not be denied.

## Best Supporting Actress

Biggest surprise of the season: a Marvel movie not only has an acting nomination, but it is the current frontrunner! Angela Bassett has been a standout in the new *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* film and she looks like she could win it all. However, Kerry Condon's role in *Banshees* is much more subtle but no less powerful.



This year, our resident film expert Forest Taylor makes his picks for the 95th Academy Awards and gives a nod to each of the following films: (clockwise from top left) *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, *Tár*, *The Whale*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Women Talking*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

The Academy has never given an acting award to a non-Joker related superhero film, so Condon could be an upset. Finally, Stephanie Hsu has been a little overshadowed by her EEAAO co-stars but she could sneak in as a spoiler. At this point Bassett has it, but that could change.

## Best Screenplay

This year's Best Adapted Screenplay category has been underwhelming to say the least (although it is funny knowing that the writer of *Transformers 4* is now an Oscar nominated screenwriter). At this point, they may as well just give the award to Sarah Polley for *Women Talking*. Nothing else even stands a chance. Best Original screenplay is much more interesting with EEAAO and *Banshees* as frontrunners but everything nominated has a fighting chance. This will be a close one, but I'm again betting on the Daniels.

## Best International Film

With a surprising snub for Park Chan-wook's brilliant *Decision to Leave*, it seems like this is going to go to *All Quiet on the Western Front* easily. The film can't hold a candle to the 1930 original but it has been

gaining a lot of attention and this will be the most likely place where the Academy will honor it. However, that quirky little Polish drama *EO* has received a surprise nomination. Could it be the little donkey that could and stop the German war drama in its tracks? We'll find out on Sunday, March 12.

