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SHOPPING LOCAL

THE 2021 ERIE GIFT GUIDE
STITCHING TOGETHER A PLAN
LARRY'S CENTRAL MARKET



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CONTENTS
NOVEMBER 2021

Shopping Local? Stitch Together a Plan – 4

Gem City brings together creators from every corner

How Small Businesses Can Save Society – 8

The ‘little guys’ have a bigger impact than most of us realize

Planting a Playground – 12

Griff Slides at Frontier Park, other initiatives
‘LEAF’ Erie feeling young and spry

The Generational Legacy of Larry’s Central Market, an Anchor in Little Italy – 14

Family feel of Sassafras Street staple still resonates

A Scientific Basis for Hope – 18

How mass vaccination eradicated poliovirus, helped prevent repeat of 1918 flu pandemic

Sacred Divine Femininity – 23

Reconnecting women to their sacred energy with traditional practices

Huge Boulders, Tiny Dragons – 24

On Allegany State Park, Thunder Rocks, and newts

The 2021 Erie Gift Guide – 26

Ditch the smiley boxes for a more local holiday

Spotlight On Erie – 29

November, it only believes in a pile of dead leaves

3RD Official Clothing Pushes For Nationwide Exposure – 32

Fashion entrepreneur Khyre Drayer embarks on cross-country trip

Movie Reviews – 33

Takes on Dune and The Last Duel

Five Books from Local Authors to Add to Your Winter Reading List –35

Recent works perfect for your Christmas library

Our Monthly Podcast Picks – 36

An infotainment feast to nourish your noggin

Local, Original Cartoons – 37

From John Bavaro, Sarah Brown, Bryan Toy, Brad Pattullo, and Tommy Link

Local Music Reviews – 38

New records from Elle Taylor, Fog Giant, Tyler Smilo, and Gabe Poland

Crossword Puzzle – 39

The latest stumper from David Levinson Wilk

From the Editors
A slice of the pie

Set aside religion and politics for a moment — the real elephant in the room we ought to be discussing is the one that put the pumpkin pie on the Thanksgiving table.

That’s right — Cucurbita, the genus of gourds that includes just about every squash and pumpkin we like to eat, was actually first spread across North America by prehistoric pachyderms such as the woolly mammoth and mastodon. The pilot versions of these fruits were smaller and significantly more bitter than their latter-day counterparts, which deterred rodents and other critters from gnawing into their seeds while still allowing those massive mammals (who were more apt to swallow them whole) to shovel them in by the trunkful. The intact seeds were left behind with a nice dollop of natural fertilizer and behold — Pumpkin-town Pre-USA.

Early humans likely ate the primordial gourds as well, rinsing the toxic compounds away from the otherwise edible seeds while avoiding the tough, stringy flesh. Over time, however — especially after the mammoths went extinct — wild squashes gradually adapted to (and were domesticated to) become larger, sweeter, and generally more palatable for our kind. Thousands of years later, pumpkin pie is America’s favorite Thanksgiving dessert — but only because we learned to work around the initial bitterness.

Few things are perfect from the outset. Through patience and diligence, we can cultivate a sweet outcome. Until then, we make do with what we have. Erie’s most beloved small local businesses — places like Kraus Dept. Store, Books Galore, Larry’s Central Market, and the dozens of others profiled throughout the Reader’s publishing history — are like the warmly spiced holiday treats we keep coming back to, as addicting as anything you’d find on Arrakis.

But they are the exception. The bitter truth of the matter is that only about one half of small businesses survive past their fifth year, and only about a third ever celebrate a decade. For most, a lean harvest is much more common than a bumper crop. Loyalty must be slowly nurtured — one sale, one smile, and one customer at a time until firsts become seconds, seconds become thirds, and lifetimes become generations. But they have to be given a chance first.

You don’t know what you’re missing until you get a taste of what’s out there. That starts by shopping small this holiday season and beyond. Even if small businesses occupy a smaller slice of the GDP pie, homemade almost *always* tastes better than something out of a box.

