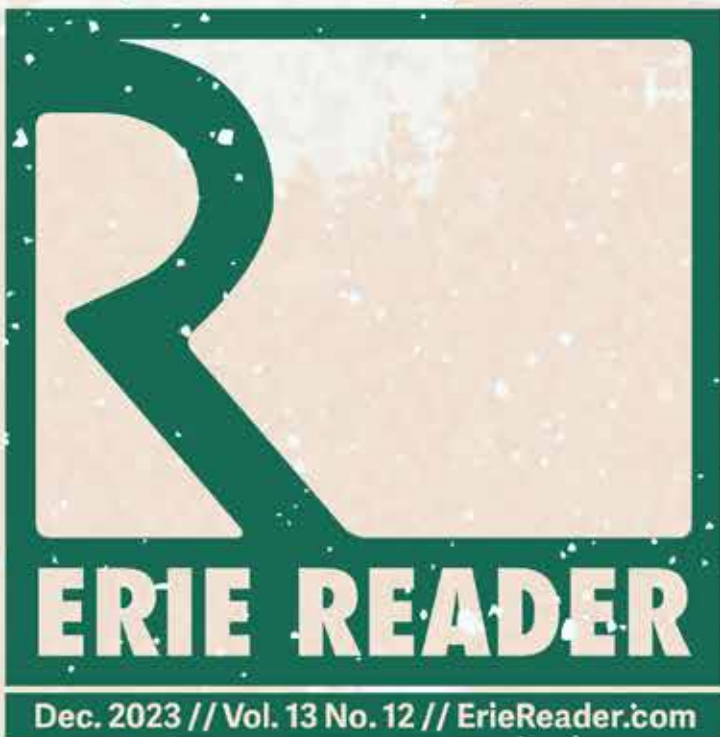


The only local voice for news, arts, and culture



# 2023 Year in Review

A look at how we've  
grown, and where  
there is still room  
for growth



**Plus: Year-end Lists | Leadhead Screenprinting  
Erie's Child Care Crisis | Wertz Announces Run**

# Free

Enroll in the Early-Spring Session with

# Free Tuition!

In-person and online classes begin **February 5th, 2024.**  
Learn More and Apply at [EC3PA.ORG](http://EC3PA.ORG)



# SWITCH

to



An affiliate of **LE|C|O|M** HEALTH

Receive **\$10\***

Ultimate Gift Card  
*Scott Enterprises*

*\*Restrictions apply.*  
Visit [ColonialFamilyPharmacy.com](http://ColonialFamilyPharmacy.com)

**Editors-in-Chief**

Brian Graham &amp; Adam Welsh

**Managing Editor**

Erin Phillips

**Copy Editor**

Matt Swanseger

**Contributing Editors**

Ben Speggen

Nick Warren

Jim Wertz

**Media Editor / Photographer**

Jessica Hunter

**Contributors**

Liz Allen

John Bavaro

Jonathan Burdick

Edwina Capozziello

Julia Carden

Nathaniel Clark

Jordan Coon

Cypher Eihwaz

Chloe Forbes

Tommy Link

Aaron Mook

Brad Pattullo

Alana Sabol

Jen Sorensen

Melissa Sullivan Shimek

Cara Suppa

Forest Taylor

Thomas Taylor

Bryan Toy

Amy VanScoter

Larry Wheaton

**Cover Illustration and Layout**

Nick Warren

1001 State St. Suite 1315

Erie, Pa., 16501

contact@eriereader.com

*The Erie Reader is published monthly and distributed at over 350 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well as social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 1315, Erie, Pa, 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct sales inquiries to 814.314.9364. For editorial inquiries, email contact@ErieReader.com.*

**CONTENTS**  
**DECEMBER 6, 2023****Erie at Large: Wertz for Senate - 4**

Remarks from campaign announcement

**Holiday Connections - 6**

How three Erieites discovered and share their gifts

**2023 Year in Review - 10**

A look at how we've grown, and where there's still room for growth

**A Day in the Life of an Erieite, 1923 - 18**

What the world looked like 100 years ago

**Erie's Child Care Crisis - 20**

Women, children bear the brunt

**Gem City Style: Dec. 2023 - 26**

An interview with Chris Pace of Leadhead Screenprinting

**Bean & Bear Cafe Sets Roots in Edinboro - 27**

Edinboro's newest coffee shop offers coffee, hangout for students and locals

**Spotlight on Erie - 28**

Oi to the world and everybody wins! Holiday Markets! Nutcracker! Presque Isle Lights! And More!

**Top Five Albums of 2023 From Our Staff - 37**

Reader writers recommend a musical melange

**The Top Five Best Films of 2023 - 41**

Year's offerings prove that there is reward in risk

**Local, Original Comics - 42**

The latest from Bryan Toy, Brad Pattullo, Melissa Sullivan Shimek, John Bavaro, and Tommy Link

**Top Five Local Albums of 2023 - 43**

Highlighting an exceptional year for Erie artists

**Top 5 Best Books of 2023 - 45**

Enjoy these page-turners as we turn the page on another year

**Crossword Puzzle - 46**

The latest stumper from David Levinson Wilk

**From the Editors****There ain't no hole in the washtub**

The story of Jim Henson's well-loved holiday movie, *Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas* is a play on the classic story of the *Gift of the Magi*, where Emmet Otter and his ma, living in poverty, sacrifice their only means of income in hopes to win the grand prize of \$50 in a local talent contest to buy each other special gifts for the holiday. Their talent is overlooked and their efforts are in vain however, as a band of rough-and-tumble out-of-towners who call themselves the Riverbottom Nightmare Band win first place and take home the prize money.

Rather than winning the grand (but singular prize) Emmet and his mother are overheard singing their moving melody after the talent show and are given a weekly job performing at a local restaurant. Emmet and his mother win something better than one big payout: they win the comfort of stability. Their creativity, their music, their art has provided them a better life and they achieved this by risking everything, putting themselves out there, and showing the world their gifts.

Our annual Year in Review issue gives us at the Reader an opportunity to look back on this past year and assess what risks Erie has taken, how we have put ourselves out there, and how we have shown the world our gifts. And sometimes we've stumbled — within this issue we'll look at those stumbles in our Year in Review feature (in particular the local politics section) and through an in-depth look at the local child care crisis and how we're (under)prepared to deal with it.

But as Emmet and Ma sing in the classic "Ain't No Hole in the Washtub," "if you look to the good side, falling down's a free ride."

Here in Erie, we aren't sitting around hoping to win the grand prize, we're working hard for our paychecks (and have been for over 100 years – as you'll see in the feature from Jonathan Burdick this month), with the goal of earning the comfort of stability. We've seen this work pay off through the progress our city has celebrated over the past year — the local successes of small businesses and nonprofits, the artists, musicians, curators, and creatives that make Erie more interesting, and the local activists who show us what changes need to be made and force us to have hard conversations. Some major changes combined with small acts of love and effort truly have us looking on the good side.

So as the credits roll on another year, it's our hope that we can all take stock of what we have here in Erie, do our best to make the best of it, have the courage to speak up when we can't, and keep working hard to make it better.

## Erie at Large: Wertz for Senate

Remarks from campaign announcement

By: Jim Wertz

When I wrote my first article for the Erie Reader in 2014, I had no idea about the path on which it would lead me. I was invited to start this column a year later. Since then, the topics and people who've entered this column have led to numerous opportunities, and a range of new experiences. I've met and interviewed some of the world's finest musicians, political figures and analysts, and local folks working to bring change to our Erie.

From those experiences, the stories we've encountered and shared, and the friends made, we start a new chapter today.

On Tuesday, Dec. 5, I announced my candidacy for the 49th District Pennsylvania Senate seat here in Erie County. With my candidacy comes a new chapter and some new rules, not the least of which require me to hit the pause button on Erie At Large. While I have no plans to leave the broader conversation for our community, I'll now engage it as a candidate instead of a contributing editor.

The following comments are an abridged version of my remarks to the audience that attended my announcement at Ember + Forge on Dec. 5. The full text can be found at [ErieReader.com](http://ErieReader.com).

It couldn't be more appropriate that we begin our campaign here at Fourth and State streets. In many ways the journey that brought us here tonight began in this very room seven years ago as a small group of friends believed we shared a vision for the City of Erie. And in many ways, that vision comes fully into view tonight with this large, diverse, and committed group of people invested in the future of Erie County.

Today, I declare my candidacy for the Pennsylvania State Senate. It's a large and sprawling district that encompasses all but three municipalities here on the shores of Lake Erie — our region's greatest asset.

The decision to run didn't come easily and I'd like to thank my wife — Kim — and our three children — Eleanor, Madeleine, and August — for their willingness to embark down this road with me.

I arrived in Erie County 25 years ago. I was a young college student, working my way through school as a cameraman and director for our local television stations, getting the lay of the land, and developing a profound respect for all that Erie County had to offer and the potential that lay ahead.

Erie wasn't all that different from the places I grew up. It was full of honest, hard-working people who had seen better days but remained optimistic about their future. It was a place of immigrants, old and new, Protestant and Catholic, Muslim and Jewish — Irish, Polish, Italian, African, and Eastern European — and like them I had an immigrant's love of this place. I could see myself starting and raising a family here, making new friends to grow old with, and looking for the opportunities that awaited around every turn.

And today, here we are — a network of family, friends, and fellow travelers willing to take this giant leap forward together for the future of Erie County. And so with you and for all those who we have come to know and love, I'm proud to start this race for the Pennsylvania State Senate with you tonight.

I'm running for state senate because I believe that the people of Erie deserve a senator who will embrace their right to vote, not someone who would trade it for personal power or the whims of their party. Pennsylvania is the cradle of democracy and Erie is its last line of defense.

I'm running for state senate because I believe that healthcare is a right, not a privilege, and that a woman's right to choose is only as valuable as the choices she has in front of her. That's why I support a constitutional amendment to protect abortion in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, no matter the party in power.

I'm running for state senate because I believe that the children of Erie, and the children of Pennsylvania, deserve opportunities as equal as those imagined by our founders when they conceived of a public education for all — an educational system that will prepare our students to face their future and to solve the problems that await their generation and the next. The answers we seek are schools that are fairly and fully funded, and communities, like



The Erie Reader's Contributing Editor Jim Wertz will be hanging up his Erie At Large hat as he launches his campaign for Pennsylvania's 49th Senate District. With his strong ties to the Erie community and his stalwart democratic values, he hopes to secure your vote in 2024.

ours, that honor and respect education from the kitchen to the classroom, from Pre-K through college or professional training and union apprenticeships.

And I'm running for state senate because working people like you and me, and folks all across Erie County deserve to be respected for the work they do — and they deserve the right to form or join a union when that respect runs short. A good salary is just one piece of having a good job. But what good is it when the pursuits of happiness leave no time for the people and activities we hold most dear.

So, tonight, as we embark on this journey together, I'm asking for your help to take this campaign into every community in Erie County.

From Union City to North East, Edinboro to Girard, in every community center and social club in between, tell your friends and family that this campaign holds the promise of action, not just words. That this campaign of the people and for the people comes from the people — we are a family of Erieites above all.

Tell your friends that you know my values — they are the same as the democratic ideals that helped build Erie County. Tell them I won't bend to fit a political mold no matter the audience or issue. Tell them I am all in and ready

to improve our collective future and I will engage in a healthy and constructive debate to get there — elevating Erie and its people who deserve respect and investment.

Tell them I believe in democracy — and in our citizens who select their leaders to represent them in Harrisburg and beyond. Tell them I am ready to walk with them — together — toward a more prosperous future rooted in our Erie values.

And tell them I need their help — and yours — donating time or your money will help amplify this campaign and will ensure that our message — one that speaks to and for all the people of Erie County — will be heard by the voters. The end of 2024 will be the start of a new era — an era when Erie is at the forefront of policy and politics in Pennsylvania.

So, wear a button, take a sign, and join our team at [jimwertz.org](http://jimwertz.org). Tonight, I ask for your support, I ask for your vote, and together we will walk toward the prosperous future that waits on the path ahead.

*Jim Wertz is now a candidate for Pennsylvania's 49th Senate District in Erie County. You can find him online and join the campaign at [JimWertz.org](http://JimWertz.org).*

# WISHING YOU HAPPY HOLIDAYS



1355 w. 26th st, erie, pa 16508  
(814)459-2585

LET US BE YOUR **2024** ONE STOP SHOP

**WE BUY, SELL, TRADE, & CONSIGN ALL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**

- appraisals
- rentals   
(long & short term)
- lessons   
(individual & group)
- gift cards
- financing
- repairs
- pro audio installs
- layaways
- rock academy

 worldofmusicerie  
 worldofmusicerie

Learn to play the instrument of your DREAMS ... We will show you how!



Chocolate  
Covered  
Strawberries Daily!

Established in 1903

  
**PULAKOS**  
*Chocolates*

Fresh Caramels,  
Creams, Marshmallows  
and Truffles!

*Celebrating 120 years*

Find us at our historic factory store: 2530 Parade Street • Erie, PA 16503 • 814-452-4026

Satellite location: 380 Millcreek Plaza • Erie, PA 16565 • 814-868-4924

ORDER ONLINE AT [WWW.PULAKOSCHOCOLATES.COM](http://WWW.PULAKOSCHOCOLATES.COM) • Buses welcome!

## Holiday Connections

How three Erieites discovered and share their gifts

By: Liz Allen

Think of this story as a collection of stocking stuffers — three small yet personal gifts of holiday music, good health, and a cheery cat tale.

First, meet Dave VanAmburg. He made a career as a business consultant and has been an integral part of Erie's vibrant music community for decades, championing the creation of JazzErie, producing concerts, and supporting local musicians in many other ways. Then 10 years ago, "out of the blue" he decided to play music again. His wife Rebecca encouraged him to pursue his dream of sharing his music beyond an audience of their children and grandkids. "Her support deserved my total discipline. I gave myself five years to make up for 40, learning theory, acoustic and electric guitar, keyboard, vocals and performance," he writes in *Tools and Toys*, his memoir (still a work in progress) about his musical journey.

Dave had stepped away from performing music several times. In fact, the first time he "retired" was after third grade, when he opted to concentrate on "sports, Boy Scouts, and public speaking," giving up piano lessons from Marion Sellers, he writes in his memoir. At age 17, he "woke up" to music again. "Mike Moryc showed me some guitar basics and I mastered finger-style guitar. I played the coffee house circuit, returned to piano and learned flute and sax. I managed a coffee house and formed two bands," he writes.

Playing with the group Calico, he also composed and arranged music. Calico drew large crowds and "could fill a hall with 750 people, but we couldn't gain enough traction to support ourselves. So I retired a second time," he writes.

For his third foray into performing, he studied under legendary Erie musicians, including Stan Bialomazy and the late Basil Ronzitti. He also found a crew of local musicians who clicked with each other. His friends and business clients, the Schwab family, invited him to play twice weekly at their Bel Aire Hotel. "Every Wednesday and Friday they had a different band in there. If they had the musical chops, they would play with us, or (we'd) turn around and we would play with them." Those bands included Matty B. and the Dirty Pickles, the Bootlegger's Bible Club, and the House of Rhythm, with father and son Jim and Jackson Froman.

Six years ago, Dave, Phil Papotnik, David Blaetz and Rickie Lynn Hopkins formed the V Band. They have a regular gig at Room 33 on the second Saturday of each month, which will move to the fourth Saturday in January. Papotnik, owner of Raven Sound, is an "amazing" musician who plays multiple instruments, including guitar, bass, tenor sax, flute and clarinet, said VanAmburg. Blaetz, on bass, has played with dozens of local bands and also tours with Sam Hyman and Steamroller, the James Taylor tribute band. Blaetz plays with intuition, VanAm-

CONTRIBUTED



**[Top]** Members of the V Band include (left to right) Phil Papotnik, Dave VanAmburg, David Blaetz, and Rickie Lynn Hopkins. **[Bottom right]** Shawnta' Pulliam-Brown, owner of Sacred Divine Femininity, shares her advice on healthy living during a presentation at the Erie Food Co-Op's downtown location. **[Bottom left]** Chauncey Dumbuya, a Co-Op board member, center, attended Shawnta' Pulliam-Brown's presentation on healthy living with her daughters, Shariah Boykin, left, and Honey Brown.

burg explained. "It's like a tapestry, the flowing of the threads back and forth."

Then there's Hopkins, a percussionist as well as a drummer. "They all listen so carefully to everybody else. (Rickie) will hit a certain rhythmic device and instantly David is on that groove, that same rhythm."

Whether you are a performer or in the audience, music is about much more than nailing the right notes or sliding into the rhythm, Dave said. "Music serves such a great purpose. If you play a song that somebody knows from the past that had an influence on them, we don't play note-for-note covers. It brings back that emotional connection for the listeners, from their past," he said.

On Sunday, Dec. 10, at 2:30 p.m., the V Band will give a concert, "Getting in the Christmas Spirit," at St. Andrew's Catholic Church, 1116 W. Seventh St. There is no charge but donations will benefit Julia Hospice and Palliative Care. The concert is organized by the parish's Forward in Faith group and sponsored by the Ladies Guild and Copy King.

In September, Lisa Austin arranged for the V Band to play on the steps of St. Andrew's for the West Bay-Front Porchfest. That performance "was like coming

home for me. I spent the first 21 years of my life living in that neighborhood," said Dave, who grew up in the 900 block of West Sixth Street. In fact, his first venture close to home occurred when his parents allowed him to ride his tricycle around the block at age three. "I would go from house to house and visit all the neighbors and they'd invite me in. The entire neighborhood means the world to me," he said, recalling the nuns, priests, scout leaders, and parishioners "who made me who I am" and "who continue to give back to the neighborhood."

For more information about Dave, visit [davevanamburg.com](http://davevanamburg.com).

Like Dave, Shawnta' Pulliam-Brown (a member of the first class of Erie's 40 Under 40) has a talent for reimagining a world where we are more in tune with ourselves. Her focus is on healthy lifestyles. An entrepreneur and author, she draws on her own life story to extol the need for self-esteem and to stress the benefits of self-discipline, especially when it comes to what we eat.

In 2006, Shawnta' started Nurturing Hearts, a self-esteem and self-development program for at-risk girls. The program is now offered in Erie elemen-



Thousands of children in our community have received new, age-appropriate books delivered right to their home at no cost to their families through the Imagination Library for Erie County for ten years!

The Imagination Library is funded **100%** by local community support to United Way of Erie County. And, we need **your help** to keep the pages turning for the future children of our community.

**GIVE THE GIFT OF READING!**





# Erie Day School

Celebrating 95 years of learning by leading.

OPEN HOUSE | JAN. 27, 2024 | 1 PM - 3 PM



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



## WHAT DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE? *It looks a lot like me.*

You never recognized my pain. You never sensed my sorrow. You never felt my heartache. You never knew any of this because I was afraid to tell you. I was afraid to tell anyone. I am one in four women. I am a victim. I am a survivor. I am the girl who never thought it would happen to me.

**TRACI GLOVER**  
Blogger,  
Community  
volunteer,  
DV advocate,  
survivor

### GET HELP GETTING OUT.

SafeNet provides free and confidential services to victims of domestic violence and relationship abuse.

Call our 24/7 Hotline at **814.454.8161** or visit **SafeNetErie.org** to learn more.

**SafeNet**  
*reclaim your life*  
Erie's only domestic violence agency



## Save Today for Tomorrow's Leaders



### Get an early start on a rewarding finish when you save for education with the PA 529 College and Career Savings Program.

If your child is college-bound or planning to pursue career or vocational training for an in-demand job, check out the benefits of saving with PA 529.

- Two plans help families build a savings plan to meet their goals.
- Low fees and no minimums fit most family budgets.
- Save automatically from a bank account or paycheck.
- Use PA 529 to pay for most education expenses after high school, including costs for certain apprenticeships.
- Open and contribute to save on PA taxes.

Still have questions?  
Scan or go to [pa529.com](http://pa529.com) to learn more.



800-440-4000 | [pa529.com](http://pa529.com)



Pennsylvania Treasurer  
Stacy Garrity

The Pennsylvania 529 College and Career Savings Program sponsors three plans – the PA 529 Guaranteed Savings Plan (GSP), the PA 529 Investment Plan (IP), and Keystone Scholars. The guarantee of the PA 529 Guaranteed Savings Plan is an obligation of the GSP Fund, not the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any state agency. Before investing in either PA 529 plan, please carefully read that plan's disclosure statement (available at [www.pa529.com](http://www.pa529.com) or by calling 1-800-440-4000) to learn more about that plan, including investment objectives, risks, fees, and tax implications. Before you invest, consider whether your or the beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other state benefits such as financial aid, scholarship funds, and protection from creditors that are only available for investments in that state's qualified tuition program.



tary, middle, and high schools. In 2017, she published her memoir, *Hell Bent, Heaven Bound: One Woman's Journey from the Drug House to the King's House*, in which she recounts her youthful traumas, including being expelled from high school and suffering a nervous breakdown in college.