## Forest's Academy Awards Predictions

**Best Picture** – *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

**Best Director** – Steven Spielberg, *The Fabelmans*

**Best Actor** – Brendan Fraser, *The Whale*– Cate Blanchett, *Tár*

**Best Supporting Actor** – Ke Huy Quan, *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

**Best Supporting Actress** – Angela Bassett, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*

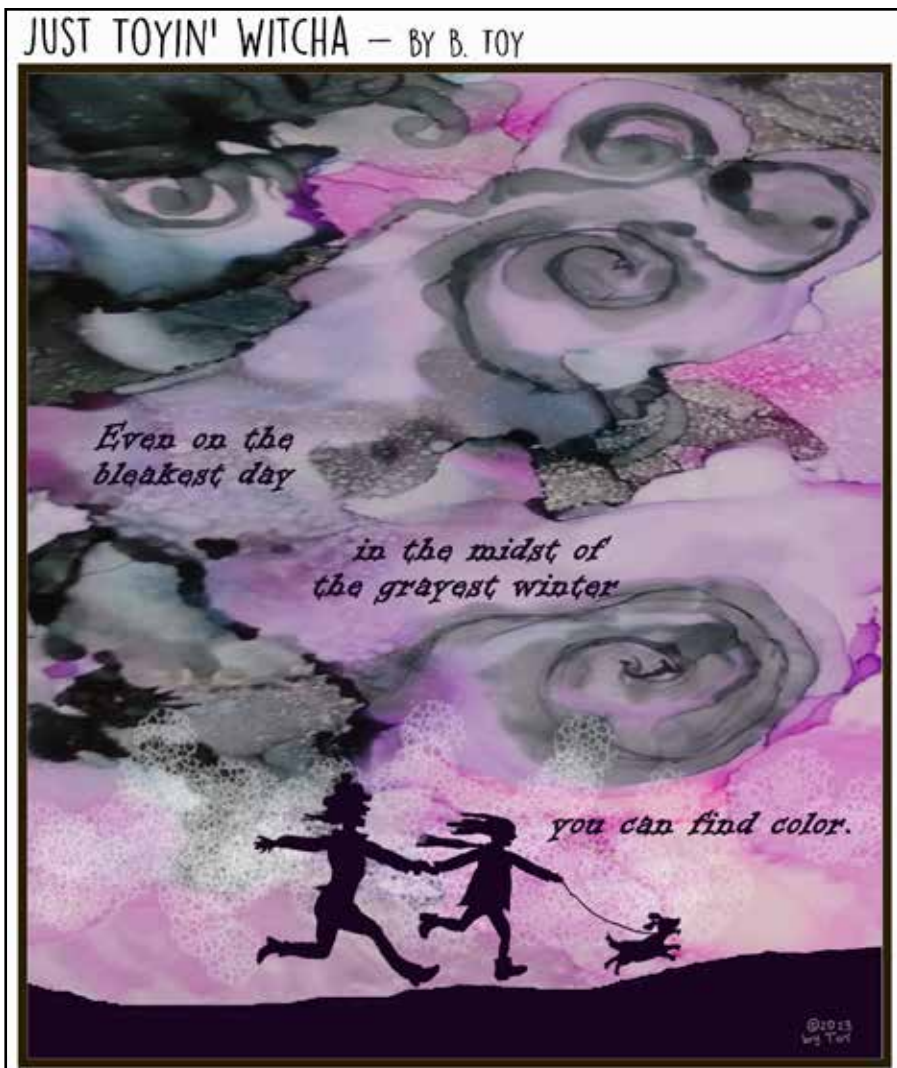
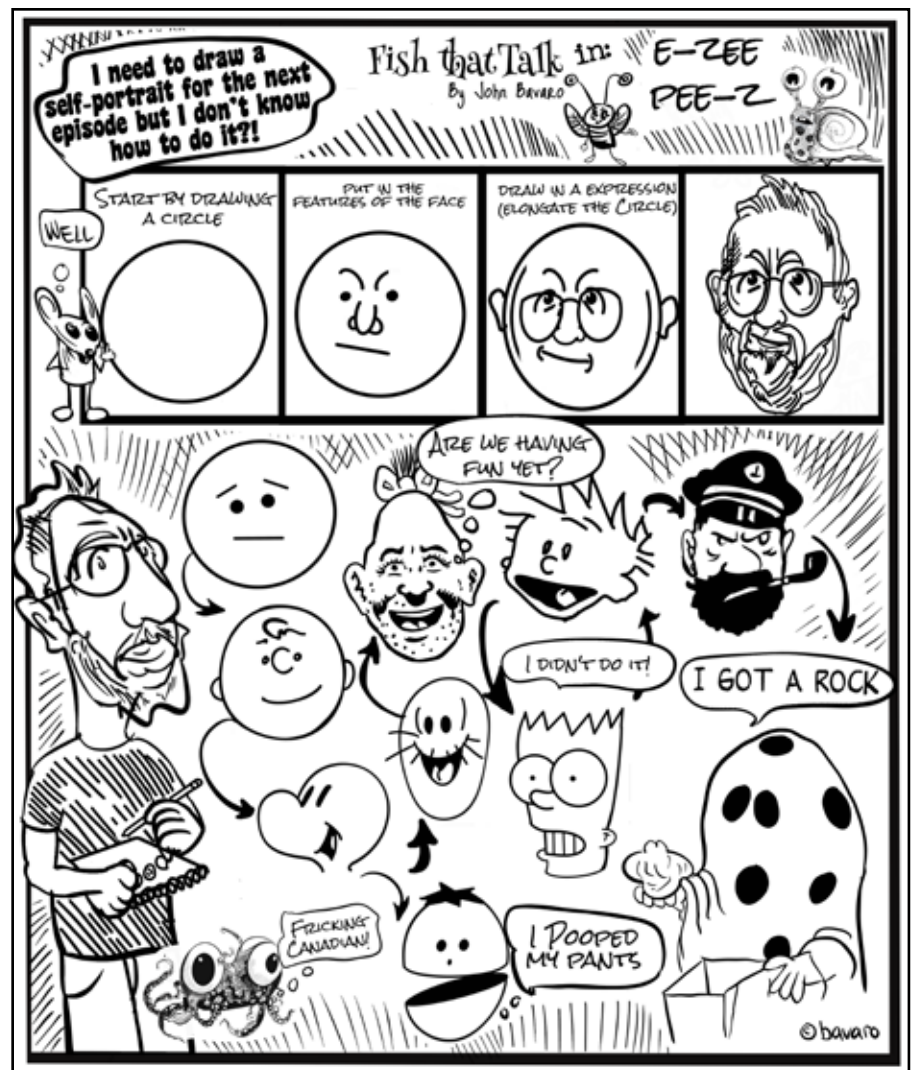
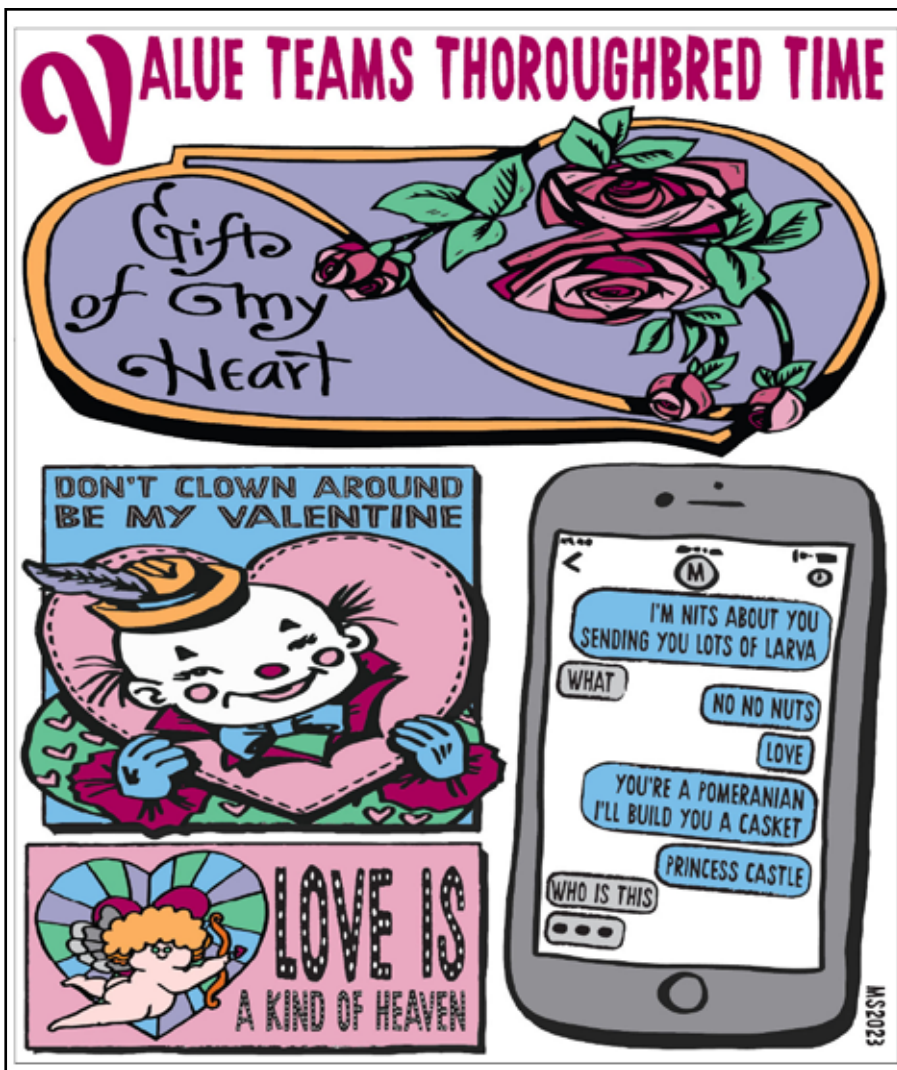
**Best Original Screenplay** – Daniel Kwan & Daniel Scheinert, *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