Shopping Local? Stitch Together a Plan

Gem City brings together creators from every corner



By: Liz Allen

To fashion a story about how to shop local this holiday season, I pulled some strings. As soon as I'd tug on one thread, I'd find another story about an entrepreneur or artisan eager to boost Erie by creating, making, and innovating.

Erie's maker community is always tight-knit, but they are especially easy to spot at this time of year, when, as **Flagship City Press** says, "At Christmas, all roads lead home." That greeting graces one of Flagship City's holiday cards, featuring a whimsical map of Erie that loops around from the heartland of Erie County to the heart of downtown.

Graphic designers Dena Rupp and Corinne Kraus, who still have regular full-time jobs, started Flagship City Press in 2019.

"I love to send cards to friends; I have a lot who grew up here and don't live in Erie anymore," said Rupp. When she lived in Pittsburgh, she enjoyed shopping at Wildcard. "Talk about inspiration. It's the epitome of a stationery dream, not just highlighting cards, but prints, wrapping paper. It's

an ode to Pittsburgh and the flavors that Pittsburgh offers — pierogis, tailgating, the Steelers, Mister Rogers. It has a little bit of everything," she said.

"We have a lot of flavor here, too. We can highlight quirky things — snack foods, pieces of history," she added. The two women asked family and friends about the things they fondly associate with Erie. Among the items mentioned? Orange-and-vanilla twist cones from Sara's. "We went from there and started making some fun, interesting, unique designs," she said.

After their creative venture was featured on the front page of the Erie Times-News in 2020, local businesses wanted to start selling their cards and other items. "This was at a time when people were just looking for a breath of fresh air," Rupp said.

Today, their cards can be found at 17 Erie businesses, including Pressed Books & Coffee, Romolo's Chocolates, Glass Growers Gallery, Michelle's Boutique on Buffalo Road, and five Country Fairs.

Visit flagshipcitypress.com to view the whole catalog. Click on "stockists" to find local businesses that sell their products, or use the link to buy from

Romolo's Chocolates is one of 17 local retailers that sell cards and other items from Flagship City Press. Flagship City pays tribute to Romolo's with its "Home is where the sponge candy is" greeting card.

Etsy.

Flagship City Press is also one of more than 30 businesses with home-made goods that will be featured at the first annual Western Pennsylvania Maker's Market in Perry Square on Saturday, Nov. 6, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Designing women

Also at the Maker's Market, **Blair Mead Designs** will preview four unique pieces of clothing that have sprung from Mead's imagination to computerized design to mock-up to sewing machine.

With bold colors, stunning floral and geometric patterns, and sumptuous fabrics, the poncho, jumpsuit, wrap skirt, and tunic shirt look like something a sophisticated shopper would seek out in Milan, Paris, or the Fashion District in New York City.

Instead, this clothing is being created in a warehouse in Erie's Little Italy, although the fabric is purchased abroad because U.S.-made textiles are hard to find.

Mead's design team includes Reem Al-Misky, design/fashion consultant; Gloria Mifetu, sewing manager; and Yifan Wang, associate designer. Mifetu, from Ghana, and Wang, from China, were recruited from the highly regarded School of Fashion at Kent State University.

The four outfits, part of the company's spring line, will be available for sale at blairmead.com on Dec. 5.

But Mead's vision involves more than making stylish clothing in Erie. She wants to make a statement in favor of sustainability and against what's termed "fast fashion" — the practice of churning out cheap clothing overseas in sweatshops that pollute the environment and exploit child workers.

"A lot of fashion is wasted," said Al-Misky. Clothing is produced for one season, then relegated to the clearance rack before it's thrown out. The Mead business model is to pay workers a living wage and to use sustain-

able fabric. "We command prices that are slightly higher," she said.

Her goal is to develop an internship program for high school students and, by 2023, to launch a patented wearable device that can be used to cool down or warm up the person wearing the clothing. Such clothing would be a godsend to women going through menopause, workers laboring in hot shops, Southerners coping with climate change, or customers shivering during an Erie winter.

Engineer DJ Krahe is working with Mead's sister company, Azeylo Technology, on designing and testing the wearable device, small enough to fit into your palm and light enough to be incorporated into or outside the clothing item.