In 2021, while continuing to direct Nurturing Hearts and work part-time in safety and security for Wabtec, she opened Sacred Divine Femininity, 4906 Richmond St., where she offers guidance on natural health remedies, yoni steaming, and doula services, among other programs.

I sat in when she gave a presentation about her services at the Erie Food Co-Op's downtown location on Perry Square.

Shawnta', a pescatarian, is concerned about how the Standard American Diet (SAD) negatively impacts health, especially for African Americans. "High blood pressure, diabetes, and heart conditions are really prevalent in the African American community," she said.

Chauncey Dumbuya, a Co-Op board member, attended the presentation with her daughters, Shariyah Boykin, 20, and Honey Brown, 15. "It's a generational way of life," said Chauncey, who learned the positive impact that a food co-op can have on Black members when she visited minority-run co-ops in North Carolina.

Shawnta' is board-certified as a natural health practitioner by the American Association of Natu-

ral Wellness Professionals. She isn't an M.D. and is careful to distinguish between what she can and can't do. For example, she can't advise someone to stop taking prescription medicine or to reduce the dosage. "You have to do that under a doctor's supervision," she said. But she is always pleased when a client makes lifestyle changes and tells her that chronic health conditions have eased or even disappeared. Such changes could include a "detox" from meat, taking vitamins and minerals, drinking more water, adjusting sleep habits, and taking advantage of "emotional and spiritual support."

The doula service offers educational, emotional, and physical support for women pre-labor, during labor, and post-labor. Her goal is to combat the disproportionately high childbirth mortality rate for women of color.

But how do you flip a switch to become a healthier person?

Her "aha!" moment occurred at a burger cookout with Wabtec coworkers. "I started Googling what kale was doing for me, what spinach was doing for me," she recalled. She was also motivated to change her eating habits after her mom suffered two strokes. Don't worry if family members don't want to give up meat. "My husband still eats beef and chicken," she said. Still, she advised, you can also keep it simple. Eat more fruits. Eat more vegetables.

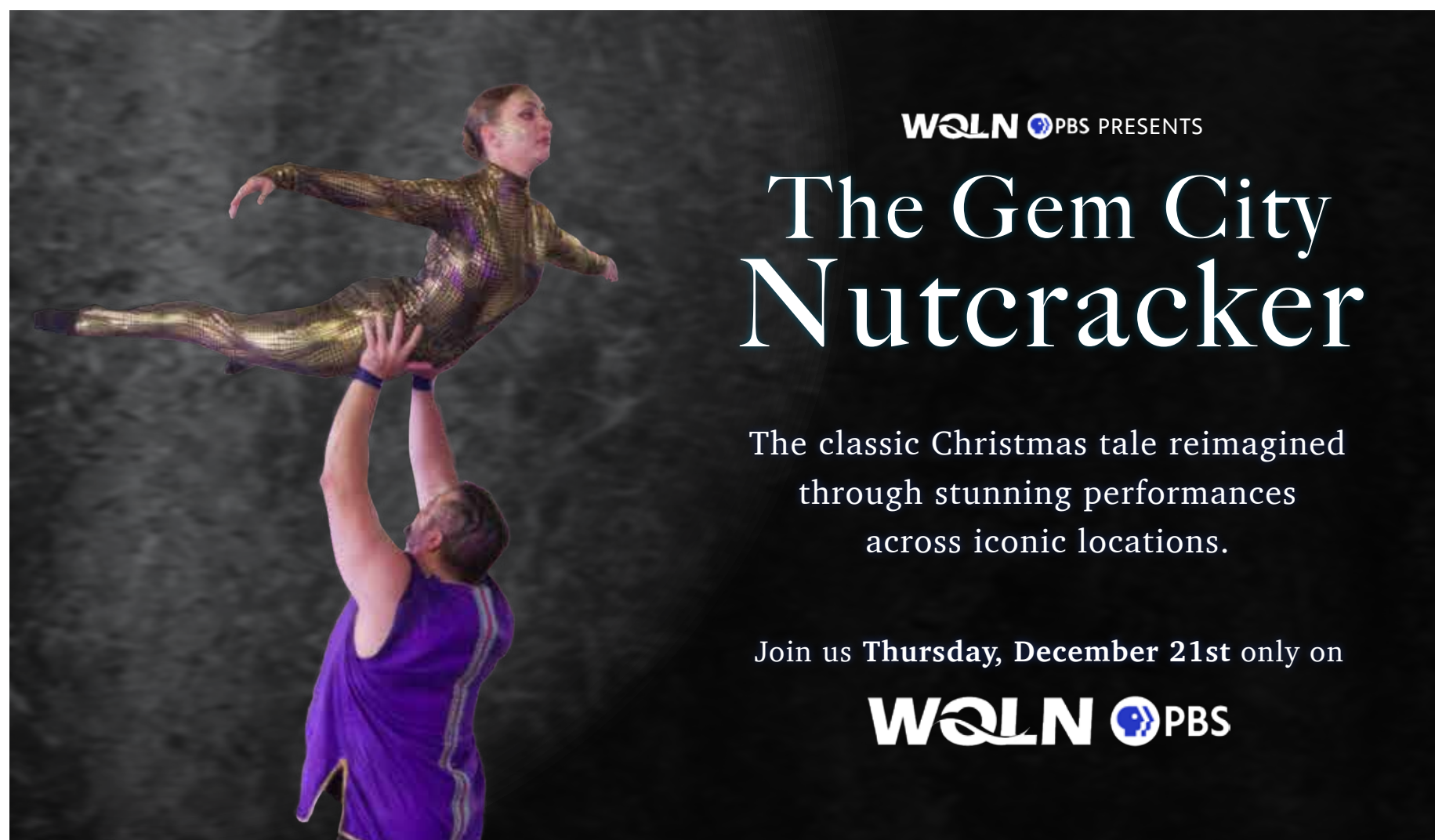
For more information, email SacredDivineFemininity@gmail.com or call 814-299-9550.

For both Dave and Shawnta', peace and harmony come with making the right connections, whether it's an emotional link to music or insights into how mind, body and spirit work together.

So my final connection this holiday is to tell you about Angie Andrews, daughter of Mary and Howie Heintz. Howie graduated from St. Andrew's, where his sister Cathy and I became lifelong friends. Cathy asked me to plug Angie's self-published children's book *Tux and Edo* about a little boy who is curious about the origin of tuxedo cats. The book, illustrated by Rebecca Lambertson, is available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble websites.

While Angie's husband was stationed in Okinawa with the U.S. Army, she wrote for *Okinawa Magazine* and blogged for the Army Wives Network. After they transferred back to the U.S. about a year ago, she worked on her book, inspired by her two cats, Hunter and Matthews. Talking to Dave prompted me to put the Christmas concert at St. Andrew's onto my to-do list. Meeting with Shawnta' reminded me that it really is time to join the Erie Food Co-Op. And Angie's book made me appreciate anew my daily interactions with Jack, our neighbor's roaming tuxedo cat, who likes to sun himself on our front porch. I can't pet him due to allergies but I could treat him to a Christmas stocking.

*Liz Allen wishes happy holidays and a merry Christmas to all our readers. You can reach her at lizerie@aol.com.*



WQLN PBS PRESENTS

# The Gem City Nutcracker

The classic Christmas tale reimagined through stunning performances across iconic locations.

Join us Thursday, December 21st only on

WQLN PBS

# 2023 Year in Review

A look at how we've grown, and where there's still room for growth

By: Erin Phillips

It's been long understood in our corner of Pennsylvania that when Erie makes the national news, it's rarely a great look for us. In 2023 the City of Erie made headlines for a few cringey reasons, of course. Do we really need to be reminded of the crowd-surfing baby during the Flo Rida performance at Celebrate Erie and the intense parenting debate/debacle that ensued?

Despite the overall sigh of resignation triggered when Erie comes across the wire, there has definitely been some positive national coverage (depending on who you are, we suppose). There was that small issue of *discovery* which came about due to a certain state senator's lawsuit against a certain local alternative newspaper (ahem) which resulted in the national publication of some previously confidential emails between government officials regarding the overturning of the 2020 election, and that was decidedly not a great look for Pennsylvania Republicans.

Erie also made national waves when it was announced that a portion of our lake is under serious consideration for National Marine Sanctuary designation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration because of the astounding number of historic shipwrecks and artifacts that lie beneath the water's surface.

Regardless of the coverage we've received nationwide, 2023 has been a year of major moves and big changes for Erie. Where those changes fall on the cringe-o-meter varies wildly, as our county has certainly seen some struggles this year. BUT we always have something to celebrate — some new successes, businesses, nonprofits, or creative endeavors for which to cheer. And while we'll always have those grumpy armchair warriors in the comment section, conversely we also have a growing population of Erie's cheerleaders — those among us who want to see Erie succeed, those who reserve judgment on our road to progress, and those who support, encourage, ask meaningful questions, constructively criticize, and ultimately celebrate our growth.

So, let's review this past year and take stock of how we've all grown, shall we?

## Downtown Erie

Let's start where it all started. Downtown Erie has seen its fair share of ups and downs throughout our city's history, from the boom at the turn of the 20th century to the slow decline through the turn of the 21st. Lately, we're working towards a definitive upswing due to a few key players and a boatload of massive, expensive construction projects. While we all wait patiently for the sidewalk expansion and infrastructure improvements along State Street to clear up, there are a few projects that have been years in the making that saw completion in 2023.

With the renovations on North Park Row largely complete, and the Flagship City Food Hall and Market recently celebrating their second anniversary, the **Erie**



MIKE SCHNELLE, PATRICK GRAB, ERIE SPORTS COMMISSION, SARA NESBITT



(Clockwise from top left): Erie County Community College saw its first graduating class in 2023; the Lake Erie Quadrangle is under consideration by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for designation as a National Marine Sanctuary; the City of Erie is moving forward with its Active Erie plan which would create an interconnected network of biking infrastructure throughout the city; and concerned citizens protested at the Erie County Library after librarians were instructed to remove a Pride display in June.

**Downtown Development Corporation** turned their efforts to their 28,000-square-foot new construction project which reached its summit in the new Ascend climbing gym (and 30 new apartments) which opened in November.

The **expERIENCE Children's Museum** celebrated the completion and grand opening of the first phase of its massive expansion and renovation on the first day of summer in June. The children of Erie have real cause to celebrate — with three floors of brand new, hands-on, STEAM-focused exhibits meant to stimulate a child's imagination, promote physical activity, and foster creative thinking. The older portion of the Children's Museum (the former, reused historic Boston Store livery) is currently under renovation, and with construction hopefully wrapping up there in the spring, the entirety of the building project will soon be open, refreshed, and ready for fun.

West Sixth Street and the areas around Gannon University are continuing to see investment from our friendly neighborhood billionaire, Thomas B. Hagen, as the **Historic Erie Preservation Trust** (HEPT) has completed restorations on a number of properties in and around the historic district. We're currently observing work nearing completion on projects at 502 W. Sixth St. (the Connell Payne Wilson House), at 446 W. Sixth (the Shenk Emmett House), the property next door to the Erie Community Foundation at 453

W. Sixth (the Lowry House), and at 556 W. Sixth (the Walker Filer House). Meanwhile, we're seeing restoration movement happening at a number of other key historic properties, most notably the Thayer Thompson house, which has the group branching off of Sixth Street to attend to the incredible, nationally registered historic property and Civil war era home at 605 Cherry St. Additionally, work has begun at the Carter-Shannon House, which is prominently positioned adjacent to Gannon's library at 203 W. Sixth St. The HEPT has also recently acquired the property on the northeastern corner of West Sixth and Cherry.

The HEPT was established in 2020 and was modeled after a similar foundation created in Newport, Rhode Island. The idea is that rent monies, donations, or funding collected from the renovated properties will go into the trust that will then be used to sustain the buildings' maintenance in perpetuity.

Speaking of historic property restoration in the City of Erie, this year has overseen the advent of Erie's first **Historic Preservation Plan**, as well as our city's designation as a Certified Local Government. What this means is that our city now has the ability to designate local historic properties as landmarks, or create historic overlay districts in certain areas where the architecture is historic or otherwise significant to the character of the neighborhood. As a result, these properties, if designated locally, will be at a greater



SKIN IMAGINED

Medical and Wellness Spa

814-413-7546

simplycocomedspa.com

988 West Erie Plaza - Erie PA

# FED UP

WITH YOUR CHECKING?

Maybe it's time to **SWITCH**.  
*Choose Erie FCU and Un-bank yourself today!*

- **Free Checking** that's really FREE!
- **Mobile & Online** banking convenience:
  - Bill Pay, Mobile Deposit, External Transfers & more.
- **Dividend + Plus Checking** – offers a market leading interest rate!
- **Contactless Debit Card** with Digital Wallet capabilities.

[eriefcu.org](http://eriefcu.org)
 (814) 825-2436
 Insured by NCUA

**Sarah P.**  
 Clinical Manager,  
 Physician Network

Life changing is...

## making a difference

"If any little bit of what I do every day makes a difference in someone's life, that's what I want to do."

**UPMC** LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE

[UPMC.com/LifeChangingUs](http://UPMC.com/LifeChangingUs)

# 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)



## Enjoyed your stay with us?

We'd be thrilled if you'd consider voting for us in the Erie Reader Best of Erie Awards. Your support helps us continue to offer great service and comfort.

Thank you for being our wonderful guests!

*VICTORIA INN*  
Bed and Breakfast

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)



## 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)

JEFFREY PHILLIPS, JESSICA HUNTER



(Left) The Erie Seawolves took home the Eastern League Championship for the first time in the club's history. (Right) The Erie Downtown Development Corporation took their latest construction project to the summit with the opening of the new Ascend Erie Climbing Gym on Fifth and State Streets.

advantage of being designated nationally (i.e. the National Register of Historic Places) and give property owners greater access to tax credits, grant funding, and facade improvement funding. It also provides some level of protection against a historic property's demolition. The first of these buildings to be designated locally was the PACA building (i.e. the Meyer building) at 1505 State St. in March of 2023.

We'd be remiss to leave out the main artery of Erie that has been a subject of hot debate and millions of taxpayer dollars: **the Bayfront Highway**. Work on this bad boy was supposed to be underway this fall with an estimated timeline of completion by Spring of 2027. Initial work will take place on the Sassafra Street Extension roundabout on the waterfront side. In preparation for Bayfront Parkway construction, the city's first infrastructure-related move was to make improvements to the flow of traffic along 12th Street. You may have noticed improved traffic signals and pedestrian safety upgrades along the main corridor in anticipation of a massive influx of commuter usage once the Bayfront Highway construction gets into full swing. Plan on switching up your routine and kicking it old school on Route 5 for the foreseeable future.

#### Arts and Culture

There was a changing of the guard in the Erie art world in 2023 as Patrick Fisher, the executive director of Erie Arts and Culture (EAC) resigned his position

after seeing through the implementation of a number of programs that were created under his administration. Arguably one of the most impactful projects was the **Purposeful Placemaking** public art and mural project, which, in partnership with the United Way of Erie County, saw 50 murals installed throughout the city, along walking routes to Erie's public schools. The program began in 2021 and was completed this past summer in a massive public art effort, the Views Festival. These murals were completed by both nationally known and local artists alike and have succeeded in making Erie a brighter place for city schoolchildren and, really, all our residents. Additionally, in 2023, we welcomed a new executive director for EAC, Anne O'Dell, who has relocated to Erie and is helping to carry on many of the programs in place at the organization, while working to create her own footprint in the Erie arts scene.

In addition to the changes seen to the Erie public art landscape, we always have the working artists in Erie to celebrate, as well as a smattering of new spaces in which they have made their mark. Among these:

**FEED Media Arts Center** is gaining ground in a collaborative, renovated space on 13th and State

The former Bastion Studio building (the historic Daniel Illig House) at West 21st and Peach has been acquired by the folks running the show at **10/20 Collective** and will continue to serve as a launchpad for local creatives.

The **Dafmark Creative Arts Center** in the John Horan Garden Apartments has expanded their reach and funding to bring quality art education to hundreds of local children living in public housing in Erie.

The **Erie Art Museum** recently celebrated their 100th annual Spring Show, bringing local and regional artists into the spotlight.

What would have been the 31st annual **Blues and Jazz Festival** in Frontier Park was canceled this year due to lack of funding and community partnership. Breaking a 30 year streak, the organizational group is feeling positive about their ability to make it happen again in 2024. The Erie Blues and Jazz festival is seeking new nominations to their board of directors as well as a co-host, and of course, sponsorships. Visit [eriebluesandjazz.com](http://eriebluesandjazz.com) to help.

**The Historical Institute of Culture and the African American Experience** located at 315 E. Ninth St. is a new endeavor (opened in June of 2023) in an old church, and the brainchild of artists and leaders from Erie's Black community. Poet, artist, and baker Mabel Howard, Bishop Curtis Jones Sr., and Pastor Vickie Jones are spearheading the project which will bring visual art, poetry, and civil rights history and artifacts into the reused space.

**Celebrate Erie 2023** was a resounding success (despite the overwhelming focus on the aforementioned crowd-surfing baby) and saw record numbers of attendees enjoying the city's designated "districts," with music at every turn, including the headlining national acts of Flo Rida and Parmalee alongside the Erie All Stars going their own way with a Fleetwood Mac tribute. There was the ever popular chalk walk with art, music, educational opportunities, food, drinks, family fun, vendors, cultural and dance events, and more. It's great to see Erie come together as a community, and Celebrate Erie always affords that perfect occasion.

Erie's cultural landscape certainly doesn't start and stop with art and music — we've also seen some awesome movement, changes, and victories within our local educational endeavors, sports and athletics, and nonprofit sectors. Most notably, our very own **Erie SeaWolves**, who just a few years ago were on the verge of packing up shop, have made local history as they reigned supreme as the 2023 Eastern League Champions. Their victory was intensely fun to watch unfold, as the Seawolves won all four of their playoff games, capping the streak with a 10-0 victory over the Binghamton Rumble Ponies to secure the first championship title in the club's history. If you were there to witness it, it sure was a howl of a good time.

In alternative forms of education, we have cause to celebrate. The **Erie County Community College** saw their first graduating class, adorned in royal blue robes, commencing their studies at the long-awaited community college. The class of 28 graduates earned certificates that included welding and applied business in management and entrepreneurial thinking. Many went on to enter the workforce, while some used the educational boost to continue their studies at one of our major regional colleges/universities. Meanwhile, the **Jefferson Educational Society** turned 15 years old and celebrated bringing thoughtful programming, speakers, leadership groups, and, of

BRANDON SOTO, CONTRIBUTED; ERIN PHILLIPS, GROUNDLED PRINT SHOP



(Clockwise from top left) Celebrate Erie was a huge success, and resulted in Erie making national news when headliner Flo Rida was passed a baby through the crowd; Erie County Executive Brenton Davis has come under scrutiny for a myriad of reasons, including a historically high proposed tax increase; the ExpERIENCE Children's Museum saw through phase one of their massive expansion in June; the Purposeful Placemaking public art initiative spearheaded by Erie Arts and Culture completed the goal of creating 50 new murals in Erie this past summer.

course, the annual Global Summit Speaker Series, to open minds throughout the Erie region.

And while we're on the subject of bettering ourselves, we'd also love to mention that Erie loves to give. Our nonprofits are what raise up our city and county to be the best they can be, and the annual event **Erie Gives Day** hosted (and bolstered by) the Erie Community Foundation saw record numbers of donations flowing through their website in August. In 2023, 493 nonprofit organizations received \$8,269,362 due to over 32,764 individual donations. That's astounding, Erie. Kudos.

**Local Politics**

What a weird year for local politics. 2023 saw two mid-term resignations, one from Erie City Council in Liz Allen's abrupt departure following her stint as council president and one from Erie County Council in Mary Rennie's (former director of the Erie County Library) resignation. Allen's city seat was filled by the appointment of Susannah Faulkner (a 2023 40 Under 40 honoree and director of development for the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network) which she will have to vacate as of January 2024 (who will fill it has yet to be determined). Mary Rennie's resignation placed her seat up for grabs in the November election and it was filled by political newcomer and Democrat Rock Copeland.

This, along with other key victories by Democrats (perhaps most notably, the defeat of Brian Shank by Chris Drexel) in the county council race has restored an *actual* Democratic majority to the council that has been under much public scrutiny since Brenton Davis has taken the office of county executive. Davis and

council have made some... controversial decisions, which resulted in a Lake Erie-sized blue wave on county council this election cycle. While those controversial decisions are quite numerous, among the most contentious have been:

At the end of last year, Davis dismantled the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion board, or **DiverseErie**, abandoning a critical effort created to aid populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The current director of the **Erie County Library**, under the authority of Brenton Davis, demanded that an LGBTQIA+ children's book display be relocated or removed during Pride Month spurring hundreds of citizens to participate in protests, read-ins, and petitions.