**Best Adapted Screenplay** – Sarah Polley, *Women Talking*

**Best International Feature** – *All Quiet on the Western Front*

**Best Original Song** – "Naatu Naatu" from *RRR*







ALBUM REVIEWS

**Iggy Pop**  
*Every Loser*  
Atlantic Records  
★★★★★

With *Every Loser* the godfather of punk presents an album that feels like a career retrospective, while still managing to sound fresh. Throughout the years, Iggy Pop has collaborated with several unique producers who have left a distinctive imprint on his work. Albums made with David Bowie (*The Idiot*, *Lust For Life*), James Williamson (*Kill City*, *New Values*), Josh Homme (*Post Pop Depression*), and Chris Stein (*Zombie Birdhouse*) all sound like they could be a part of those artists' own catalogs. Similarly, his 19th release *Every Loser* bears the signature of producer Andrew Watt. Watt was inspired by the Bowie years on the track "The News For Andy" and the Williamson era inspired the recording of "Modern Day Rip-Off." However, it's tracks like "Strung Out Johnny" and "Comments" that sound fresh and in Watt's modern rock style. Along for the ride on this album are a roster of musicians led by Watt: Chad Smith and Josh Klinghoffer (Red Hot Chili Peppers), Travis Barker (Blink 182), Taylor Hawkins (Foo Fighters), Duff McKagan (Guns N Roses), Eric Avery (Jane's Addiction), and Stone Gossard (Pearl Jam). Even with all these big names attached, Iggy Pop still brings the same ferocious, anti-authoritarian lyrics that he always has, delivered with sincerity so he can still hold the reins as a punk icon. — Larry Wheaton



**We Are Only Human Once**  
*Every Dog on Earth*  
Self-released  
★★★★★

A beautifully melancholy work of well-exercised songwriting, the latest album from Delaware, Ohio (a half-hour north of Columbus) band We Are Only Human Once is a gem worth uncovering. *Every Dog on Earth* hits hard and unflinchingly. It's morose, inward-looking, epic, thoughtful, and funny. The duo of Adalyn Clarke and Willard Fogle has been utterly prolific since they started releasing music with the band. From December 2018 onward, they have released 135 songs over eight full-lengths and six EPs. With a pace that puts Guided By Voices to shame, you might think that there would be diminishing returns, but quite the opposite. Clarke and Fogle deliver 10 tracks that span numerous emotions and tones with remarkable expertise. Perfect for fans of Pavement, Songs: Ohia, or Car Seat Headrest, there's a literate yet practically mumbled stream of consciousness that weaves the album together. Tonally replete with fuzz blended with acoustic guitar, piano, and harmonica, its well-articulated lo-fi production captures each cut lushly. No matter what you do, make sure to listen to "Better Off," "Release," and the final two tracks "Miss You More" and "Shifting Blame," and you'll want to dive into their entire discography and get blissfully lost. — Nick Warren