As far as the artistic prints she designs for her fashions, Mead sees them as "a call to be bold, to stand out. I call it visual self-confidence."

Capping a decade of success

Karen Rzepecki wanted to engineer a sustainable container for home-made salad dressing by designing reusable lids for Mason jars. Ten years ago, on Nov. 9, 2011, the Kickstarter campaign for her business, **ReCap Mason Jars**, met its goal. She had also won the Innovation Erie design competition. "Between Innovation Erie and Kickstarter, it gave me the funds to tool up," she said.

Now known as masonjars.com, her business, housed in the Renaissance Center, has an entire line of lids and gadgets for jars, including sprayers and pumps, with most of the products manufactured in Erie.

In addition to stocking goodies and snacks like Hershey Kisses in capped jars to give as gifts, you can use jars to dispense homemade cleaning products or soothing bath balms. "Take some Epsom salts, add some lavender or sage from your garden, put the sprigs in with a flip lid, and you have a bath salt present," Rzepecki said.

"Annoyed" that big outlets, such as eBay and even Etsy, had become resellers of products from China, Rzepecki created a technology company to design and launch online marketplaces. "I wanted to make my own marketplace. How hard could it



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Philip J. Hall is a new associate with Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C.

Philip will focus his practice on litigation, working on complicated civil disputes including contract, personal injury, business, employment, constitutional and civil rights, and more.

He graduated cum laude from Mercer University and with Woolsack Society honors from Penn State University's Dickinson School of Law. During law school, he served as a federal judicial intern to Chief Judge Christopher C. Conner and Judge Yvette Kane at the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. He also earned six CALI awards and a "Best Brief" Award at the ABA's National Appellate Advocacy Competition." Before law school, Philip was an accomplished classical musician who routinely worked with Grammy Award- and Juno Award-winning musicians. He has performed in hundreds of concerts throughout the United States—including at Carnegie Hall—as well as in Canada and Italy.

Philip joins a team of more than 40 attorneys that has been providing quality legal services to businesses, governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, insurance companies, financial institutions, individuals and families for over 60 years.



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PRESENTS

ERIE MAKES

November 13

A day to celebrate & encourage
Erie Makers of all ages

LOCATIONS

Erie Makes is celebrated at ECPL (Blasco, Edinboro, Lincoln) and partners: CAM Erie, Grounded Printshop, Lake Erie Woodworks, Claytopia, Neighborhood Art House.

BUTTON PALOOZA

Invites all makers to create a button showcasing what they love about Erie for display in our community art exhibit.

KITS + ACTIVITIES

Patrons can enjoy on-site programs & events, then keep on making at home with kits like terrarium making, landscape painting, and cookie decorating!

Find the full schedule at:
ERIELIBRARY.ORG



[top] Karen Rzepecki started her business with reusable caps for Mason jars. Now the company website, masonjars.com, serves as a “social commerce” gateway and also links shoppers to products made by 200 small businesses and independent makers. **[bottom]** The team at Blair Mead Designs includes, left to right, Reem Al-Misky, design/fashion consultant; Gloria Mifetu, sewing manager; Mead, company founder; and Yifan Wang, associate designer.

on people’s health than ever before.”

The Juice Jar is environmentally conscious. “We’re very eco-minded,” said McMaster. It uses coconut bowls and provides bamboo straws, which customers can take home and re-use. Greens from No Dirt Farms in Fairview go into its salads and sandwiches and Nova maple syrup, from Hartstown in Crawford County, goes into its granola and other menu items.

You can also buy Nova maple syrup at the Juice Jar, as well as honey from MV Power in Millcreek and Raintree Farms in Cambridge Springs; Happy Mug Coffee, roasted in Edinboro; goat milk soap from Al-By Farms in Union City; Hawthorne 1204 organic bath fizzies; and organic lotion bars, salves, and sprays by Andrea Chesley.

McMaster encourages customers to visit the makers themselves. A trip to Al-By Farms makes for a fun family outing and you can buy more of their products, she said. Selling local products in her shop is “a nice way to introduce people to the cool things we have in our region.”