A rushed vote that was eventually unanimously *rescinded* by county council to transfer 200 acres of county-owned farmland in Fairview and Girard to the County Redevelopment Authority for development of a **proposed "business park,"** had angry county residents attending council meetings en masse (and likely contributed to that aforementioned Lake Erie blue wave in November).

A current deal with Gannon would place the private Catholic university's **Project NePTWNE**, a 3,000-square-foot water research center, within the publicly-owned Erie County Library's bayfront building. According to an Erie Times News article by A.J. Rao, "Council's inability to table the measure was met with boos from a standing-room-only crowd that objected to the center's potential effect on library services and parking, and the county's lack of public engagement on the project." This was then approved by a 5 to 2 vote on county council (with "Republicans

in Democrats' clothing" Jim Winarski and Tom Spagel voting yes).

Davis has also overseen what would have been one of the **highest county tax hikes** in recent history (a 14 percent increase) which county council recently voted down to 10 percent (which is still a double-digit, significant increase coming after multiple campaign promises by Davis to NOT raise taxes). Interestingly, given the next bullet point on our list, one of the main programs to lose funding within this recently approved budget is the Office of Children and Youth...

And while not affecting the county policy-wise, but certainly affecting the overall character of our public office — a woman formerly in a relationship with the county executive was assigned two temporary **protection-from-abuse orders** for her and her children against Davis. And while these orders were not made permanent by Venango County Judge Robert Boyer, Davis consented to a six-month protection-from-intimidation order that prohibited him from having any contact with the children in this case.

While we're currently in a lame duck situation on county council, one can hope that the reins with which Davis has run county government will be significantly tightened come January.

In more positive political news, striking workers at Erie's Wabtec won an improved contract after 10 weeks of holding the picket line. According to UE News, "The 1,400 members of Locals 506 and 618 forced Wabtec to improve the contract offer that the members had overwhelmingly rejected on June 22. The UE members voted on Aug. 31 to accept a tentative agreement that was reached between the parties the previous week, ending their strike."

And in other good news, Erie was among 120 U.S. cities to receive the highest-possible score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's annual Municipal Equality Index which ranks cities based on criteria like non-discrimination laws, leadership on LGBTQIA+ equality, municipal services, and employment practices. This recognition comes after a resolution was adopted by city council, spearheaded by Councilwoman Susannah Faulkner, declaring Erie a sanctuary city for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

**Climate Issues**

All other Year in Review summaries don't really matter if we don't address the major one: climate change — we're, as they say, simply polishing the brass on the Titanic. So what moves has Erie made this year to address the increasingly dire global climate situation locally? Well, along with the aforementioned potential National Marine Sanctuary designation for our lake (which would help ensure high water quality, among other environmental issues), the City of Erie has also committed to moving forward with its **Active Erie Plan**. This plan will, among other street level improvements, create safe biking infrastructure and dedicated bike lanes on a connected grid throughout the city, encouraging more citizens to cycle by making those routes safer and more abundant, thus cutting our dependence on vehicular travel.

Our largest city fire station went totally solar-powered this summer. There have been improvements



SUBARU



YOUR DEAL. YOUR WAY. THAT'S THE NEW WAY.

# COVERAGE SO GOOD IT LASTS A LIFETIME.

**WARRANTY FOREVER® IS POWERTRAIN COVERAGE**

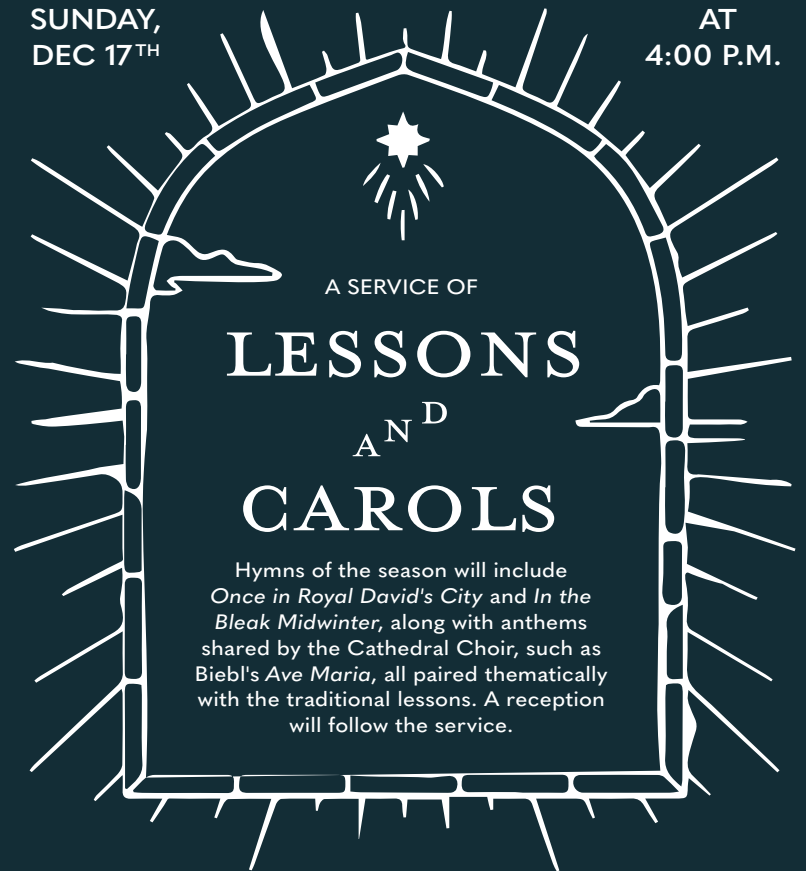
THAT'S INCLUDED WITH EVERY QUALIFYING VEHICLE OFFERED BY NEW MOTORS. COVERAGE LASTS FOR AS LONG AS YOU OWN YOUR VEHICLE. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS COMPLETE THE CUSTOMARY MAINTENANCE OUTLINED IN YOUR WARRANTY FOREVER® AGREEMENT AND YOU'RE COVERED FOREVER!



**8670 PEACH ST | ERIE**  
**SALES: 814-868-5516**  
**NEWMOTORS.COM**

SUNDAY,  
DEC 17<sup>TH</sup>

AT  
4:00 P.M.



A SERVICE OF

## LESSONS AND CAROLS

Hymns of the season will include *Once in Royal David's City* and *In the Bleak Midwinter*, along with anthems shared by the Cathedral Choir, such as Biebl's *Ave Maria*, all paired thematically with the traditional lessons. A reception will follow the service.

AT THE EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL OF ST. PAUL  
134 W 7th St Erie, Pa 16501 | [www.cathedralofstpaul.org](http://www.cathedralofstpaul.org)



**Thank you for shopping small  
this holiday season!**



**WERNER**  
BOOKS & COFFEE

## Erie's Community Bookstore

**Located at 3608 Liberty St. in the  
Liberty Plaza**

Selling new and used books

Earn store credit by trading in your books  
Full service coffee shop serving locally roasted coffee  
and local baked goods

814-864-1565

[info@wernerbooks.com](mailto:info@wernerbooks.com)

Housing Families Since 1994




SINCE 2017  
**0%**  
OF PROGRAM GRADUATES HAVE RETURNED TO SHELTERS.



IN THE LAST YEAR  
**100%**  
OF PROGRAM GRADUATES HAVE GAINED INCOME.



**77%**  
OF OUR RESIDENTS HAVE OVERCOME ADDICTION.



**69%**  
OF OUR RESIDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

(814) 455-4577

MCWERIE.ORG

Our Gift TO YOU

20% Off Cami-Bras Dec. 1-31



Braserie, Dearie!

3330 West 26th Street • Erie Pa. 16506  
814-833-2003 • braseriedearie.net

2023 AFFILIATE OF THE YEAR



“Leading through Connection”

Among the 70 affiliates nationwide, we are honored to receive this recognition for our unwavering dedication to supporting individuals and families living with Autism.

814.455.3540

WWW.AUTISMNWPA.ORG

3308 State St, Erie PA 16508



ASNWPA is entirely independent of Autism Society of America from a fiscal and legal standpoint sharing name and brand. ASNWPA has its own 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.



made within EMTA to increase and encourage more public transportation. And as of just last week, the City of Erie's Environmental Advisory Council held its first meeting. The purpose of this council of seven (John Michael Campbell, Robert Howden, Aaron Kerr, Sister Pat Lupo, Matthew Puz, Sherri "Sam" Mason, and Freda Tepfer) is to help research and identify environmental concerns in the City of Erie and propose policy changes to help rectify those concerns.

And of course, there are nonprofits addressing these concerns like the newly formed Groundwork Erie (focused on Lake Erie water conservation), PenFuture, The Regional Science Consortium, and various local and regional conservancy groups. But, according to the county's Emerge 2040 report, despite "a 25-year strategy to create a more sustainable, resilient, and prosperous Erie County," "no formal Erie Climate Action Plan has been developed," which is alarming, to say the least. We have, collectively, just experienced the hottest summer on record ever. The tipping point has happened, the floodgates are open, and we can hope (while also advocating, protesting, attending council sessions, etc.) that 2024 will bring more "development" on this issue locally.

**Our Erie Reader Year**

What does a year mean to us here at the Reader? What can we hang our community-contribution hats on for 2023? While this year has brought a personnel

shift (Hi! It's me, Erin Phillips, your Erie Reader managing editor, seeing through my first full year at the helm and finally maybe getting the hang of it), most of what is expected of us has remained the same.

**Regardless of the coverage we've received nationwide, 2023 has been a year of major moves and big changes for Erie. Where those changes fall on the cringe-o-meter varies wildly, as our county has certainly seen some struggles this year. BUT we always have something to celebrate — some new successes, businesses, nonprofits, or creative endeavors for which to cheer.**

We have brought you another year of **Best of Erie** — highlighting those businesses, artists, nonprofits, restaurants, and cultural institutions that YOU feel are worthy of the recognition (reminder: voting for

2023's Best of Erie closes on Dec. 11, log in and contribute now before it's too late).

We've highlighted our 11th class of **40 Under 40 honorees**, which is always an inspiring list, reminding us all that you're never too young (or too old) to make a positive impact on Erie's community.

We've introduced our newest publication, the **Erie Reader Business Quarterly** showcasing our local economy and the businesses that make it hum.

We've published another stunning edition of our comprehensive **Best of Erie City Guide**, which helps to guide tourists and visitors in finding the best parts of Erie.

Overall, we're most proud to have continued to bolster local writing talent, giving a platform for sound political opinion (and still working to defend our First Amendment rights in a costly legal battle brought to us by State Senator Dan Laughlin), and highlighting local history while uncovering (often uncomfortable) truths about our own past. We've supported local artists, writers, and musicians with our reliable and insightful reviews, and made our pages a bit more colorful with our local, original comics.

And we're all ready to take a deep breath and do it again. We welcome this new year and the new cycle of monthly Erie Reader issues that will grow from it.

*Erin Phillips, who is taking a deep breath after writing this feature, can be reached at [erin@eriereader.com](mailto:erin@eriereader.com)*

*To donate to our legal defense fund, please visit [gofundme.com/ff/erie-reader-legal-defense-fund](http://gofundme.com/ff/erie-reader-legal-defense-fund)*

# We're growing.

## UPMC CHILDREN'S NOW AT UPMC HAMOT



We're expanding pediatric services at UPMC Hamot with our UPMC Children's inpatient unit. Pediatric patients now have greater access to the elite providers of UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, in a child-friendly setting that is close to home.

Inpatient care is now part of a wide range of services dedicated specifically for children in Erie, including:

- **Children's Express Care**
- **Children's Emergency Department**
- **Children's Specialty Care Center**
- **Children's Community Pediatrics locations**

Visit [UPMCHamot.com/Childrens](http://UPMCHamot.com/Childrens) to learn more.

**UPMC | CHILDREN'S**



# A Day in the Life of an Erieite, 1923

What the world looked like 100 years ago

By: Jonathan Burdick

Another year has come to an end. You can hardly believe it. Soon, it will be 1924! It seems like yesterday that you were celebrating New Years in 1920 — the last before Prohibition went into effect, making it quite a memorable night. Now you're nearly halfway through the decade.

It's been five years since the Great War. You still think often of that senseless catastrophe which killed nearly 200 people from Erie County. Many of the thousands of others who came back to Erie still suffer. They left the war, your uncle told you, but the war never left them. Shell shock, some call it. That was the same year of the deadly flu strain. It killed over 500 people in this city alone.

The past few years though, they've been calmer, at least relative to the chaos of those years. The economy is roaring. Unemployment is low. People *really* seem to like buying stuff. In the newspapers, you've never seen so many advertisements for things to purchase. Your neighbor even bought one of those powered vacuum cleaners.

Life expectancy is much higher than it was 20 years ago. One can, if they take care of themselves, expect to live to almost 60 years old! The city is growing too, doubling its population over the past two decades. Many of these nearly 100,000 residents are immigrants. Not all take so kindly to that.

Most do take kindly to the recent completion of the Mill Creek tube though, which puts the *entire* creek underground downtown. It's an incredible feat of engineering and, while it cost over two million dollars, you hope it will prevent a repeat of the disastrous 1915 flood. "That once babbling brook will babble no more forever," you read in the Erie Daily Times, which added that nobody could have imagined the "peril and nuisance" the creek would become.

You've found yourself with more leisure time recently, although you wonder if the current anti-union sentiment might lead to rollbacks of labor gains. You've been reading more and one of your favorites is this new publication called *Time* magazine. You learned about some new theoretical invention called a helicopter, how it may soon be easier to get a divorce, and that Pancho Villa and Gustave Eiffel died. You read stories on Harry Houdini freeing himself from a straitjacket while dangling upside down at deadly heights, about this newly mass produced medicine called insulin, and more about politics around the world than you ever could have imagined. The Soviet Union was officially established by those Russian revolutionaries a year ago. Then there's this fascist fellow named Mussolini who consolidated power in Italy. A successful coup d'état occurred in Spain while a coup d'état failed in Germany led by some palooka named Adolf Hitler. Fortunately, they arrested that guy.

Then, of course, there is the biggest news of the year. President Warren G. Harding died. The Erie Dai-



While this view of 10th and State Streets looks quite different than it did 100 years ago, some standout architecture still remains (like the Plaza Hardware building). The Strand Theatre was a popular spot to watch "moving picture shows" in the 1920s.

ly Times called it a "great shock to the nation" as they had previously been reporting on his recovery only the day before. They described him as "self-made" and "a man of people" who was a "kind, considerate, lovable character" with "unerring judgment" and would "rank as one of the great presidents of the United States." The president was very well-liked. In fact, you didn't know many people who *didn't* like him, especially being from nearby Ohio — although you're wondering if there may someday be a reevaluation of his presidency considering this whole Teapot Dome thing. Time will tell, you suppose. You haven't made up your mind on Calvin Coolidge yet, although it was tantalizing hearing him give his congressional address on the radio a few weeks ago.

For other enjoyable distractions, you're particularly fond of moving pictures. Your cousin working for Westinghouse in Pittsburgh swears that someday you'll be able to watch them in your own home. One of his colleagues is patenting something called a "television system." You don't understand it, but assume he's bluffing when he insists it might be as popular as the radio someday. As for the moving pictures, you've seen plenty of them at The Strand Theatre on State Street. You loved Charlie Chaplin in *The Pilgrim*. *The Ten Commandments* was like walking right into history. Can special effects get any better than that? Recently, Eugen Haesener, director of the Erie Philharmonic, stated that local theaters might remove their orchestras and replace them with "lowbrow ... vulgar sensational music." You hope he's wrong.

Whatever the case, you dream about starring in pictures one day: the glitz, the glam, driving a shiny,

brand new Cadillac or Willys-Knight through the California hills with that new "Hollywoodland" sign off in the distance. Maybe those four brothers who started off in New Castle would hire you now that they're out there. What was the name again? The Warner brothers? There are also those Disney brothers you read about who are trying to make those cartoons. You doubt they'll ever be able to compete with Felix the Cat.

Let's be real though. You know how to put on the ritz even here in Erie. Despite Prohibition, it's not too difficult to find one of the city's many speakeasies full of Canadian booze brought across the lake. And, much to your older family members' disapproval, you're quite fond of the blues and jazz. You've heard about these two new artists, Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong, and hope to get a chance to see them someday.

You wish you had more time for sports, but sometimes it's hard to keep up. You were happy that Jack Dempsey retained his World Heavyweight title and while you don't love the Yankees, you found it difficult to root against Babe Ruth who, with his three home runs and .368 batting average, helped the team win their first World Series. You simply can't believe that he came to Erie for an exhibition game against the Moose Club barely a week later! You heard that he even visited some of the local orphanages.

The role of women in society seems to be changing, you've noticed, likely thanks to women *finally* being granted the right to vote three years ago. Much to your excitement, there's even been some progression with including women in sports. The first ever USA

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



This view of State Street from the Library of Congress archives shows a day-to-day aerial look at Erie from 100 years ago. Factory smoke stacks and church steeples pepper the landscape, as we notice how the architectural history of Erie has changed.

Outdoor Track and Field Championships for women was held this year and last year was the first Women's Olympic Games in Paris.

Unfortunately though, most of these sports (much like the neighborhoods of Erie) are still segregated. While the Civil War ended nearly 60 years ago, racism seems just as rampant. The Ku Klux Klan is bigger than it has ever been. You still are shocked that *The Birth of a Nation* picture made them out to be heroes. You've read all the horror stories about lynchings and heard some estimates of 150,000 members in Penn-

sylvania alone. This doesn't surprise you given that nonsense with the 25,000 Klansmen down in Carnegie back in August, not to mention the increased activity right here in Erie. The Klan is mentioned in the Erie Daily Times, it seems, nearly every day. There seems to be a lot of internal strife in the local chapter and while generally not outright violent like in the southern states, you despise their backwardness and are amused when the paper continuously publishes the license plate numbers of those attending the Klan gatherings (much to their anger and frustration).

"What right has your representative to publish these numbers?" a local businessman and Klansman wrote to the editor. "Please cancel my subscription ... I don't want your paper."

In these final days of December, it's been *cold*. Temperatures are dipping well below zero. "Put plenty of alcohol in your radiators for New Year's eve celebration," you read in the paper. "This is the warning of the Erie weather man and is not to be misconstrued as a new kind of [Prohibition] joke." While you are fond of the seasons, nights like these make you yearn for a ferry ride across the bay for a picnic on the peninsula, maybe enjoying some treats from the Lake Shore Ice Cream Company.

Oh, and this won't mean much to you yet, but it was quite a year for births too: Bob Barker, Estelle Getty, Richard Attenborough, Bettie Page, Charlton Heston, Jean Stapleton, Ed McMahon, Norman Mailer, Bob Dole, Hank Williams, Glen Bell (your great-great-grandkids are really going to enjoy his Taco Bell someday), and, yes, TikTok star Uncle Jack were just a few someday famous names born in 1923.

Well, onward to 1924. Who knows what will be in store for you and the world over this upcoming year? If history provides any clues though, it will likely be quite unpredictable.

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

**MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE THIS YEAR**

**IT'S TIME FOR A PANACHE GIFT CARD**

PANACHE salon • spa GIFT CARD

PANACHE salon • spa

INSTANT GIFT CARDS ONLINE or IN STORE  
 PANACHEERIE.COM - 814.838.3333

BEST OF ERIE 2022

# Erie's Child Care Crisis

Women, children bear the brunt

By: Chloe Forbes

**W**hat happens when the workforce behind the workforce falters? When people can't go to work because there's no one to look after their children, and generations of youth miss out on essential learning opportunities?

Erie is about to find out.

Signs of a child care crisis ravaging the nation are starting to be seen in Erie County as the last pool of funding just dried up. The effects are beginning to hit home — and will likely worsen for years to come — as parents and early childhood educators endure a grueling and relentless fight. The worst part? Nobody is there to save them.

With Erie County officials making budget cuts to the Office of Children and Youth services, and major companies doing away with hybrid work schedules that accommodate parents who have to stay home with children, it's increasingly difficult to believe that the Erie community values families.

This isn't an issue that just landed on the radar, though. In 2021, the Jefferson Educational Society released a report where author and sustainability researcher Court Gould detailed how the child care crisis has worsened since the onset of the pandemic. He cited statewide data that revealed 55 percent of parents pre-pandemic reported they missed work due to child care issues, creating \$3.7 billion in lost revenue.