**Storms Within**  
*Minds of the Wicked*  
Monochrome Studios - Zach Kubiak  
★★★★★

Formed in 2014, Erie rockers Storms Within have been slaying the scene and exhibiting just how powerful a female-fronted band can get. Their newest masterpiece, *Minds of the Wicked*, dropped Jan. 13 and includes 10 hard-hitting tracks featuring Erica Mayr's gritty and timeless vocals, Tom Wurst's and David Cilluffo's edgy guitar riffs, Ron Dickum's virtuoso drumming, and Mike Lohse's dexterous bass riffs. This album is packed full of bold statements worth deep consideration, brimming with energy and angst that will grab the attention of all those who love heavy genres. Their tracks "Loyalty Lies," "End Game," and "Justified" were released with visually appealing official music videos showing off the performance of these catchy and thought-provoking songs. Those videos can be found on the Storms Within YouTube channel touting a healthy dose of viewers. It's undeniable that *Minds of the Wicked* serves its listeners with a dynamic and robust energy of power and protest, giving a booming and modern sound that you won't be able to stop listening to. Stream it on all music platforms or at storms-within.com. Be sure to catch their next local performance on Friday, March 3 at the Sandbar Drafthouse at 7 p.m. — Cypher Eihwaz



**Frame and Mantle**  
*Above a Burning World*  
Independent  
★★★★★

It's no secret that great art often comes from struggle. It's not a requirement, but it's been demonstrated time and time again. In fact, great art might be one of the only positives to come out of difficult political times or, say, a global pandemic. Fortunately, this is the case for semi-local Pittsburgh quartet, Frame and Mantle. After a promising debut LP in 2019's *Lost Under Nighttime Sky*, the emo post-rockers are back with a new EP, their most concise and thoughtful release to date. We use the word "promising" for *Lost Under Nighttime Sky* on purpose; *Above a Burning World* is the follow-up that delivers on that promise, sounding simultaneously more dynamic and cohesive. Vocalist Connor Freer sounds better than ever, their screams punctuating smooth runs of clean vocals on tracks "At the End of Everything" and "Rift." They are supported by bassist Scott Gergelis, drummer Mark Thompson, and guitarist/songwriter Brian Thompson, who carefully crafts layers of beautiful post-rock (see the end of shockingly bouncy single, "Space Forest") in between muscular guitar riffs. By finding new footing on this three-track EP, the band succeeds at beckoning towards the future. If it sounds anything like *Above a Burning World*, long term emo and indie-rock fans are in for something special. — Aaron Mook



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK

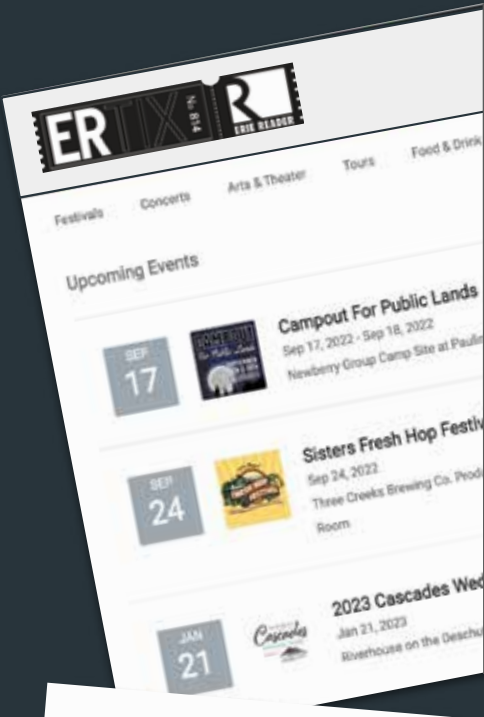




|    |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5  | 6  |    | 7  | 8 | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |    |
| 15 |    |    |   |    |    |    | 16 |   |    |    |    | 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

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





## Who is this for?

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

... and many more!



## ERIE'S ONLY LOCAL EVENT TICKETING

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

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

## Features

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

100%  
**FREE**  
for event creators

**\$1.50 + 4%\***

SERVICE FEE THAT CUSTOMERS PAY

\* standard online credit card fees apply

[tickets.eriereader.com](https://tickets.eriereader.com)

The Erie Reader