Gift certificates are available online, but from now until Nov. 6, you can buy one gift certificate and get a second one at half price by shopping in person.

Easy does it

Patronizing local businesses is less of a hassle than jostling crowds at a big box store, but any kind of shopping can be stressful, especially in the midst of a pandemic.

So we decided to check in on AcousticSheep, which has garnered lots of attention since Dr. Wei-Shin Lai, a family physician, and her husband, Jason Wolfe, founded the business in their home in 2007. By 2013, they had left their day jobs and opened their business at 2001 Peninsula Drive.

Today, you can shop online at sleepphones.com for their trademark headband SleepPhones and RunPhones but you can also shop in person at the Peninsula Drive location or order by calling 877-838-4790.

“Our lives have changed significantly in the nearly two years since the pandemic began and it’s no surprise that worldwide, there has been a huge spike in insomnia and other sleep-related issues,” said Andrew Dalton, PR outreach manager. “On the physical side of things, lockdowns, social distancing, and work-from-home arrangements have made many of us more sedentary than we typically are. Our products provide solutions to these issues by promoting healthy, happy and well-rested lifestyles,” he said.

Dalton explained how AcousticSheep meshes with Erie’s local business community. “Erie is a tight-knit community in the heart of the Rust Belt. Our chief technical officer (Wolfe) is originally from this area and had a dream of one day coming back to Erie with a ‘Silicon Valley mindset’ that is bringing good-paying jobs and exciting tech opportunities for the city with him,” Dalton said. “This dedication to the future of our area is something that resonates heavily with the residents of our city. That is why we think that part of our story helps the shop local/small business movement.”

Liz Allen hopes that this story prompts her to get her Christmas shopping finished with time to spare. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com.

Coming up

- Erie Arts & Culture is partnering with the Erie Downtown Partnership and PH&G to host the first annual Western PA Maker Market. It takes place in Perry Square on Saturday, Nov. 6, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Representatives from the NWPA Innovation Beehive Network, made up of local universities and the Erie County Library, will be available to explain the Beehive’s services for entrepreneurs. “Our goal is to promote makers as a great resource for gift items leading into this year’s holiday season,” said Patrick Fisher, executive director of Erie Arts & Culture.

- The Shoppes at The Colony will hold its holiday-themed open house on Saturday, Nov. 6, and Sunday, Nov. 7.

- The Erie Downtown Partnership will sponsor the Local Lovin Small Business Saturday Market on Saturday, Nov. 27, starting at 11 a.m. at the Boston Store.

be?” she wondered. “It’s hard,” she admitted.

But since the Wholesalerie marketplace launched two years ago on her company’s website, it has attracted 200 independent brands and small entrepreneurs. One offering is formulated CBD. “That’s a big deal. You have to get a lot of approvals,” she said.

The multi-seller marketplace is “social commerce,” she said. “When you go to our site, you get inspired. You can find recipes, how-tos and stories. You can learn to do a lot of stuff,” she said.

Rzepecki also designed shopthepawilds.com, with goods from north central Pennsylvania. At \$12, the spiral-bound State Park Passport, highlighting Pennsylvania parks and forests, is just one of many appealing, affordable products.

“The time will come when we have an Erie-made marketplace,” she predicted. “We are coming together as a

society, as a community, and promoting our local makers. It can be our beacon to the world of all the cool products we have in Erie — and we have a lot of them,” she said.

In addition to online, her Mason jar products can be found at Wegmans, the Erie Food Co-op, Franco’s Café, Traditions, and Country Fair.

Smoothie operator

Speaking of jars, the **Juice Jar** in the Colony Plaza is a place to find healthy meals, drinks, and grab-and-go items made in its scratch kitchen. “We really cater to the people looking for a vegan or gluten-free option,” said owner Holly McMaster, who bought the business 11 days before COVID hit in 2020.

“That forced me into the nitty-gritty of the business to figure out what works. We survived and we’re chugging right along,” she said. The pandemic, she said, “puts more of a focus

How Small Businesses Can Save Society

The 'little guys' have a bigger impact than most of us realize



The small business community tends to be tight-knit and interconnected. Stop into a locally owned business any time of year (not just the holiday season) and the shopkeeper is almost certain to not only be knowledgeable about their own products, but also those of other stores around town.