Now, pandemic-era funding has ended and child care is in an even more desperate situation. The Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission found that insufficient child care has created \$6.65 billion in losses this year.

That's \$4.1 billion in lost earnings and reduced participation in the workforce, \$1.52 billion in reduced business revenue and turnover costs, and \$1.03 billion in tax revenue loss.

In 2021, Gould warned that without action, the situation would become dire when temporary relief funding for child care ended. What will be Erie County's fate since it turned a blind eye to the crisis?

Well, the loss of child care is not just an inconvenience for families. It's the mass exodus of women from the workforce; it's the inequitable education for future generations; it's the hardship driving demand for mental health services; and it's the reason economic development needs a different perspective.

## Immediate implications

Many parents are already feeling the hurt of the child care crisis as Erie Insurance recently announced that hybrid-position employees will be required to return to the office beginning in the new year. For parents who are now unable to stay home with their children, they are finding it hard to find affordable, quality care with available spots.

When Ashley Aldan, a 31-year-old mother in Fairview, found out she was pregnant, she already had to leave one job due to unrealistic work expectations for new mothers. She's now at odds as she took a job



**The United States is experiencing an acute crisis in child care availability and affordability, and the problem is hitting home in Erie as well. Disproportionately hindering women in the workforce, many are forced to find remote work or postpone or forgo their careers entirely due to lack of dependable child care.**

at Erie Insurance because it allowed her the flexibility to pick up and drop off her now 3-year-old son at child care. She said that she initially joined the company in a different department, but she was under the impression that returning to in-office work was not a direction the company was heading in.

"We are certainly empathetic to the personal responsibilities of our employees and understand that locating and keeping quality child care can be a challenge in the communities we serve and across the country," Lydia Harris, communications consultant for Erie Insurance said. "We encourage employees to work closely with their leaders to identify a solution that helps accommodate their recurring personal commitments."

Aldan said that thankfully, she can speak with her manager and work out a doable schedule. Others are not as lucky.

"A lot of concerns have been expressed for single parents or parents who work multiple jobs and there's less flexibility in their household and how they're going to be able to make this work," Aldan said.

A previous Erie Insurance employee, who wishes

to remain anonymous, said that Erie Insurance was beginning back-to-work plans when her daughter turned 1. She asked her management if she could remain remote due to breastfeeding and its associated difficulties in the workplace, and said she was quickly denied.

"I soon after looked for a new job," she said.

Even for Aldan, though, the transition will be difficult.

The child care center she was finally able to enroll her son in is far from her office and doesn't open until 7 a.m. when Aldan needs to get to work. The center faces its own challenges and can't remain open longer in the day due to short staffing, a common story.

Currently, centers across the nation are experiencing short staffing and high turnover.

Nadine Leach, owner of Handled with Care, said it's one of her biggest obstacles.

Arlene McMahon, owner of Little Acorns Learning Center seconded that.

"It's difficult. Since COVID, employees and applicants have kind of changed their priorities for work. They're looking for things with a little more flexibility

Dine with us this season for chances to win with our Red Envelope Giveaway!

**SPEND THE HOLIDAY AT**

*Cloud*  
WINE BAR & RESTAURANT

**BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY PARTY AT CLOUD 9 AND RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH US!\***

\*OPEN NEW YEAR'S EVE 4PM-12AM PARTY BOOKING AND RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE BY PHONE AT 814-870-9007 OR ONLINE AT WWW.CLOUD9ERIE.COM  
\*GIFT CARD SALE ENDS DEC. 16TH

Buy a \$50 gift card, get a \$10 card free!



**Your One Stop Hippie Shop**

Incense | Apparel | Jewelry  
CBD | Smoking Accessories  
Crystals & So Much More!

Enjoy  
**20% off any one item**

One Coupon Per Person  
Cannot be combined with any other discount  
Expires 1/31/24

Find Us On Facebook @lovelightheart soul

**Store Hours: Tues-Sat 11am-6pm  
Sun-Mon 11am-4pm**

*Love Light Heart Soul*

223 Main St W. (Route 20)  
Girard, PA 16417 (814) 402-1257

Locally Owned  
kitchen tune-up  
And Operated

**kitchen tune-up**

Update. Upgrade. Uplift.

Open Up the Possibilities For Your Kitchen!

**REFACING AND REDOORING:**

- No demolition
- Update existing cabinets to a modern style & door
- Less cost, mess & time than a full remodel

**1 DAY TUNE-UP:**

- Restores & repairs wood cabinets
- Quick & effective way to update kitchen cabinets

Also Cabinet Painting, New Cabinets, Accessories, Organizers and more!

Serving Erie, PA and surrounding area

**Schedule your free consultation!**

814.616.5219  
kitchentuneup.com

**HO, HO,  
OH!**

Everything you need to make your holiday extra special.

**ROMOLO®  
CHOCOLATES**

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

Give A Crepe Instagram- Google -Facebook  
2431 Peach Street

La Creperie

# WE LOVE GIVING A CREPE

Seven Days a Week 10 to 3  
Catering- Carry-Out - Call-in  
We Give A Crepe About Feeding you Local and Delicious

# Tis the season to shop the COLONY

**We have something for everyone!**

West 8th street just east of Peninsula Drive

## How long should your pet live?

Help your pet live a longer, healthier life.

# Nickel Plate Mills

1932 Parade St, Erie, PA 16503  
www.nickelplatemills.net  
Like us on facebook



# Keystone Scholars

## Keystone Scholars is an automatic, at-birth \$100 investment for education savings!

All children born to PA residents, including children who are adopted, automatically have a Keystone Scholars account in their name with \$100 for postsecondary education expenses.\*

Use funds for career & vocational training – or at community colleges & four-year universities.

\*Child must be born on or after January 1, 2019.



**Stacy Garrity**  
Pennsylvania Treasurer

**800-440-4000 | pa529.com/keystone**

Keystone Scholars is open to Pennsylvania residents born after December 31, 2018 and children born after December 31, 2018 who are subsequently adopted by a Pennsylvania resident. The child must be a Pennsylvania resident at birth or adoption and at the time the Keystone Scholars funds are used. The child must also be the beneficiary of a PA 529 account other than the Keystone Scholars account at the time Keystone Scholars funds are used. If not used by the beneficiary's 29th birthday, the funds will be returned to the Pennsylvania Treasury Department (Treasury). Funds in a Keystone Scholars account will be invested in a PA 529 GSP account and will remain under the sole custody of Treasury until they are used for the purposes of paying for qualified higher education expenses at an institution of higher education. A list of qualified higher education expenses may be found at www.pa529.com. No additional funds may be contributed to a Keystone Scholars account. However, families are encouraged to save in their own PA 529 account.



After announcing that all employees need to return to in-office work after working remotely or with a hybrid schedule since March of 2020, Erie Insurance (Erie's largest employer) will have workers facing the difficult decision of how to access affordable childcare.

and want higher wages," McMahon related. "We are a very payroll-heavy industry, so we are very much dependent on staffing. We're not like a McDonald's where you can just put in a self-serve kiosk and save some money."

Childcare centers can't afford to cut corners when the education and care of children is at stake.

Places like Erie Insurance offer benefits such as assistance to find child care and budget for it, but some benefits have guidelines like giving the company 30 days' notice before being able to use the assistance. Others are able to locate child care but the waitlist is too long to be a realistic option.

A recent report by the PA Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) and Ready Nation found that across Pennsylvania, working families report struggling with affordability, quality, and access to child care. Across the commonwealth, 61 percent of respondents reported affordability is a challenge, while 51 percent said quality child care was an issue, and 70 percent did not have access to child care at all.

Once Mekenzie Morgan, 27, of Erie, calculated the cost of child care versus how much she'd make working, she broke even.

A study by Pennsylvania State University this year revealed a median cost of \$339 per child per week for

child care.

That's around \$17,000 per year and is on par with rates in Erie County. For reference, U.S. Census data reports the median household income in Erie County as \$56,000.

Morgan is now a stay-at-home mother due to her hardships in finding viable child care options. She's also had multiple job offers she's had to turn down due to the waitlist for child care.

Madisyn Schaefer, a 22-year-old mother in Union City, began looking into child care when she was pregnant so that she could go back to work after the birth of her daughter. She was on a waiting list for over a year before she got the call about an available spot. That spot became a moot point when Schaefer couldn't get a job to pay for child care by the week-long deadline the center gave her.

She became limited to jobs with night shifts as her family could only watch her daughter after daytime work hours. Now, her daughter is next on the list, but the next open spot is estimated to be up to a year away.

Unfortunately, the tale of women leaving the workforce isn't far-fetched.

Currently, the United States Department of Labor reports that the participation between men and

women in the workforce is the most equal it has ever been, and the Brookings Institute reports that 70 percent of those women have children.

When parents can't find child care, they can't work. It seems mothers might be on the hook for that loss more than fathers, which would drastically affect the current progress in women's employment.

After surveying a large population, the Marshall Plan for Moms found that 45 percent of women who left the workforce cited lack of child care as the reason they left, whereas only 14 percent of men said it was a reason for their departure.

"I think it affects mothers more than fathers because of gender stereotypes," Morgan said. "Mothers stay home and raise the babies, and dad goes and works. Men are not penalized for having children, while women are."

She said she was one week postpartum when her previous manager sent work-related messages.

"I was seen as leaving them hanging, but if it was my husband that was home after a surgery, he wouldn't hear anything," she said.

Aldan has been in similar situations with various employers.

"There is a different type of pressure placed on women to maintain a perfect household — to sit down and do the educational games with the kids, go out and do the sensory activities, have everything planned, and if you're in the office, great, but maintain that balance," she lamented.

In Pennsylvania, the Century Foundation estimates that with the most recent funding cuts, 2,848 child care programs will close, and parents will lose \$412 million in earnings after being forced to cut hours or leave the workforce.

#### Future ramifications

For Thanksgiving, children at Little Acorns ruffled their feathers in the kitchen, learning hands-on about pumpkin pie's many ingredients and textures. McMahon, the owner, said sensory experiences and socialization are essential to development.

"We're in a big world of technology, so children are on phones and iPads, and to be able to see the world around them and figure out how things work is going to help them be better learners in the future," she said.

Currently, the center has 47 children with over 200 families on its waitlist. Its capacity is 52, but it doesn't have the staffing to be at capacity.

To encourage high-quality child care, Pennsylvania rewards those centers that meet high standards of care. To assess quality, the commonwealth uses Keystone STARS (Standards, Training/Professional Development, Assistance, Resources and Supports). There are four levels from STAR1 to STAR4. The higher the STAR level, the higher the quality.

Many child care centers in the area, like Little Acorns, Handled with Care, YMCA of Corry, and Early Connections, are STAR4 — the highest level. In turn, the state provides more funding at each ascending level.

However, regulations require specific staff training, child-to-teacher ratios, activity management, minimum teacher pay, and more — in addition to the basic

guidelines child care centers must follow to maintain their licenses.

The requirements exist to ensure high quality, but it's backfiring.

The lowest position a center can hire is a teacher's aide, but those aides are not allowed to be alone with a group of children and can't do things like walk a child to the bathroom without the supervision of an assistant group supervisor — a position that requires at least 2,500 hours of documented experience in Early Childhood Education (ECE).

An aide needs a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential. Therefore, child care centers compete with state-funded public schools to get those workers — amid a teacher shortage — and are currently losing the battle.

Nia Peoples, 21, of Edinboro, is an employee at the Wattsburg YMCAs child care program. She took up the job — one of three she has — because she enjoys fostering growth in children. She will earn her CDA soon and has decided to go to school for ECE, but she plans to work at a public school.

Public schools can pay more and provide benefits.

With a limited pool of hires, child care centers face the dilemma of not having the staff required to maintain a STAR rating, dropping them down to a lower level. With no choice but to accept the lower-level rating, the child care centers lose funding.

McMahon budgets a lot of time and education fees for training required by the STAR program, too.

"If the finances are not there, it goes onto the burden of the families paying for that, and they can't afford to pay anymore. Tuition is very expensive. It's more than a house payment," she said, noting that parents shouldn't have to choose between quality child care or putting food on the table.

She emphasized that the quality of child care shouldn't depend on wealth. It should be accessible for everyone to empower future generations.

Research shows that the return on investment for high-quality child care centers is high, with increased school and career achievement and reduced costs in remedial education, health, and criminal justice system expenditures. Child care is a place to nurture skills like impulse control, persistence, teamwork, cognition, and character, which drive education, career, and life success.

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman reports that the highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing from birth to age 5. His research reveals a 13 percent return on investment per child through better education, economic, health, and social outcomes.

That means for every \$1 invested into early learning, the return can be up to \$16.

#### Where can Erie go from here?

Although it would be easy enough to point fingers and blame each other, it's not feasible. For a systemic issue, there needs to be a systemic change, and that involves everyone working toward the same goal.

To understand a possible solution, it's important to look at the past.

During World War II, when men went to war and women took on "Rosie the Riveter" type roles in facto-

ries, the government provided child care as a service.

After the war, a bill was brought to the table in 1976 to expand the program as a permanent, nationwide service. President Richard Nixon vetoed the bill. In the following years — the late 1970s and early 1980s — the country began providing subsidies for child care to those in the lowest socioeconomic classes.

Those programs have changed over time but still exist. Families at or below 100 percent of the poverty level are eligible for the Head Start program, and families at or below 300 percent of the line qualify for Pre-K Counts.

Many child care centers encourage families to apply for subsidies, and although it helps many families, it further alienates the working class, who don't qualify for aid but struggle to afford tuition.

Leach and McMahon also said there's a gap between what the subsidy pays and what a private parent pays, leaving the child care center to make up the difference. In other words, the more disadvantaged children a center helps, the more of a bill they have to foot.

they can directly work in child care centers or at least have a path to obtain a CDA certificate and possibly even a bachelor's degree in ECE.

Kim Beers, who serves as the Early Connections ECE pre-apprenticeship program coordinator, helps to establish connections between community partners and the schools and students in search of available funding.

School districts, including Erie High and Corry Area High School, currently have ECE programs that work to prepare students to enter the workforce upon graduation.

In addition, in 2018, a pilot group formed with two Pennsylvania universities — Shippensburg and Edinboro University (now PennWest Edinboro) — to obtain a Professional Development Organization (PDO) grant that breaks down the cost of higher education to make it more attainable for those who already have CDA certificates. The PDO grant pays tuition for ECE workers who want to get a degree.

Beers and Michelle Harkins, director of Early Connections, confirmed the turnover rate for those who

---

**The loss of child care is not just an inconvenience for families. It's the mass exodus of women from the workforce; it's the inequitable education for future generations; it's the hardship driving demand for mental health services; and it's the reason economic development needs a different perspective.**

---

Following the pandemic, Gould said he believes the crisis merits another look at universal child care.

"With the pandemic exacting a devastating economic toll and claiming more lives than the number of American soldiers killed in combat during the Vietnam War, World War I, and World War II combined, the economics of child care is understandably back on the table," he wrote in his 2021 report.

Possible solutions could include increasing the threshold for subsidy eligibility, increasing reimbursement rates to match the true cost of care in child care centers, supporting the expansion of child care options including those with nonstandard-hour care and for families in rural communities, as well as increasing compensation and access to benefits for ECE workers.

Fortunately for Erie, there are some solutions already beginning to take shape.

As child care centers continue upholding high standards for care and the demand for ECE workers grows, an apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship model is taking form. Early Connections is a registered pre-apprenticeship intermediary, as pre-apprenticeships enable high school students to gain experience in the ECE field. That way, when high schoolers graduate,

participated in the pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship programs is lower than those who don't utilize it.

Donna-Marie Cole-Malott, co-leader with the Pennsylvania Education Diversity Consortium, also stated that turnover could be reduced using various tactics, from higher education to professional development, to help connect community members with resources that alleviate barriers like cost and race-related discrepancies. For example, creating a pipeline for community members to receive an education and enter the workforce in their communities. That way, there's a stronger connection between educators and the children they care for, many of whom they would share a background with.

In addition to advocacy for child care workers, Harkins said it's helpful to have business allies, too. In fact, Erie Insurance is one of the businesses that contribute to early learning initiatives in the area.

They have donated to Erie's Future Fund, which provides scholarships to low-income families to allow children to attend high-quality programs at 3 and 4 years old.

The Future Fund is an investment into the community for children from families whose gross fam-



ily income meets the federal poverty threshold of up to 350 percent. Unlike the subsidy for children from low-income families to attend child care, the gross family income requirement is more inclusive as it doesn't require both parents within a family to be working to qualify. It looks at the bigger picture when considering a family's situation, especially as one parent may be unable to work due to the lack of child care.

For example, a mother staying at home and living on her significant other's income due to the lack of child care may meet the poverty requirements based on income alone, but because both parents don't have jobs, they don't qualify.

The Future Fund was created in 2011 as an outgrowth of the Erie Community Foundation's Early Childhood Advisory Panel in partnership with the United Way of Erie County, members of the Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC), and Erie Together.

The program enables families to choose STAR 3 or 4 facilities to send their children to. Since its creation, the fund has helped 1,600 children receive education before kindergarten.

Those organizations who donate to the scholarship effort also receive a tax break. For those companies who want to express support, they can also help through cause-related marketing.

It's an opportunity for companies to shine a light on the issue while receiving positive public relations.

Harkins, who oversees cause-related initiatives with Erie's Future Fund, said it's vitally important to work toward a singular goal to solve some issues within the child care system. With many policymakers coming up with their versions of solutions, she said it's helpful to educate everyone and get on the same page to truly progress.

McMahon shared her frustrations as well, saying, "The general feeling is that everybody acknowledges that the system is broken for child care. It sits on the backs of the families to be able to make it work, yet nobody wants to be able to put the money in to support the children. There are always other things that seem to be more important than that, and they tell us there's only so much money to go around, and everybody has a need."

Also unlike policy, the funding stream from Erie's Future Fund takes effect rather quickly. Harkins said they have a fair, transparent system with public reporting, so there's never a question about where the money is going and how it's impacting the community. Following that logical system enables them to put things into effect fairly quickly.

The other model Erie businesses are looking at is an employer model, where companies would pay for spots at local child care centers. That way, they can recruit employees and offer child care as a benefit. Parents said the downside is that they don't want their employers dictating the quality of care their children receive but said credit toward tuition may be helpful.

For example, Bank of America employees can receive up to \$275 per month per eligible child toward child care.

Looking at research in economic development and various forms of research could help Erie create the first of its kind: an American city with universal child care.

With a small enough community, leaders could create a ballpark number to reach by using data like how many beds prisons may need in the future based on current illiteracy rates, or how quality control would increase in manufacturing plants due to lessened burdens for working parents.

Erie County and the City of Erie are in the news for their economic development already, talking about its many benefits to reviving the area. Child care reform would be a crucial notch in that belt.

As Gould said in 2021, "A city of Erie's modest size, and with its oversized resources, is well-positioned to make a great stand and become a national role model for eliminating child care as a barrier to work. Erie has a unique abundance of public, private, university, philanthropic, and civic leaders who, when focused on a problem, can pioneer solutions. The case is clear that child care is critical to not just COVID recovery but equitable economic progress upon which Erie's aspirations depend."

*Chloe Forbes is a local journalist with an exceptional devotion to the Oxford comma. She can be reached at chloeforbes14@gmail.com.*



**ANGELO'S ROOFING**  
814-490-8483

**"We've got you covered."**

1504 Cherry Street • Erie, PA

I HEARD YOU WERE SEARCHING FOR A

**HOME  ALONE**



**Brielle Brown** 814.323.3619  
REALTOR® now with (814) 459-9400 ext 299



2635 W 26TH ST, ERIE, PA 16506  
BRIELLE@TRYAGRESTI.COM



scan me!

## Gem City Style: Dec. 2023

An interview with Chris Pace of Leadhead Screenprinting

By: Jessica Hunter

**Jessica Hunter (JH):** Chris, you have been in business since 2009. Can you shed some light on your background and how you started Leadhead Screenprinting?

**Chris Pace (CP):** I grew up being obsessed with comic books and music, so I originally attended Edinboro University with the intention of becoming an illustrator. Edinboro didn't offer an illustration major, so I settled for graphic design and absolutely hated it. Sitting in front of a computer all day clicking a mouse is not for me. All BFA students have to take an introductory printmaking class, and I fell in love with it immediately. It was exactly what was missing for me: a chance to illustrate combined with using big, clunky equipment.

I have collected screen-printed posters since I was a teenager, so that was what I really focused on in my own work. When I graduated, I was working at a bar called the Crooked I, which had local and touring musicians performing almost every day of the week. A friend of mine already owned a very basic screen-printing set-up, so we joined forces and started printing out of the basement of the bar. I met musicians and new people nightly, so it didn't take long to establish a loyal customer base. Fourteen years later, I'm somehow still doing this.

**JH:** I love seeing your work in the community with local businesses and artists. What services can you offer?

**CP:** Our main focus is offering traditional hand-pulled screen-printed apparel to smaller businesses, bands, and artists. Embroidery, custom-printed mugs, keychains and all that other stuff is not something we have any desire to get into. Being the next Canva or CustomInk sounds like a fate worse than death to me. I would love to do more poster printing, vinyl record printing, and artistic projects. We recently purchased a Risograph, which is another form of printmaking that's perfect for posters, zines, and comics which I'm really excited to start offering to customers.

**JH:** Tell us a bit about your process from the design to the finished product.

**CP:** Generally customers approach us with a design already created and we go through the process of separating the colors in Photoshop into "layers" or "spot colors." Each layer is then printed out onto a transparency, which is then "burned" onto a screen that has been coated in a light-sensitive emulsion. Essentially you're making a stencil that ink passes through onto a garment when you pull a squeegee over it. After lots of swearing, interruptions, phone calls, texts, emails, Instagram messages, Facebook messages, and walk-ins... you will eventually have a finished customer order.

**JH:** What advice do you have for someone interested in starting a business in Erie, PA?

**CP:** I'm probably the last person to ask advice from because I'm pretty sure I've done everything wrong from day one. This job started as a way to make some spare change for drinking money, and then it was a side gig, and then eventually turned into a 70 hour a week job. I never took a business class, never applied for a loan, and didn't have rich benefactors bankroll-

JESSICA HUNTER



**Chris Pace, owner of Leadhead Screenprinting, speaks with Jessica Hunter about how his screenprinting and design business got started, how it's grown, and what he hopes to work on in the future within the company's new space at PACA.**

ing me. I'm incredibly stubborn and independent and hate asking for help, which I'm sure has been detri-

---

**"Our main focus is offering traditional hand-pulled screen-printed apparel to smaller businesses, bands, and artists. Embroidery, custom-printed mugs, keychains and all that other stuff is not something we have any desire to get into. Being the next Canva or CustomInk sounds like a fate worse than death to me." — Chris Pace, owner of Leadhead Screenprinting**

---

mental. Don't be me. I guess my only advice is master one skill; nobody ever recommends a Chinese buffet because they have good pizza. Also... get paid up-front.

**JH:** You recently moved; it is such a unique space! How are you liking the new downtown shop?

**CP:** It's amazing. We outgrew our last space and were tripping over each other. I actually printed out of PACA when it was known as the Artworks building

from 2011-2013. It's nice to be back and surrounded by so many artists and creatives. Mark Tanenbaum and crew have worked hard to make something really special here and don't get enough credit.

**JH:** How do you set yourself apart from larger corporations aside from your sick playlists online? I'm a big fan!

**CP:** This job is the literal definition of repetition, so it can get boring quickly. I have to entertain myself, and that seems to manifest as me using a lot of vulgar language on our social media posts, dad jokes, and posting the music I'm listening to while we work. We are a small operation, so I'm involved in every step of the process. Will the competition respond to your emails faster? Yup. Will they complain to you about their sore wrists and recommend some obscure niche album? Nope. Choose wisely.

**JH:** What is the coolest and/or weirdest thing you have ever printed?

**CP:** I could tell you but this is a family-friendly publication.

*Leadhead Screenprinting can be found at [leadheadcreative.com](http://leadheadcreative.com) or on Instagram or Facebook @ [leadhead\\_screenprinting](https://www.instagram.com/leadhead_screenprinting)*

*Jessica Hunter can be found at [jessicahunterphotos.com](http://jessicahunterphotos.com)*

## Bean & Bear Cafe Sets Roots in Edinboro

Edinboro's newest coffee shop offers coffee, hangout for students and locals

By: Julia Carden

Edinboro locals Katie and Jason Spangenberg recently opened the town's newest coffee shop, Bean & Bear Cafe, a name inspired by their beloved family pets.

"My sister had the idea for the name Bean & Bear after our pets. My cat is named Muenster 'Bear,' and my dog-in-law is named Fletcher 'Bean.' We liked it with reference to coffee beans," Katie said, who owns and operates the cafe with her husband (and Edinboro borough manager) Jason. The Spangenbergs both attended General McLane High School and are Edinboro University alumni with degrees in business.

"Between my love for coffee, and my urge to open a business, it just made sense," Katie explained. "I've always wanted to open a business and I have a lot of food industry background." Katie was previously employed by PennWest Edinboro's Global Education Office, and has also worked as a hostess, waitress, cook, and bartender at Culbertson's Hills Golf Course, as well as Charlie's Pub and Eatery in Edinboro.

She attributes her most invaluable industry experience to a more personal influence — her father. "My dad has been in food service since high school, so I had a lot of influence and inspiration from him and his various roles over the years," Katie shared.

Bean & Bear offers drinks and food items in a welcoming cafe space complete with free Wi-Fi and a curated playlist of lo-fi music. They have specialty beverages seasonally, like the peppermint mocha cold brew and sugar cookie latte from their holiday menu. In addition to drinks, the cafe also offers breakfast sandwiches and baked goods. Both drinks and food items are locally sourced from Majestic Baking Company and Happy Mug.

The cafe does not sell bagels to avoid competition with the local staple down the road, Lakeside Bagel and Deli. "I love the bagel shop. They have great bagels, so we're not serving them," Katie said. "We don't want to compete with local businesses. That isn't our goal." According to Katie, the homemade cinnamon rolls are a fan favorite, and usually sell out before lunch. Her personal favorite pairing is the chai latte.

The Spangenbergs wanted to provide a traditional cafe environment experience that they noticed Edinboro lacked. "We wanted a counter-serve, traditional coffee

JULIA CARDEN



**New to the Edinboro scene and filling a niche that was previously empty, Bean and Bear brings hand crafted coffee to local students and residents alike. Owner Katie Spangenberg named the cafe after her beloved family pets.**

shop. All the college towns in the state system have one," she explained. "The goal is to be a hangout spot where people don't feel pressured to give up a seat. And we're already seeing it. There are always college students here studying."

Bean & Bear is conveniently located near Lakeside Commons at 222 W. Plum St. in Edinboro. "We wanted to be as close to downtown and the campus as possible," Katie said. "We looked at a few places, but we ultimately chose this location because of its walkable distance and ample parking."

After signing the lease last March, the space was gutted and transformed into a warm and inviting cafe. "From floor to ceiling, everything is brand new," she said. "When we moved in, it was an office. We had to build the kitchen, move the bathrooms, it was a total overhaul."

Katie says the greatest challenge in the new business venture was navigating paperwork, construction, and scheduling. The Spangenbergs originally planned to open the cafe in July, but construction caused delays. Once construction was complete, they hit the ground running.

"There was definitely a time where I was training employees on the espresso machine and they were putting up drywall in the kitchen," she joked. "We got inspection approval and opened the next day."

They never held an official grand opening, because community members began showing up in support before they got the chance. "On Sept. 27, we hosted a soft-opening. We planned out the first

three days to be invite-only to get our staff comfortable. But people just started wandering in. By homecoming weekend, we were fully open."

Barista Paige Geason has worked at Bean & Bear since the cafe opened. She says working in a new business environment allows for more authentic interactions with customers. "We field a lot of questions about how we operate, which keeps it fresh in our minds," she said. "I enjoy the little questions."

Similarly, barista Shiloh Morris says her favorite part of her job is meeting new customers and working alongside her coworkers. "My experience has been amazing so far. I love that we are all growing and working together," Morris said. "It's been really fun watching my boss, Katie, adapt to running a business and her passion for it."

After an intentionally impromptu opening, Katie says her first moment of realization came later on. "It's been a whirlwind so far. So, for a while it didn't seem real," she said. "I was working in the kitchen the other day and behind me I heard people talking, music playing, the baristas working, the milk steamer going off. That was my 'it happened' moment. It was pretty exciting."

*The Bean & Bear Cafe welcomes customers Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sundays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Find more information or order online at [beanandbearcafe.com](http://beanandbearcafe.com).*

*Julia Carden can be reached at [juliacarden91@gmail.com](mailto:juliacarden91@gmail.com)*

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS from the EMTA!



NEW YEAR

NEW CAREER  
We are Hiring!

Scan to see job opportunities!



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

## Advent Lectio

Join us for a period of shared reflection, contemplation and conversation.

Mount St. Benedict Monastery  
6101 East Lake Road, Erie

Materials provided,  
donations accepted.



Join us either  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13 7-8:30 PM  
or  
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 3-4:30 PM

Register by emailing  
[retreats@eriebenedictines.org](mailto:retreats@eriebenedictines.org)

Benedictine  
Sisters of Erie

## EVENTS

### Striking 12 Shakes the Grooves Off New Years Funk

The PACA musical finds a full spectrum of light in dark humor

#### CONTINUING FRIDAY, DEC. 8

**B**rimming with cynical holiday sentiments, *Striking 12* is the latest musical being staged at the Performing Arts Collective Alliance (PACA). Written by Brendan Milburn and Valerie Vigoda (member of the band GrooveLily), and Rachel Sheinkin, *Striking 12* is also inspired in part by Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Match Girl*. While the grim 1845 tale is explicitly mentioned by the characters in the main story, the tone is balanced out by a modern, post-holiday attitude. Director Kate Neubert Lechner noted that "It's truly the only holiday show that I've encountered that can be equally enjoyed by folks who love, hate, or are indifferent about the holidays."

Taking place during New Year's Eve, things center around "The Man Who's Had Enough," played by the wonderfully biting Josiah Prittie. He resolves to spend the holidays alone in his apartment, until he runs into a plucky Light Seller (played with charming resilience by Maeve Kirby), offering full-spectrum Christmas lights to ward off Seasonal Affective Disorder

(S.A.D.). Lechner explained that it "provides a pretty realistic look at why the holidays might not be the most exciting time for some people, while ultimately providing a realistic message of hope at the end."

The show's unique formalism and meta storytelling is another remarkable part of the production. As Prittie's character interacts with new people, he begins to read *The Little Match Girl* (played by the heartfelt SaNae Stephens), which is itself retold as a play-within-the-play. These narratives are woven together with multiple narrations, interstitials, commercials, and short sketches, having the majority of the cast act in multiple roles. All this, and the backing band (in full stage view) interacts with the story itself.

Portraying a litany of quirky characters, the cast also features the talents of Alex Staley, Marley Tressler, Michelle Michali, Dan Bainbridge, and Curtis Jones III. The band is composed of Bainbridge, Andrea Tredient, Moe Ferrara, Dan Lucore, Jim Kipp, and Liz Alward.

"It's essentially a staged concert, rather

DIGIT: DAVE SCHROEDER



**A holiday production for everyone, even those who despise the holidays – PACA's latest show *Striking 12* is a uniquely interwoven story with an ensemble cast and a live band bringing a concert-like vibe to the stage.**

er than a big splashy musical, so the focus was really on telling the story with the music," Lechner described. "We also wanted to focus a lot on making the audience know that they are also a part of the storytelling experience, so depending on the audience from night to night, it

could be a different vibe at every show."

— Nick Warren

Weekends through Dec. 17 // Fridays and Saturdays and Thursday, Dec. 14 at 7:30, Sunday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$20 // For tickets and more info: PACA1505.org



## Cobb's Thrift Shop

Giant Multi-Level Thrift Shop  
Offering New & Gently Used Furniture,  
Appliances, Clothing, Jewelry,  
House Wares, Home Decor & MORE!

**OPEN 6 DAYS A WEEK!  
DELIVERY AVAILABLE**

**BRING THIS AD IN TO RECEIVE  
10% OFF YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE**

1215 Parade St. Erie, PA  
(814) 455-4068

Store Hours: Monday–Saturday, 10am–6pm  
Like Us on Facebook

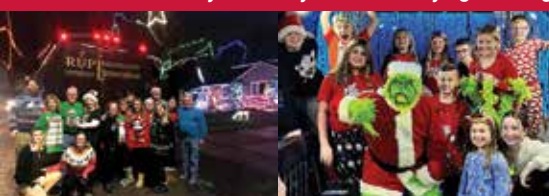
## Celebrate the holiday season with

Rupp  
Limousine

**Our wine and ale tours are  
the perfect way to celebrate!**



**Create memories with your family with a holiday light outing.**



**HOLIDAY LIGHT OUTINGS! PIZZA & POP PROVIDED. BYOB FOR ADULTS.**

**Erie's Oldest & Most Trusted Limousine Service**  
Public/Private Tours • We Handle All Arrangements • Comfortable & Convenient

303 E. 32nd  
**814.452.2025**  
www.RuppLimo.com  
Perfect for bachelor/bachelorette Events!  
All major credit cards accepted  
PA-PUC:AOQ101537  
ICC MC 274929  
Limousine Service For All Occasions

## Glass Growers Gallery

Art Gallery + Gift Shop **Since 1974**

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

10 E. 5th Street  
Erie, PA 16507

www.glassgrowersgallery.com

814.453.3758 • staff@glassgrowersgallery.com



**Friday, December 15**

**GALLERY NIGHT & HOLIDAY SHOW CELEBRATION 5-10pm**

**Saturday, December 16**

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

**Sunday, December 24**

**CHRISTMAS EVE SHOPPING AND  
GIFT WRAPPING STATION 9am-3pm**



## 'Tis the Season for Dance and Music on the Mary D'Angelo Stage

Mercyhurst makes merry with holiday concerts

### BEGINNING FRIDAY, DEC. 8

There are few things that haringer the holiday season like Christmas jazz standards and ballet — namely the *Nutcracker Suite* — and the Mercyhurst Department of Dance, as well as the D'Angelo Department of Music, are bringing both to the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center stage for two jolly nights (and one morning) of music and dance.

Mercyhurst alumnus Dillon Shidemantle (Class of 2015) will preside over the family-friendly event as master of ceremonies — and, as a guest artist, will provide his vocal talents. The Mercyhurst Jazz Ensemble, under director Scott Meier, will kick off the event playing Christmas standards with a big band twist, including "Joy to the World" and a unique piccolo and ukulele duet during "Santa Baby."

And after a brief intermission, the Mercyhurst Dancers will perform *The Nutcracker Suite*, accompanied by Tchaikovsky's immediately recognizable score, but with a delightful twist — the "Land of the Sweets" will be set in the Roaring Twenties.

This is actually a little taste of the collaboration between the Department of Dance and Mercyhurst alumnus Justin Michael Hogan (Class of 2009), as C. Noelle Partusch, professor and chair of dance at Mercyhurst explained.

"[Justin] mulled around an idea for several years about choreographing a version of *The Nutcracker* for the Department of Dance that would tie into the university and the Erie area. In addition, he wanted to place the story in Erie in the 1920s when the university was founded," Partusch said.

While you're enjoying this holiday homage, it's important to remember that the music and dance are all the product of student dedication and hard work. "I hope audiences leave the performance feeling as though they've just left a magical place," Partusch said. "I hope they feel as much joy in watching the students do what they love as the students feel in doing it." — Cara Suppa

7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. Saturday // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$5-15 // Info and tickets: [miac.mercyhurst.edu](http://miac.mercyhurst.edu)



The Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center will light up with a holiday melange of ballet, music, and celebration. In a collaboration within the dance department at Mercyhurst University, enjoy the tradition of the *Nutcracker* ballet alongside big band productions of holiday music favorites.

## ULTIMATE GIFT CARD SALE NOW THRU CHRISTMAS DAY



ULTIMATE  
GIFT CARD

FOR EVERY \$50 PURCHASED IN ULTIMATE GIFT CARDS  
RECEIVE A \$10 BONUS CARD!

Purchase Online: [ultimategiftcard.net](http://ultimategiftcard.net)

or at Erie, Warren, and Meadville PA Applebee's

Only valid at locations shown on the card in Erie, Warren, Meadville, PA and Clymer, NY. Restrictions apply to Ultimate Gift Card and Bonus Card. See [ultimategiftcard.net](http://ultimategiftcard.net) for full restrictions.

## A HOLIDAY GIFT OF GREAT TASTE & SUMMER FUN NOW THRU CHRISTMAS DAY



FOR EVERY \$100 PURCHASED IN OLIVER'S GIFT CARDS  
RECEIVE A \$20 BONUS CARD!

Purchase at Oliver's or at [OliversRooftop.com](http://OliversRooftop.com)

130 E Front St, Erie, PA

Oliver's Bonus Card valid 1/1/24 - 2/8/24. See full restrictions at [oliversrooftop.com](http://oliversrooftop.com)

## EVENTS

### Presque Isle Lights Returns for 2023 Holiday Season

Driving through a winter wonderland

**WEEKENDS THROUGH DEC. 31**

While you were at home preparing for your Thanksgiving traditions, the volunteers with Presque Isle Partnership and Penelec were working on setting up the fourth annual Presque Isle Lights display at Presque Isle State Park. The drive-through tour of seasonal lights and displays is open to the public weekend evenings throughout December. Since its inception in 2020, the event has grown bigger and brighter, with more displays being rolled out each year (including a Christmas Bigfoot making its debut in 2023).

When asked how the event has grown over the years, executive director of the Presque Isle Partnership Jon DeMarco said, "Penelec has been a critical partner as they installed secondary cable, transformers, and photo-cell outlets on approximately 30 utility poles that now power the snowflake ornaments and a few other groups of displays you see throughout the park. We've added color by bordering the windows of buildings and shelters. Since we start-

ed, we always said we would add a little more each year and that's exactly what we've been able to do."

Even though this is a free event that the whole family can enjoy, there is a suggested donation of five dollars, which can be made in the second bayside parking lot, where event programs are also available. Or stop in to Presque Isle Gallery and Gifts located in the Tom Ridge Environmental Center to donate or grab a program. DeMarco continues, "Donations are critical to partnership operations and bolster our ability to offer community events and take on future improvement projects." Along with helping out one of Erie's greatest assets, for each five dollar donation, you'll receive a keepsake button which, when registered, will enter you into a drawing for a \$1,000 Country Fair gift card. There will also be hot cocoa available at the second bayside parking lot every Friday and Saturday of December, with all the lights turned on every weekend (with the exception of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day when the park will still be lit, but sta-



Driving around and looking at holiday lights is a tradition for many families. This year, expand on that tradition while helping out Presque Isle Partnership by making a donation and checking out the light displays stationed all around the state park.

tions will not be open).

There is plenty to see so make sure you make the time to view it all. With the speed limit at the park being 25 mph, give yourself at least 40 minutes to take in all the festivities. When asked what displays were the crowd favorite, DeMarco explains "people get a kick out of the woodpeckers and especially the Presque Isle Lighthouse." Listen to some holiday

music on Classy 99.9 while making the trek through this winter wonderland and remember that Presque Isle Lights is weather dependent. Event updates will be posted on Presque Isle Partnership's website (discoverpi.com) and their social media pages.

— Larry Wheaton

Friday, Dec. 1 through Sunday, Dec. 31 // Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. // \$5 suggested donation



Woman owned and operated since 2013.

**Erie's only cafe with an in-house roaster!**

*Stop by for the freshest coffee in Erie, delicious baked goods, and light cafe fare.*



- **Homemade baked goods daily**
- **Full breakfast** (sandwiches, quiche, breads & bagels)
- **Lunch** (salads, paninis, toasted sandwiches)
- **Full Espresso Bar** (Lattes, Cappuccino, Chai & More)

M - F: 7AM - 4PM, Sat & Sun: 8AM - 4PM

[f brewhahaerie](#) [i brewhahacolony](#)

At the Colony • 2612 West 8th Street, Erie PA 16505  
814-833-2739 • [brewhahacolony.com](http://brewhahacolony.com)

**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)

# HOST YOUR NEXT SPECIAL EVENT WITH ERIE BREWING COMPANY!

One awesome local brewery, two great locations, unlimited good times!



Please contact Tyler Wigfield at [twigfield@eriebrewingco.com](mailto:twigfield@eriebrewingco.com) to inquire. Cheers!

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



## Hand Cut Glass Ornaments, Beautiful, One-of-a-Kind Art & Classes

### GALLERY NIGHT!

Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup> • 7-10pm

Brand New Art, Jewelry & Ornaments from many Different & Talented Artists!

Pop up by Labela Catering  
Solo Jazz Piano by Dan Hallett!  
Hot Tea, Wine & Spirits!

#### City Gallery

Mon-Fri 10am-8pm, SAT. & Sun. 10am-5pm  
1503 State St • Erie Pennsylvania 16501  
Phone: 814-218-4185

Explore the birthplace of the modern petroleum industry!

## DRAKE WELL MUSEUM AND PARK

OPEN DURING THE WINTER!!

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY  
10 AM - 4 PM

ADMISSION FEES APPLY

Museum Memberships are available for purchase starting at \$40. Call now or visit our website for more info!