By: Hannah McDonald

Small businesses, in all of their uniqueness, might just be the secret ingredient to saving society.

Creating non-corporate jobs and bolstering the local economy are some of the ways we see small businesses helping communities. At a deeper level, more localized businesses impact our very identity by increasing happiness and creating a sense of connectivity.

Cities and towns — big and small — have networks of small businesses.

"According to the World Trade Organization, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent over 90 percent of the business population, 60 [to] 70 percent of employment and 55 percent of GDP in developed economies. SMEs, therefore, do not just significantly contribute to the economy — they ARE the economy," Christopher Arnold, head of the SMP/SME (Small and Medium Practice/Small and Medium Enterprise) interest group and researcher for the International Federation of Accountants, reported in 2019.

These networks are far from insular. Shop owners, managers, and employees have the opportunity to further strengthen and diversify economies.

One store doesn't carry what you're

looking for? More than likely, the individual running the shop will have a recommendation as to where you can find the product you're in search of at a neighboring business. And chances are, the business they recommend will be locally owned as well.

Nearly every business in a given community network offers employment opportunities in one way or another.

These employment opportunities can offer immense benefits. Some common benefits are shorter commute times, more intimate work settings where employees can see the impact of their efforts up close, and less stringent employment requirements (think strict business-casual dress codes required at many corporate work settings).

According to the 2019 Aflac Small Business Happiness Survey, additional benefits reported by participants include flexible work hours, a greater sense of appreciation, the feeling that their input as employees mattered to the company, opportunities to broaden skill sets, and being rewarded for hard work.

Additionally, Aflac reported, "A majority of employees surveyed perceived working for a small business to be less stressful and more fun."

"These days, because leisure time

is relatively scarce for most workers, [considering the traditional American 40-hour work week], people use their free time to counterbalance the intellectual and emotional demands of their jobs," wrote journalist Ilana E. Strauss for The Atlantic.

For many, this counterbalance manifests as evenings spent at home, tired from the week. Conversely, happier workers who feel more fulfilled and less stressed from their jobs are more likely to enjoy recreations such as concerts, meals, or shopping. These activities further contribute to economic growth.

The satisfaction employees feel from working for smaller companies often stems from a true belief in what they are doing or the product they are selling. This means that many times they will harbor an affinity toward shopping small themselves.

When there is a community with strong businesses scattered (or clustered — yes, we're dreaming of a walkable society), consumers are more likely to go from store to store instead of remaining at one large department store to buy everything they need.

Even without the explicit direction from one business to another in the form of product or service recommen-

dations, this distribution of wealth can further feed other small businesses, strengthening the local economy.

The simple act of speaking to a shopkeeper and receiving a mindful recommendation opens the doors for further conversation. Those who are accustomed to shopping locally know, once they cross the line between the occasional shopper and loyal customer, owners will begin to take interest in them, just as they have taken interest in the business they are patronizing.

One of the reasons consumers take a personal interest in small businesses is their unique products and services. It is at these smaller, independently owned shops that consumers can receive a quality of service otherwise unheard of when shopping at big box stores. Small businesses keep a pulse on their communities and connect individuals in a variety of ways — from employment to personalized recommendations.

As a matter of fact, it is these unique items often only found at small businesses that have the potential to grow in popularity and change the world.

We don't have to look far to see the impact of business on society as a whole, "because companies, particularly big corporations and manufacturers, are the producers of many of the goods and services that the public consumes," reported Chron, a subsidiary of the Houston Chronicle, in 2018.

It is many smaller companies, however, that act as catalysts to impactful new ideas that are brought into the world by innovative entrepreneurs.

"Because they need to stand out from the crowd to be competitive in the marketplace, small businesses create new, unique products and solutions to problems," reported Chron.

Focusing on the potential to impact consumers worldwide, many small businesses simultaneously try to offset their environmental impact by occupying smaller physical locations.