WWW.DRAKEWELL.ORG  
(814) 827-2797  
202 MUSEUM LANE,  
TITUSVILLE, PA 16354

INDOOR & OUTDOOR EXHIBITS\*  
AUTHENTIC REPLICA OF DRAKE'S WELL  
EASY ACCESS TO HIKING & BIKE TRAILS  
LOCATED ALONG SCENIC OIL CREEK

\*Trains and machinery do not operate during the winter months.



## EVENTS

### Erie Philharmonic Chorus Performs Handel's Messiah

First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant plays host to musical majesty

**SATURDAY, DEC. 9**

The Erie Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra will be performing George Frederic Handel's *Messiah* at the First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant. Considered a holiday music tradition, *Messiah* is well known for its thrilling arias with scriptural text taken from the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

"Composed nearly 300 years ago, Handel's career-defining oratorio remains one of the most popular pieces in classical canon and an unequaled tribute to the holidays that sets the audience's pulses racing each year," the Philharmonic describes. "Experience the magic for yourself this December with this full-scale concert from the Erie Philharmonic, featuring four amazing guest soloists and the stunning talents of the Erie Philharmonic Chorus."

The choir will be under the direction of Thomas Brooks, featuring soprano Kelly Futterer, mezzo-soprano Meridian Prall, tenor Travon Walker, and bass Christopher Humbert as guest soloists.

"[The church is] 90 years old," Joseph Kumer, director of community engagement at First Presbyterian explained. "People say it looks a lot older, it looks like a European cathedral. There's a recurring intentional theme of grapevines. It's in stone, wood, and plaster all throughout the building. It always reminds me that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches."

The First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant was initially a merger of two Presbyterian churches in Erie: Park Church and Central Church. The two voted to merge together in 1927, with the Presbytery of Erie approving the merger on Feb. 8, 1929, with services beginning the following year with over 3,000 worshippers. Known as the "Church of the Covenant", the new congregation officially merged with First Presbyterian Church in 1981. The former building used by First Presbyterian was purchased by Gannon University.

Montgomery Service, director of music and worship technology and member of the Philharmonic Chorus, enjoys working with the community on musical events. "It's been really great working with the [Erie] Philharmonic. Handel's *Messiah* is an iconic piece of music, and having it performed in a sacred setting like our church is a good thing. I think it's been a great way to let the community have the chance to come to church for something other than a church service and get a chance to see everything."

Handel's *Messiah* has been performed by choirs all over the world during the holiday season. "It's so well-known to lots of people. It screams Christmas tradition and brings all those emotions that come with that," Montgomery explains. "It quotes scripture all throughout the music, so it makes sense for it to be performed in a sanctuary this time of year. It's a challenging piece of music as well, so



THOMAS AYERS PHOTO

The architecturally inspiring First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant will host the awe-inspiring Erie Philharmonic Chorus under the direction of Thomas Brooks performing Handel's *Messiah* just in time for the holidays.

it's great to have musicians like the Erie Philharmonic chorus and the orchestra there."

The Church went through renovations in the early 2000s, updating the lighting, windows, and sound design through new speakers and wood that help with acoustics. "I think the acoustics in our space lend itself really well to a group that size. It's great to have a full choir there with the orchestra and soloists as well. It just really seems like the right venue acoustically for both the performers and the audience. Aside from a speaking microphone,

that's all the amplification you need."

"It sells out, and sometimes there are two shows. Our congregation is very glad to be the host site. We love that Handel's *Messiah* gets to be performed by the orchestra in the building every year before Christmas," Kumer answered about the community response. "People have sung this in high school and in churches. It's just a beautiful, magical piece of work."

—Thomas Taylor

3 to 4:30 p.m. // First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, 250 W. 7th St. // \$17-\$25 // For tickets and info: [eriephil.org](http://eriephil.org)



[www.TipsyBean.Cafe](http://www.TipsyBean.Cafe)

**YOUR ONE STOP SHOP FOR HOLIDAY DRINKS,  
COOKIES, CAKES, SHIRTS, CANDLES, CARDS,  
JEWELRY, COFFEE SUPPLIES AND MORE!**





*Peace & Goodwill Towards ALL!*

*Holiday on the Hill!*

*See Santa Dec. 9th 11am-1pm*







## Time to Get Festive With 'A Motown Christmas'

The seasonal favorite returns to The Warner Theatre for one night only

**MONDAY, DEC. 11**

Let's face it, this time of year can be full of hustle, bustle, and stress. So, if you're looking for motivation to deck your halls or get into the holiday spirit in general, look no further than *A Motown Christmas* — as the interactive musical show returns to Erie's historic Warner Theatre for a third year.

*A Motown Christmas* will bring a group called The Motortown All Stars to the stage. The group features former members of Ollie Woodson's Temptations, The Miracles, and The Contours. The performers will be backed up by a professional six-piece band.

Erie is just one stop on this tour of 26 cities in multiple states according to Ben Hart, promoter for BPE Productions. BPE is producing 19 of the 26 total shows, including the staging here in Erie. Hart says he and BPE "really enjoy the people and staff of Erie and the Warner Theatre." According to Hart, this will be a family-friendly show "for everyone" that encourages singing and dancing and "everything that goes along with a Motown Christmas."

This show is designed to appeal to Motown fans and Christmas music fans alike by featuring a combination of Motown favorites as well as holiday classics with "soulful Motown style," according to Erie Events. Hart says that his favorite, and crowd favorite, is the Temptations' version of "Silent Night." But, adds that he is



Erie's Warner Theatre will be rocking and rolling with the smooth sounds of Motown, as the Motortown All Stars bring a creative mix of Motown classics and holiday favorites to the historic stage.

excited about the addition of a medley of tunes by The Spinners that the group is debuting this year. Hart adds "this is a time to sing, dance, and celebrate more than 60 years of Motown music with a hearty dose of your favorite Christmas songs." — Edwina Capozziello

7:30 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$44-\$54 // For info and tickets: [erieevents.com](http://erieevents.com)

## 10/20 Collective's Holiday Bazaar and Women's Biennial Exhibition

Two creative events collide at the heart of Erie's art scene

**BEGINNING THURSDAY, DEC. 14**

10/20 Collective, known for its multifaceted artistic showcases, is set to highlight the Women's Biennial Exhibition, a dazzling compilation of multidimensional works from 44 local female artists. This massive exhibition encapsulates diverse multimedia expressions, a testament to the region's rich artistic tapestry.

But that's not the only thing the collective is hosting in December. Step into the festive spirit with 10/20's inaugural Holiday Bazaar, a vibrant vendor market brimming with the talents of numerous local businesses and artists, several of whom are also featured in the Women's Biennial. Among the vendors will be unique ceramic works by Madison Rose, striking large-scale paper creations of Ana Balcázar, intricately crafted crocheted artistry of Sophia Troutman, thoughtful works on paper by Sheila Lorenzo, and original hand-embellished prints by Kaitlyn Page. Browse through Wicks and Wax's aromatic delights, Nuance Massage Therapy's wellness indulgences, and Forest Crossing Friends' captivating nature-inspired creations, among others. Each piece reflects the unique vision and craftsmanship of the 44 artists involved.

"We're hoping our community will support our local makers and artists this holiday season during our Holiday Bazaar", says program director Sarah Moody. "Our Women's Biennial is an extremely special exhibition, worth seeing and enjoying!"

The Holiday Bazaar spans three days, beginning



This holiday season, enjoy local art while supporting local makers at 10/20 Collective's inaugural Holiday Bazaar. The shop will take place in the same space as the gallery's current show, the Women's Biennial Exhibition, which features over 40 regional female artists.

Thursday, Dec. 14 from 5 to 8 p.m., continuing through Friday's Gallery Night on Dec. 15 from 5 to 10 p.m., and culminating with a Saturday extravaganza on Dec. 16 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Indulge your senses further with wine, food offerings, and live music performances each day, featuring melodic tunes from Jess Royer, The Rhythm and The Flavor, and other stellar talents yet to be announced.

These two events represent a celebration of art, community, and the spirit of the season at the 10/20 Collective — a kaleidoscope of creativity and local talent not to be missed. — Aaron Mook

Dec. 14-16, Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m., Friday from 5 to 10 p.m., and Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. // 1020 Collective, 1020 Holland St. // Donations encouraged

**SAINT ANDREW PARISH**  
Presents:  
GETTING IN THE  
**CHRISTMAS SPIRIT**  
FREE PUBLIC CONCERT  
WITH HOLIDAY CLASSICS

**DAVE VANAMBURG'S  
THE V BAND**

**DEC 10 SUN**  
2:30 PM

**THE V BAND**  
DAVE VANAMBURG  
PHIL PAPOTNIK  
DAVID BLAETZ  
RICKIE HOPKINS  
FEATURING: JIM MADDEN

**JULIA HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE**

**SAINT ANDREW CHURCH**  
1116 WEST 7TH STREET - ERIE, PA

DONATIONS APPRECIATED. ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT  
**JULIA HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE**

SCAN TO DONATE

The Shops at the Colony

**Allen Stoneware**

Erie's Handmade Pottery Artists

**Try our 1 Day 2 Hr. Class!**  
flexible times available

**Presque Isle Inspired Pottery**  
Function and Unique Gifts  
by local artist Vickie Allen Shea  
Classes and Gift Certificates Available

**Allen Stoneware**  
2206 West 8th St. • 814.836.0345  
in the Colony Plaza  
[allenstonewaregallery.com](http://allenstonewaregallery.com)

## EVENTS

### A Seasoned Event to “Get You Jazzed” About Gift Giving

Holiday Makers Market and Jazz event gets crafty with their holiday festivities

FRIDAY, DEC. 15

As many of us know, the holiday season can be one of stress and panic when it comes to figuring out the perfect gifts for your loved ones. Do you go with the luxurious option? The personal option? The expensive option? Handmade? Regardless, the best gift is the one that is the easiest to purchase. During this holiday season, wouldn't it be nice to have a one-stop shop for items handmade, curated, and designed by local crafters and makers of all sorts? The Erie community just so happens to be in luck when it comes to that.

Dave Tamulon is the events and marketing manager for the Erie Downtown Partnership, which is partnering with Erie Community Foundation and HANDS for the Holiday Makers Market and Jazz Event. This will be the last holiday shopping event this year from this specific group and Tamulon is excited to be involved, “This is a great chance for folks to come down and get a gift for their favorite people, or themselves, from a local business.” Downtown will be bustling with customers as well as small businesses of all sorts, who will get the

chance to connect with more potential clients.

“This event is a wonderful family and community setting,” Dave continues. “There will be over 30 vendors in the beautifully historic Boston Store to shop from, horse-drawn carriage rides around Perry Square, and the skating rink will be live and operational to the public.” In addition to all of the vendors and makers, it is also Gallery Night at the Erie Art Museum and surrounding local businesses which will be showcasing local artists as well. And let's not forget — JAZZ. Nicholas Nasibyan will be showcasing his jazz talents live with his piano playing and vocal slaying.

If jazz and local artistry may not be your kids' speed, we have it on good authority that the Grinch may be showing up to Perry Square and the Boston Store to try to ruin the Holiday cheer! Get all of your gift shopping done in one place, on one night, with handmade and special local products made by your fellow community members. — Jordan Coon

5 to 9 p.m. // Boston Store, 716 State St. and surrounding downtown areas // Free



If you've left your holiday shopping until the last minute, don't opt for an impersonal gift card, check out the Holiday Makers Market happening at the Boston Store on Gallery Night for a more personal, local, handmade item and enjoy some original jazz while you're at it.

### Erie's Nutcracker Reimagined at the Warner Theatre Combines History and Whimsy

Enjoy this fresh take on *The Nutcracker* ballet

BEGINNING SATURDAY, DEC. 16

A beloved childhood memory was created when I first watched *The Nutcracker* with my grandparents at the Warner Theatre. This year, Lake Erie Ballet Company is inviting Erie residents to continue making lasting memories this holiday season with their second annual performance of *Erie's Nutcracker Reimagined*. The show runs Saturday, Dec. 16 and Sunday, Dec. 17 at the Warner Theatre, with a special performance for school children on Friday, Dec. 15. The production was made possible through collaborating local organizations, including Marguerite's Academy of Dance, Corella Productions, Seiche Dance Collective, Sovereign Ballet, and Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy.

“I just wanted [*The Nutcracker Reimagined*] to be *more* because the audience that comes to the Warner, it's not just families and relatives of the kids that are in it. It's not a recital. The majority of people who come are from the general public.” Christina Maria Adelhardt, Lake Erie Ballet Company artistic director

The story of *The Nutcracker* focuses on Clara, a young girl who is gifted a nutcracker by her godfather on Christmas Eve. Later that night, Clara's nutcracker comes to life and leads her through whimsical worlds while fighting against the evil Mouse King.

*Erie's Nutcracker Reimagined* adds new elements to the original rendition, including a script, moving digital backgrounds, and a connection to Erie's history.



There is little more magical during the holidays than watching the *Nutcracker* performed on the historic stage of the Warner Theatre. This year's *Nutcracker Reimagined* brings themes from Erie's history to the traditional ballet.

Artistic executive director of Lake Erie Ballet Company Christina Maria Adelhardt was inspired to add new elements to the ballet after hearing feedback from past audiences. “I just wanted it to be *more* because the audience that comes to the Warner, it's not just families and relatives of the kids that are in it.” Adelhardt said. “It's not a recital. The majority of people who come are from the general public.”

The script also allows the audience to better understand and engage with the story, especially during the

first act, Adelhardt explained. “If you know what's going on, it's just way more enjoyable.”

Throughout the performance, there are references to Erie's history, including the Brig *Niagara*, Commodore Perry, the War of 1812, Marx Toy Company, and more. “It just kind of brings a little bit more of a personal connection to *Nutcracker*,” Adelhardt said. — Alana Sabol

Saturday Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. and Sunday Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$29-\$49 // For tickets and info: [eriewarnertheatre.com](http://eriewarnertheatre.com)

# Shop Less. Give More.



When you give an authentic Erie, PA experience, you're creating memories that will be cherished for years to come. Erie has so much to give, and it's all here for you to do the same.



VISITERIE MAJOR SPONSORS



**'Tis the Season**  
Our Gift Baskets Are Perfect for the Holidays!

HOLIDAY HOURS:

Saturday, December 16th: PAJAMA CHRISTMAS PARTY 7-10pm w/special guest Minka  
Christmas Eve/Day: CLOSED. New Years Eve/Day: CLOSED.  
Open Tuesday, December 26th & Tuesday, January 2nd.



## Unlock Your Tastebuds!



**Open Sundays 12-5  
for the holidays!**



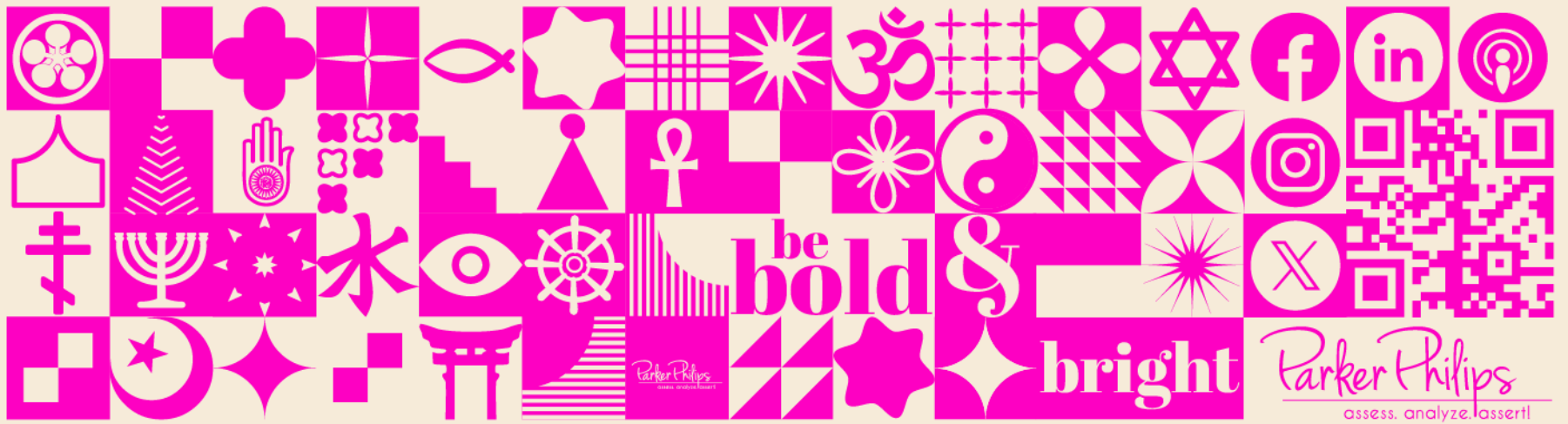
Olive oils ♦ Balsamic vinegars ♦ Herbs ♦ Salts  
Honeys ♦ Olives ♦ Unique gift ideas & more!

OPEN 12-5:30 MONDAY; 10-5:30 TUESDAY—SATURDAY, CLOSED SUNDAYS  
814-835-6898 | 1535 W 8<sup>th</sup> St. Erie, PA | buonacucinaerie.com



Greengarden Plaza

1535 W 8th St, Erie, PA 16505 • (814) 790-9822 • alteredstatedistillery.com



★ **FIRST AMENDMENT TEES Co. Inc.** ★  
 FOR ALL OF YOUR APPAREL DECORATING NEEDS  
 217 W 11TH ST, ERIE, PA 16501  
 (814) 520-8163

T-SHIRTS. HOODIES. HATS. POLOS. JACKETS  
 UNIFORMS. JERSEYS. STICKERS. SIGN VINYL  
 PHONE CASES. PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS.

- GARMENT PRINTING
- SILK SCREENING
- EMBROIDERY
- SUBLIMATION
- VINYL TRANSFERS
- VINYL STICKERS
- HEAT TRANSFERS
- TEAM UNIFORMS
- BUSINESS WEAR
- BUSINESS CARDS

-AND MORE...

★ **FAT-TEE.COM** ★

**Fa, la, la, la, la,  
la, la, la, la.**

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

'Tis the season to be jolly.  
 Wishing you a safe and joyous holiday.  
 Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.®

0901016.1 State Farm, Home Office, Bloomington, IL

**OFFICE BUILDING  
AVAILABLE FOR RENT**

Dickson Tavern - 201 French St. Erie PA 16507  
 (814) 392-7734 or [www.dickson tavern.com](http://www.dickson tavern.com)

**COLDWELL BANKER** 814-452-2100  
 SELECT REALTORS® 4664 W. 12th Street  
 Erie, PA 16505

©2021 Coldwell Banker. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker and the Coldwell Banker logo are trademarks of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. The Coldwell Banker® logo is comprised of company owned offices which are owned by a subsidiary of Realty Income Group LLC and franchise offices which are independently owned and operated. The Coldwell Banker® logo fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act.

**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)

**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

## Top Five Albums of 2023 From Our Staff

Reader writers recommend a musical melange

This year, in the spirit of spreading the love, we decided to gather opinions from all of our regular album review writers on what they believed were the best albums produced in 2023. The results are a smattering of selections spanning genres from hyperpop to singer-songwriter, ambient to punk, hip-hop to psychedelic folk and more, which give a real taste of the tastes of the Erie Reader. Make sure to check out the online version of this article for a custom playlist made from the favorite tracks off of each album selected by our writers. Happy listening!

### Nathaniel Clark (Contributing Writer)

#### 1. Sufjan Stevens // *Javelin*

After the traumatic loss of a partner, Sufjan Stevens returns to the musical aesthetics of his masterworks for comfort — crafting an album equal to that level.

#### 2. Jessie Ware // *That! Feels Good!*

Jessie Ware presents a pop album with no fat — just illustrious bops as far as the eye can see.

#### 3. JPEGMAFIA, Danny Brown // *SCARING THE HOES*

Two of experimental hip-hop's most creative acts come together for a lean and mean thrash.

#### 4. Jane Remover // *Census Designated*

Leaving their hyperpop roots, Jane Remover journeys into post-rock and shoegaze with astounding success.

#### 5. Yves Tumor // *Praise a Lord Who Chews but Which Does Not Consume; (Or Simply, Hot Between Worlds)*

Yves Tumor and company return from a short hiatus with another batch of catchy and explosive psychedelic synth rock.

### Aaron Mook (Contributing Writer)

#### 1. Youth Lagoon // *Heaven is a Junkyard*

The nostalgic sounds of the ups and downs of childhood that follow us into adulthood, and the literal sound of a singer-songwriter finding his voice again.

#### 2. Sufjan Stevens // *Javelin*

Amidst personal turmoil, the beloved indie songwriter returns with one of his most kaleidoscopic and emotional records — one that time may prove to be his best.

#### 3. 100 geecs // *10,000 geecs*

The king and queen of hyperpop return to their polarizing throne, doubling down on infectious pop-rock, grimy nu-metal, and all things poor taste.

#### 4. Suzanne Ciani & Jonathan Fitoussi // *Golden Apples of the Sun*

Suzanne Ciani, a pioneer of synthesizer music and pinball scores, delivers a new-age ambient masterpiece that makes you feel like you're living in an early MMORPG.

#### 5. Sigur Rós // *Átta*

Nearly 30 years into their career (and a decade since their last album), the Icelandic post-rock icons have released an expansive soundtrack to accompany the way the world has changed, equal parts beautiful and devastating.

### Erin Phillips (Managing Editor)

#### 1. Palehound // *Eye on the Bat*

Not a single bad track from start to finish, Palehound's catchy, melodic, cleverly written, and tightly packaged songs (often working in everyday themes like plants and cats) makes this a forever favorite.

#### 2. Jeff Rosenstock // *HELLMODE*

Jeff Rosenstock writes music the way I want music to sound: loud, fast, and unpretentious with superbly well-thought out lyrics that are somehow both funny and upsetting.

#### 3. We Are Only Human Once // *Every Dog On Earth*

(Shout out to Nick Warren for putting me on to this ultra-indie band) A little bit fuzzy grunge, a little bit singer-songwriter, these songs are touching, interesting, not overly produced — just perfect.

#### 4. A Giant Dog // *Bite*

Part rock opera, part concept album, all unmistakably A Giant Dog — it took the group five years to write this album and that was exactly the necessary amount of time.

#### 5. AJJ // *Disposable Everything*

The classic self-deprecating, Neutral Milk Hotel-esque, indie-pop-rock sound of AJJ but on a global scale — we're all doomed, but let's sing some catchy songs about it!

### Melissa Sullivan Shimek (Contributing Writer and Comic Artist)

#### 1. Facs // *Still Life in Decay*

Remember back in 1991 when you saw Jesus Lizard open for Gang of Four at the Euclid Tavern?

#### 2. Brooks Nielsen // *The Circle*

You're sitting barefoot at an AA meeting in a dimly lit basement with Neil Diamond, Lee Hazelwood, Scott Walker, and Iggy Pop.

#### 3. Big Thief // *Vampire Empire*

Like watching a wild carrot grow up from the asphalt against a chain link fence every day as you walk to work.

#### 4. Various Artists // *Asteroid City Soundtrack*

Want to get a peek at the small notebook wrapped with a golf score pencil in a rubber band you imagine Wes Anderson keeps in his breast pocket?

#### 5. Rick Dietrich // *The Unguitarist Complete Works*

You got your John Fahey stuck in my Bob Ross! You got your Bob Ross stuck in my John Fahey!

### Nick Warren (Contributing Editor)

#### 1. Corinne Bailey Rae // *Black Rainbows*

This experimental, often caustic record from the neo-soul songstress is ambitious, angry, and everything I want in an album.

#### 2. Indigo De Souza // *All of This Will End*

The Asheville indie artist weighs trauma and self-worth through unforgettable melodies in her third album.

#### 3. Ratboys // *The Window*

Another addictively listenable blend of punk and alt-country from the Chicago quartet that adds to their nearly perfect catalog.

#### 4. Mitski // *The Land is Inhospitable and So Are We*

A refined and intimate record from the best artist of her generation, its sparse instrumentation lets the listener focus on Miyawaki's lyricism.

#### 5. Hannah Diamond // *Perfect Picture*

Shimmering pink bursts of bubblegum brilliance are around every corner in this hyperpop explosion for the British singer's sophomore release.

### Larry Wheaton (Contributing Writer)

#### 1. Twin Temple // *God Is Dead*

This is what happens when Motown meets the Manson Family. Marketed as "Satanic doo-wop," Twin Temple is a Satan-worshipping band that your parents can listen to, too.

#### 2. Matt Berry // *Simplicity*

Pour a glass of cognac and dim the lights, because this actor/comedian

**Advent Vigils**  
With the Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Join us the first four Saturdays of December for silence, chant, meditation, and reflection in our Advent Vigil prayer services in the monastery chapel.

**December 2, 9, 16, & 23**  
**7:00 pm**

Mount Saint Benedict Monastery  
6101 East Lake Road

**Tour the Monastery**

On Dec. 16, come at 4:00 pm for a guided tour of the monastery, followed by supper with the sisters before the evening Advent Vigil. RSVP through the QR code or call Michelle (814) 899-0614 ext. 2507

Benedictine Sisters of Erie

TRAVEL WITH WQLN!

# Road Trips

A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE  
THE PERFECT HOLIDAY GIFT



# MAMMA MIA!

February 3, 2024

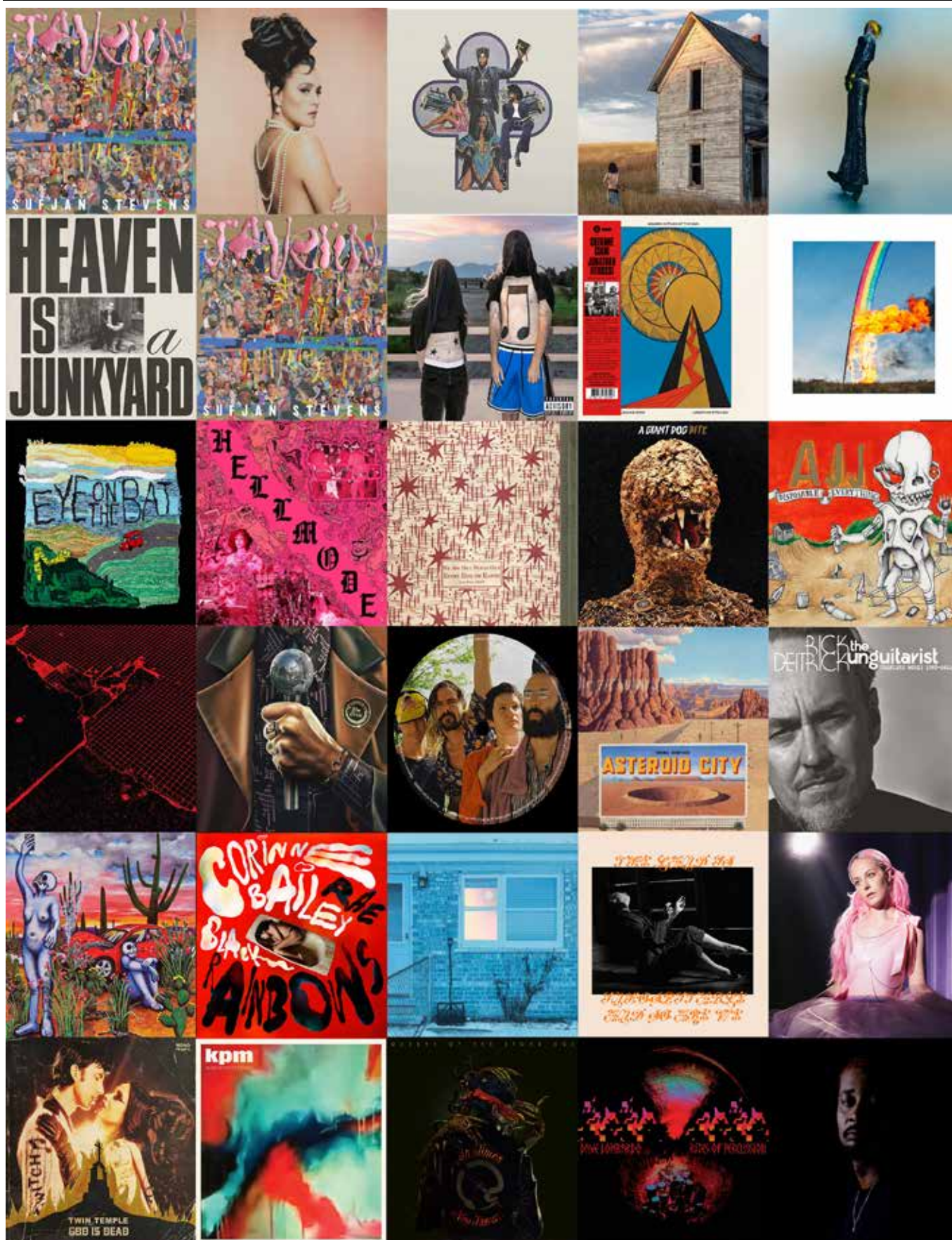
Playhouse Square, Cleveland

# WQLN



WQLN.org/RoadTrips

## YEAR'S BEST ALBUMS



has been putting out the most heady and relaxing psychedelic folk you haven't heard for over a decade.

3. Queens of the Stone Age // *In Times New Roman...*

Long live the Queens! With rock and roll taking a backseat to other genres, this record proves there is still room

for steady beats, blues grooves, and guitar solos in the roaring 2020s.

4. Dave Lombardo // *Rites of Percussion*

The metal drummer releases his first solo record, proving that he is a master behind the kit. This album is far closer to Buddy Rich, Tito Puente,

and Fela Kuti than it is to Slayer.

5. Danny Brown // *Quaranta*

These songs express what it's like to live in a forgotten Rust Belt town — relatable to anyone who has lived paycheck to paycheck, while still finding the time to let loose on the weekends.

**BUY ALL THREE AND SAVE!**



MAHLER 3  
JANUARY 20

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION  
MARCH 23

CARMINA BURANA  
MAY 11

**THREE TICKETS, THREE AMAZING CONCERTS, STARTING AT \$59  
CALL OR STOP IN TODAY: 814.455.1375 • 23 W 10TH ST**



Produced through special arrangements with Theatrical Rights Worldwide

**STRIKING I2**

by **Brendan Milburn, Valerie Vigoda, and Rachel Sheinkin**

Directed by: **Kate Neubert-Lechner**

Featuring: Alex Staley • Marley Tressler • Michelle Michali • Dan Bainbridge  
Josiah Prittie • Maeve Kirby • Curtis Jones III • SaNae Stephens

Live Band: Andrea Tredent • Moe Ferrara • Dan Bainbridge • Dan Lucore • Jim Kipp • Liz Alward

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

**December 01 - 17, 2023**  
[Thu, Fri, Sat] Doors: 7:00pm • Show: 7:30pm  
[Sunday Matinee] Doors: 1:30pm • Show: 2:00pm

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

We have your *Holiday Shopping List* Covered!

- ✓ **Beer Lover**
- ✓ **Secret Santa**
- ✓ **Boss's Gift**
- ✓ **Teacher's Gift**



**Gift Certificates Available in Any Amount!**



**6 PACA HOUSE OF BEER**  
847 Pittsburgh Ave  
Erie, PA 16505  
814-454-1989   
**Great Food! Awesome Beer!**

# 13¢

# OFF

PER GALLON  
EVERY DAY



\*Unlimited 10¢ savings on CITGO® gift card. 3¢ savings on the Club CITGO® app up to 30 gallons. Offer only available at Country Fair CITGO® locations. Offer available only through the Club CITGO® app. See Club CITGO® app for terms and conditions, including the More Info section of the deal. Message and data rates may apply. Void where prohibited.

# STACK & SAVE

## SAVE 10¢ /gal

WHEN YOU PAY WITH A CITGO® GIFT CARD

## SAVE 3¢ /gal

WITH THE CLUB CITGO® APP



# Country Fair

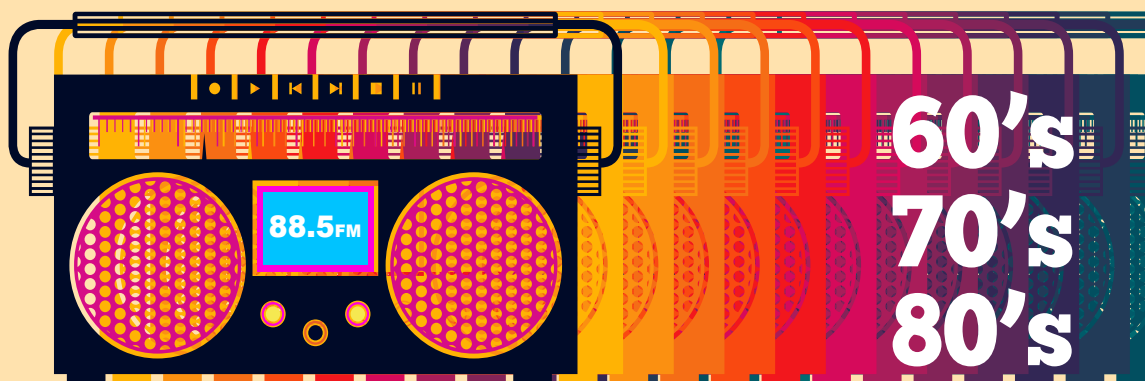
# Erie's No.1 Classic Hits Station

## More than 50 minutes of music per hour!

LECOM RADIO

# WMCE

# 88.5 FM





## The Top Five Best Films of 2023

Year's offerings prove that there is reward in risk

By: Forest Taylor

### 1. *Showing Up*

I have made no qualms about my admiration for Kelly Reichardt, whose last two films have topped my year-end lists, and she does it again with this quirky, autobiographical gem. The story of a struggling sculptor (Michelle Williams giving another knockout performance) preparing for a gallery exhibition in the midst of personal and financial hardships speaks directly to Reichardt's own career which has been mired by its troubles throughout the years. It is also a love letter to the artist in a society that seems to have the utmost contempt for art as a profession — where simply showing up to a gallery or screening is cause for celebration. On top of that, it is the funniest film in Reichardt's career. The dry humor wonderfully adds to the absurdity of the various situations in which the protagonist finds herself. The result is a subtly entertaining and deeply personal statement from possibly the best filmmaker working today.

### 2. *The Eight Mountains*

Over 10 years ago Felix VanGroeningen tore at our heartstrings with *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. Now he (along with co-director Charlotte Vandermeersch) does it again with this humanistic epic about friendship. The story of two boys whose friendship endures as their journey to manhood takes them down very different paths, is sensitive and never judgmental of their decisions in life — merely observant of where those decisions take them. Call it a masculine companion to Agnes Varda's *One Sings, the Other Doesn't*. Their lives are beset by triumph, tragedy, and enlightenment both spiritual and personal, but within their hearts remains the bond that ties them together. The film masterfully shows the importance of those deep bonds but also laments in how rare they often are. I think it is already on its way to becoming a modern masterpiece.

### 3. *Beau Is Afraid*

Ari Aster rose to prominence with two intense and terrifying horror films. His latest isn't horror in the traditional sense, but this psychosexual hero's journey is easily his most intense and terrifying. Aster brilliantly infuses the tale of a paranoid man's (Joaquin Phoenix — excellent, as always) attempt to get to his mother's funeral with surreal imagery and absurdist situations designed to evoke fear and anxiety. The result is a story that is nightmarish, personal, and darkly funny — like if Charlie Kaufman wrote *The Odyssey*. The fact that we still live in a world where a filmmaker is given free reign (and a sizable budget) to basically put a fever dream/panic attack onto the screen gives me an endless amount of joy. This ride is definitely not for everyone, but oh, what a ride it is!

### 4. *Past Lives*

One of the best things about art is an artist's ability to take a familiar story and tell it in a unique and unexpected way. That is certainly what Celine Song did



with this moving and emotional film. The story of a happily married woman (Greta Lee) who begins to doubt her life choices after reconnecting with her childhood friend (Teo Yoo) after 20 years apart definitely hits on some cliches. However, rather than turn it into a sordid melodrama, Song tells an intelligent, mature story about regret, fate, and what it means to truly love someone. If given the chance to take other paths in life, would things look completely different or would we end up exactly the same? Song presents this question with a deep sympathy for her characters and a compassion for their situations. The film says more with quiet conversation than any amount of shouting and heightened emotions could, and the fact that it was a hit with audiences is a real victory for adult indie dramas.

### 5. *Sanctuary*

Zachary Wigon has achieved what few filmmakers are able to: he made a film set in one location with only two characters and made it one of the most exciting films of

the year. The story of a young man (Christopher Abbott) on the verge of inheriting his late father's hotel empire and the professional dominatrix (Margaret Qualley) hired to help him through his fears, has the potential to be stagy and visually uninteresting. But Wigon rectifies this with clever blocking and an ingenious use of color and camera movement, giving us a dazzling story about the power dynamics of a dom/sub relationship, the unique role that kink plays in dealing with anxieties, and the constrictions of social expectations and gender roles. Carried by two solid performances, the film is sexy, witty, and, in the end, a surprisingly sweet love story.

#### **Honorable Mentions:**

*Killers of the Flower Moon*

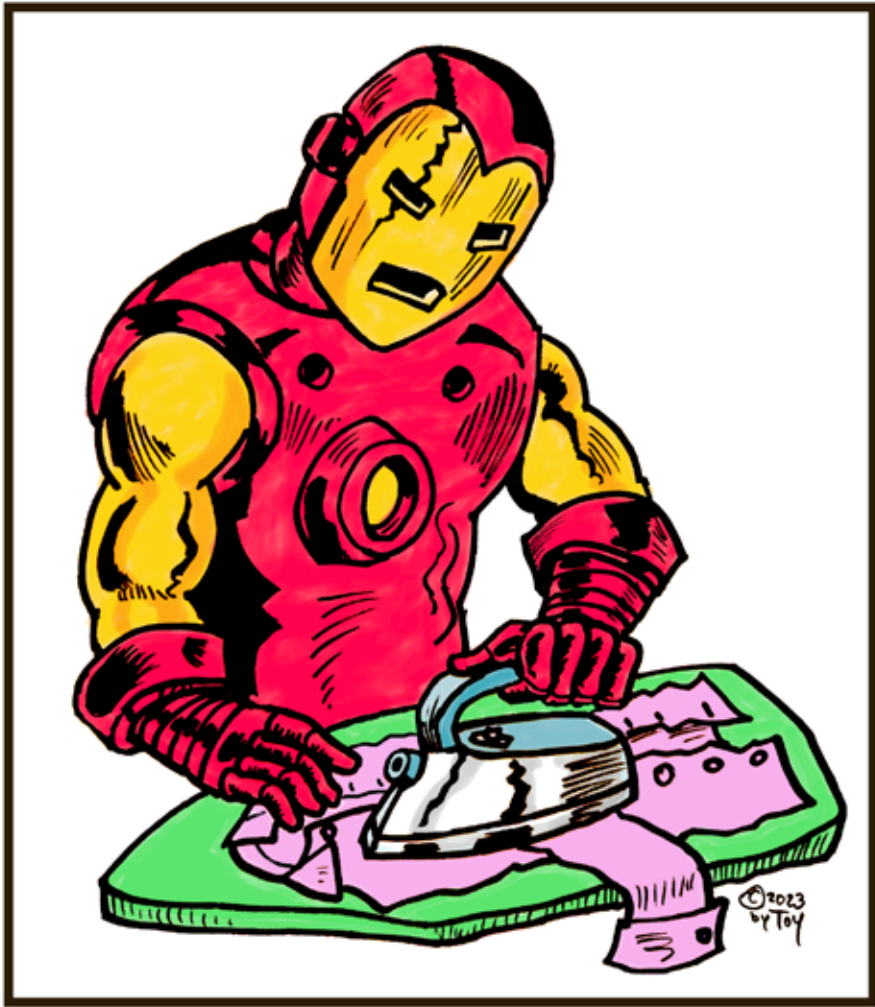
*Anatomy of a Fall*

*Afire*

*Oppenheimer*

*Theater Camp*

JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY



ACROSS THE COMIC-VERSE BY BRAD PATULLO ©2023 bradpatullo.com



NOTHING ELSE BUT MIRACLES

INSTEAD OF GIVING YOU ANYTHING THIS YEAR, I'M TAKING AWAY THE WEIGHT OF YOUR FEAR, REGRET, HESITATION, & SELF-DOUBT.



BUT I WANT THE BRAND NEW JUMBOTRON TELEVISION EVERYONE TOLD ME TO GET. IT'S EVEN ON SALE OVER AT GARBAGEMART. A FREE SOUL AND LIGHTER CONSCIOUS? WHAT WOULD SOMEONE DO WITH THAT? REALLY PRETTY LAME. NO THANKS, SANTA.



Fish that Talk *from the series THE HORROR!*

The year is 2023 and things are looking up in the US-China relationship. President Xi has pledged instead of sending spy balloons, sending friendly panda balloons! President Biden welcomes this news, but the problem is that they don't have a place to land!



## Top Five Local Albums of 2023

Highlighting an exceptional year for Erie artists

The local original music scene in Erie is something of which our community should be immensely proud. The amount and variation of talent is impressive. This year, each of our album review writers chose their favorite local original album to feature for our top five local albums of the year list. Supporting our local music artists directly will help ensure the local music scene into the future, so if something catches your ear, be sure to check out the bands' social media, websites, Bandcamp pages, etc. and throw some cash their way. Without further ado, our favorite local albums of the year!

### Blunt Guts (AKA Bobby Jensen) // *Blunt Guts the Destroyer!*

This music makes you feel restless and frenzied, yet so chill. Jensen's churning rhythms teeter between dub and industrial. He still laces obscure, challenging samples which have defined his work for decades. John Yochim's aggressive shoegaze guitar shreds while somehow being dreamy. One can see what squeezed Erieites into smoky, packed bars to see their old bands Pegasus Unicorn and Jargonauts for years. Jensen's musicianship is more like a sculptor creating an interactive display with shapes and moods letting you free-fall just long enough before pulling you back in again. Musicians Garrett Razman, Alex Krishner, and Nate Jeffery also contribute, enriching this work. The title track is hard to digest but so tasty. The autobiographical "Bullies" is an anthem. Listen to this album! — Melissa Sullivan Shimek

### One if By Land // American Crows

One of the region's most consistent songwriters returns with even more fire in his belly. On Fred Oakman and company's third studio album as One if By Land, the band tightens up their muscular songwriting and delivers 33 minutes of anthemic punk tunes, making for one of the strongest local releases of the year. What makes *American Crows* so special is the way it manages to nod both to the past (opening track "We're Still Making Noise") and the future, optimizing the band's singalong hooks while also offering something a bit more mature and complex than their pop-punk peers. Oakman has always been skilled at showcasing his growth as a musician, and when he brings that to a full band, the results are stunning. — Aaron Mook

### Re\$inate // PPD

Northwestern PA's beloved hardcore quartet Re\$inate released 22 minutes of pure and euphoric unhinged angst with their debut EP, *PPD*. Featuring songs with a politically fueled message like "Open Your Mouth And Eat The Rich" and "Gem City Fire," lead vocalist Jake Juliano, guitarist and vocalist Corbin Fowler, bassist John Bramlett, and drummer Brent Knight set the energy for a blissfully chaotic journey. Tracks like *Scorched Earth Tactics* and *Snake Eyes* accentuate just how talented these musicians are with Fowler's uniquely weaved guitar solos and Bramlett's heavy bass riffs. *PPD* brings the co-



lossal energy Re\$inate displays during live performances into five powerful activist anthems to make one of my personal favorite local releases of 2023. — Cypher Eihwaz

### Odd Atrocity // Groundscore

Heavy post-grunge band Odd Atrocity released their first album under their current moniker (they were formally known as Lucid) this year. This debut showed the band leaning into heavier riffs and sounding tighter than their previous release. Despite their relative freshness on the scene, they've built an impressively large fan base in Erie, and they deliver an energetic show every time. *Groundscore* proves that Odd Atrocity can capture the same raw energy in the studio as they do on stage. — Larry Wheaton

### Northbound Soul // Love, Loss & the In-between

From front to back, Northbound Soul's 12-track full-length debut is so amazingly listenable that it simply has to earn a top spot for this year. Virtually everyone who hears this album or catches the band live will see that there is something special happening with frontman Mike Spagnolo and company. An Americana blend of light country, rock, and folk, the band uses a measured hand, always giving just what the songs require, for a simple and classic sound. With an on-the-nose album title, Spagnolo's lyrics weave together stories of *Love, Loss, & the In-between*. — Nick Warren

## TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



*Are you tired of this?*



**Why not consider this?**



Walking from your luxury apartment directly to a heated, well-lit, secure garage.

Apartments currently available at



**glenwood towers**

4601 Glenwood Park Ave, Erie, PA 16509

Call Samantha at **814.217.1870**

parkview at glenwood LLC

**Time and Temperature**  
at Your Fingertips

**814 452-6311**



**Call it for**



**Call it for the MEMORIES!**

Sponsored by

**Dr. James Lin, Geriatrician at**

**L|E|C|O|M HEALTH**  
INSTITUTE FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

## Top 5 Best Books of 2023

Enjoy these page-turners as we turn the page on another year



### ***Never Whistle at Night* edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst**

It's not often that a short story collection hits the mark perfectly, but this year's *Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology* comes pretty darn close.

In many Indigenous stories and legends, whistling at night brings with it terrible consequences — for Native Hawaiians, this means summoning the Hukai'po, or the spirits of ancient warriors, while Native Mexicans believe it beckons Lechuza, a witch able to turn into an owl. No matter the group, though, the act is something to be avoided if you don't want to draw the attention of evil spirits.

Each story is chilling in its own way, introducing readers to legends from an array of Indigenous cultures. With unique storytelling skills, each author brings to the table something new, and something frightening to keep readers up at night. Curses, ghosts, monsters both human and otherwise, and complexities of both real life and legend weave through the pages to present horrors so magnificent that you'll want to keep reading, but maybe with the lights on. — Ally Kutz

*Vintage // 400 pages // Horror, Short Stories*

### ***Shark Heart* by Emily Habek**

On its surface, the concept of *Shark Heart* is one some readers may find strange, but a deeper dive into the heart of the story will make you glad you decided to pick this book up.

When Lewis and Wren tie the knot, they never knew that their first year of

marriage would also be their last. Just weeks after their wedding, Lewis receives the rare diagnosis that he will gradually turn into a great white shark. Though he will retain most of his consciousness and memories, his physical features as well as his impulses will soon turn to those of the apex ocean predator.

While Lewis grapples with this diagnosis and his unfulfilled dreams, Wren fully resists this new life, hoping for a way forward that will keep them together. But as Lewis changes, Wren's world begins to crumble, bringing forward memories she repressed from her childhood living on a houseboat in Oklahoma, her time in college with an ex-girlfriend, and her friendship with a woman pregnant with twin birds.

A unique love story, *Shark Heart* is all at once poetic, funny, sobering, and delightful in a way many books fail to achieve. Unforgettable and beautiful, it examines the fragility of our memories, as well as finding joy where none seems to be, and making the most of the life we are given. — Ally Kutz

*Simon & Schuster // 415 pages // Magical Realism*

### ***Sure, I'll Join Your Cult: A Memoir of Mental Illness and the Quest to Belong Anywhere* by Maria Bamford**

Maria Bamford is the unsung comedic genius of a generation. If you haven't taken the time to watch her Netflix show *Lady Dynamite*, put that at the top of your list, but in the meantime, read *Sure, I'll Join Your Cult*. Smart, witty, hilariously self-deprecating, while at the same time tackling her seriously

serious struggles with maintaining her mental health — this book waffles, like Maria does, between wanting desperately to get away from the world while simultaneously craving the world's attention.

Bamford's signature voice comes through loud and clear in this memoir, and her writing style is nervous, disjointed, apologetic, and very weird (all in good ways). She turns the rules of writing memoir on its head — wacky footnotes abound, involving everything from detailed financial information to recipes. At its core, this book is about finding a way to belong while also finding a way to make it through life when it all seems too impossible. You'll never read another memoir like it. — Erin Phillips

### ***The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride**

In 1972 in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, workers digging the foundation for a new development discovered something shocking at the bottom of a well: a human skeleton. Who it was and how it got there are the two long-kept secrets of the residents of Chicken Hill, the run-down neighborhood where immigrant Jews and African Americans lived side by side, sharing triumphs and tribulations.

Chicken Hill is where Moshe and Chona Ludlow lived — where Moshe integrated his theater and Chona ran the Heaven & Earth grocery store. When authorities come to Chicken Hill looking for a deaf boy in order to institutionalize him, Chona and Nate Timblin, the janitor at Moshe's theater, work together to keep the boy safe.

When the truth is revealed and what happened on Chicken Hill comes to light — and the role the town's white establishment played in it. *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* proves that love and community are what keep us going, surviving and thriving alongside those that surround us. — Ally Kutz

*Riverhead Books // 385 pages // Historical Fiction*

### ***Maame* by Jessica George**

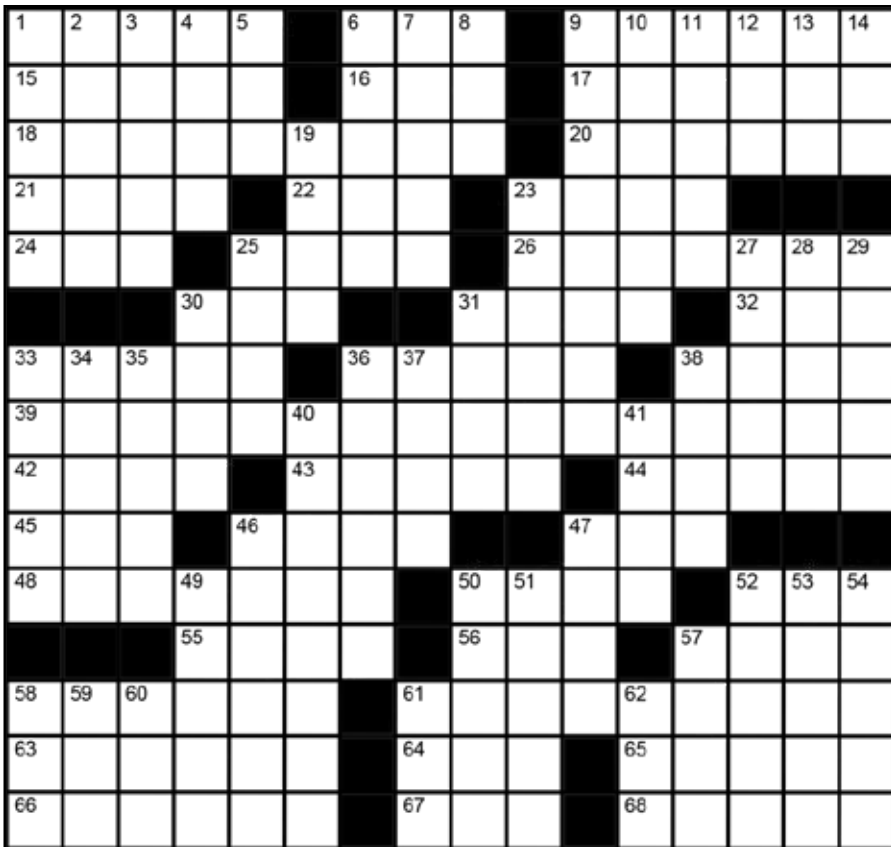
Maddie's life is primarily rooted in duty. With a mother who spends a majority of the year in Ghana — yet still somehow manages to be overbearing in her daughter's life — it has fallen to Maddie to be the primary caretaker for her father who suffers from advanced stage Parkinson's disease.

When her mother returns from her most recent trip, though, Maddie uses this opportunity to strike out on her own, leaving the family home and doing things for herself. A self-acknowledged late bloomer, she wants to experience important "firsts" — first apartment with roommates, first after-work drinks, and first time trying internet dating.

While in the throes of experiencing this new life, a tragedy occurs, pulling Maddie back to face the truths of her unconventional family, forcing her to learn that putting your heart on the line can lead to great reward or great heartbreak. Stuck between two homes and two cultures is something many children of immigrants can relate to, and *Maame* helps to celebrate finally finding where you ultimately belong. — Ally Kutz

*St. Martin's Press // 320 pages // Contemporary Fiction*

# CROSSWORD



**Across**

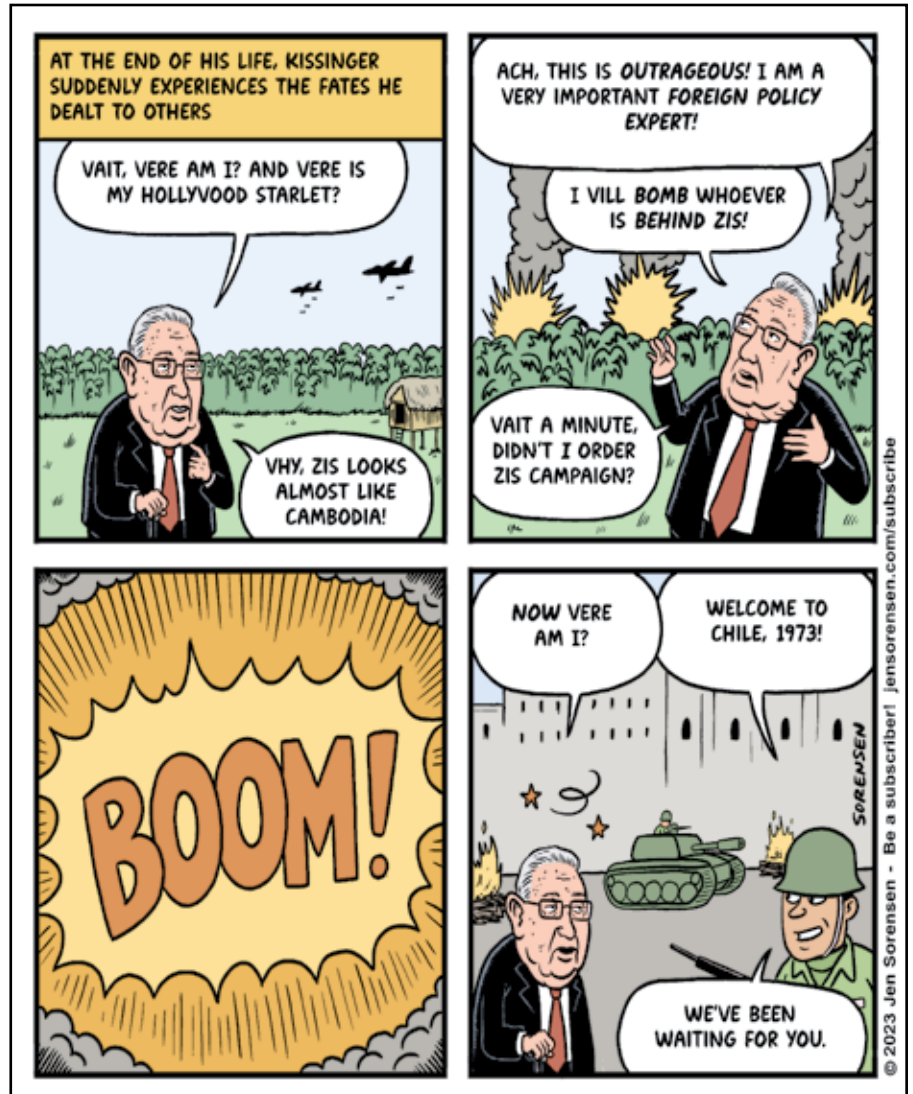
- 1. 1999 documentary "\_\_\_ Vista Social Club"
- 6. Clumsy sort
- 9. Keep the beat, in a way
- 15. Queen \_\_\_ lace
- 16. Bustle
- 17. Guarantee
- 18. Early February, roughly
- 20. Federer and Nadal, e.g.
- 21. Dinghy or dory
- 22. Delicacy with kabayaki sauce
- 23. Ward of "The Fugitive"
- 24. Acct. earnings
- 25. White-tailed shore bird
- 26. Sprint's merging partner in 2020
- 30. Debate side
- 31. Yard trio
- 32. Social reformer Dorothea
- 33. "Bodak Yellow" rapper \_\_\_ B
- 36. Auto-Tune pioneer with the hit "Buy U a Drank (Shawty Snappin)'"
- 38. Done, in Dijon
- 39. Cause a social media storm ... or a direction to black squares in four areas of this puzzle?
- 42. Skedaddles
- 43. Zigs or zags
- 44. Taurus, Virgo, Libra, etc.
- 45. Site for trivia night
- 46. Shabu-shabu noodle, often
- 47. \_\_\_-free water bottle
- 48. Liqueur in an Alabama Slammer
- 50. Bird with a forked tail
- 52. "... need I go on?" abbr.

- 55. Cause of great annoyance
- 56. Whiz
- 57. Bad way to go
- 58. Summer \_\_\_
- 61. "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" co-director
- 63. Eva Perón's maiden name
- 64. 68-Across, to fans
- 65. Put one's John Hancock on
- 66. Possible candidate for a Razzie Award
- 67. W-2 collector
- 68. A 2022 World Cup photo of him set a record for most likes ever on Instagram

**Down**

- 1. Deer friend of Thumper
- 2. Labor organizer's group
- 3. Wrap up by
- 4. Type of salamander
- 5. "\_\_\_ live and breathe!"
- 6. Like some breakfast cereals
- 7. "Easy on Me" singer, 2021
- 8. Supporting
- 9. Place where people lived in "How the Other Half Lives"
- 10. Purchase at a real estate auction, perhaps
- 11. Cornerstone abbr.
- 12. Rum \_\_\_ Tugger (cat from "Cats")
- 13. "Odds \_\_\_ ..."
- 14. "The tongue of the soul," per Cervantes
- 19. Adopted son of Claudius

- 23. Oktoberfest containers
- 25. "Black Panther" villain Killmonger
- 27. Choosing from a lineup
- 28. Tablecloth fabric
- 29. Ramps up or down?
- 30. BlackBerrys and PalmPilots, for short
- 31. State \_\_\_
- 33. Legendary NYC club that helped launch punk rock
- 34. Typeface akin to Helvetica
- 35. Fashionably nostalgic
- 36. Mr. or Ms. Right
- 37. Hammer's striking end
- 38. Cold, to Conchita
- 40. Meal for an inept cook
- 41. Channel for Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest
- 46. Lorre's "Casablanca" character
- 47. "La \_\_\_" (NBC drama series)
- 49. Critic who finished his final blog post with "I'll see you at the movies"
- 50. \_\_\_ Tots
- 51. Reverberations
- 52. Furry C-3PO worshipers
- 53. Their bark is silent
- 54. "Kinky Boots" lyricist Lauper
- 57. Juvenile outburst?
- 58. Suffix with fluor-
- 59. \_\_\_ Lock (PC key)
- 60. Confucian "way"
- 61. Inventor Whitney
- 62. Logic game with matchsticks



**Answers to last puzzle**





**THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS FOR HELPING  
THE ERIE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
MAKE AN IMPACT.**

To learn more about how you  
too can have an impact, please visit  
[ErieCommunityFoundation.org](http://ErieCommunityFoundation.org).



The Erie  
Community  
Foundation

[eriecommunityfoundation.org](http://eriecommunityfoundation.org) | 814-454-0843

# CALENDAR

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



powered by *event*

## Sun 12/03

### Featured



**Erie Philharmonic**  
Come Home for the Holidays  
@ 3pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.



PACA, 1505 State Street

### Featured



**Erie Otters vs. Guelph Storm**  
@ 7pm  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French Street Erie



### Erie Otters vs. North Bay Battalion

@ 7pm  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French Street Erie

### Striking 12

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

### Featured



**King's Rook Presents Storms Within ft. Spades and Gelatin Skeleton**  
@ 8pm / \$11  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



## Sat 12/30

### Erie Otters vs. Niagara IceDogs

@ 7pm  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French Street Erie

### Featured



**Daytona Beach 2000 Pre New Years celebration!**  
@ 8pm / \$17  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



## Thu 12/07

### Featured



**Mannheim Steamroller**  
@ 7:30pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.



## Mon 12/11

### Featured



**A Motown Christmas**  
@ 7:30pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.



## Sat 12/16

**Erie Otters vs. Ottawa 67's**  
@ 7pm  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French Street Erie

### Striking 12

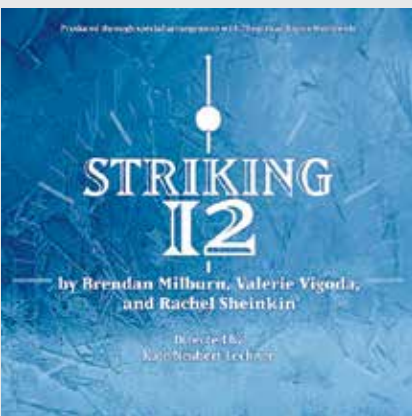
@ 7:30pm / \$20  
PACA, 1505 State Street

## Sun 12/17

**Striking 12**  
@ 2pm / \$20  
PACA, 1505 State Street

## Fri 12/08

### Featured



**Striking 12**  
@ 7:30pm / \$20  
PACA, 1505 State Street



## Thu 12/14

**Striking 12**  
@ 7:30pm / \$20  
PACA, 1505 State Street

## Fri 12/15

### Featured



**murmurations: quiet art in transition**  
@ 6pm / \$5-\$10  
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street



### Featured



**Miller Mistletoe Mile Run/ Walk**  
@ 6pm / \$20  
The Skunk and Goat Tavern, 17 West Main Street, North East



## Sun 12/31

**Erie Otters vs. Brantford Bulldogs**  
@ 4pm  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French Street Erie

## Mon 1/01

**ERC New Year's Day 5 Mile race and 5K**  
@ 10am / \$23-\$23  
1 Peninsula Dr

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

## Sat 12/09

**Striking 12**  
@ 7:30pm / \$20