Unlike the opening of a new superstore such as Target, or Walmart, small businesses do not need to prepare mul-

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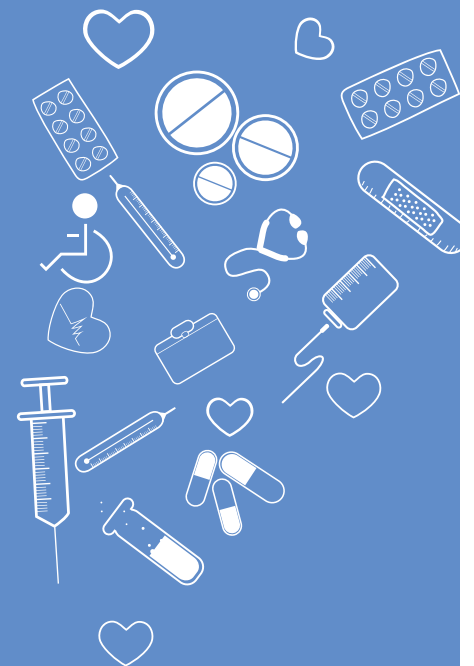
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tiple acres of land, pour tons of asphalt and concrete, erect a 5,000-square-foot (or larger) building, or install rows of new, energy-sucking street lamps in an area that once housed natural wildlife and fauna. Instead, small businesses tend to utilize readily available space.

Since small businesses are more often located in downtowns, they require less development — and most often far less startup capital, the savings of which are commonly passed down the economic chain in forms of more product offerings or higher wages — to be established.

This leads to positive impacts on both the environment and community. Spaces that may otherwise have remained empty have the opportunity to become bustling community hubs while empty natural spaces can remain undeveloped.

From creating jobs that benefit both the business and the employees to spreading local wealth while protecting wilderness areas, the list of ways small businesses are positively affecting the world and communities which

occupy it could go on and on. However, the point is made. The impact of local businesses far surpasses the annual day of celebration — Small Business Saturday.

The movement (and the understated antonym of Black Friday) Small Business Saturday began as a way to spread the wealth of the holiday shopping season to independent retailers — many of whom cannot compete with the massive markdowns boasted by larger corporations. For the most part, however, Small Business Saturday, which was started by American Express in 2010, fails to capture the essence of small businesses and reflect just how important they are to society.

Between the supply chain crisis and the ongoing pandemic, the future may appear dark. While many may look outward to a higher power, or — at the least — a higher form of government, for salvation, the answer may be right down the street at the corner store.

In Erie, that looks like fresh farmers' markets. In the summer months, through harvest season, these pop-ups are near-daily. It looks like a walk

to get a fresh loaf of bread before enjoying a cup of coffee at one of the countless local cafes where you chat with the barista (who might just be the owner, too!).

Small businesses look like a more affluent city — one where the paying jobs empower and allow people to spend more time with friends and family; eating out, enjoying concerts, and — as lower commuting costs allow — supporting other businesses they love.

As good as all of this sounds, to the average reader the evidence might appear as if it has been filtered through rose-colored lenses. Yes, if the pandemic has taught us anything it is that we should shop local. But can it really save the world?

Give it a try. Commit to shopping all small for something small — maybe holiday gifts for your friends. See how it feels, and keep track of the new friends you make in the stores you explore along the way.

Hannah McDonald can be reached at hmcDonald@eriereader.com



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Planting a Playground

Griff Slides at Frontier Park, other initiatives 'LEAF' Erie feeling young and spry



This archway, constructed from Pennsylvania limestone, beautifully frames the new Griff Griff Slides at Frontier Park. The project, completed at a cost of over half a million dollars, has transformed “the armpit of the park” into one of its major attractions — one that has brought out the youthfulness in visitors of all ages.

entities such as the Housing Authority of the City of Erie.

Beyond reducing stress and beautifying the environment, Peterson noted the timeliness of the initiative as we strive to curb climate change and global warming — according to the Arbor Day Foundation, the average fully mature tree absorbs 48 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year while releasing enough oxygen to supply two human beings for the same period. In this day and age, it cannot be understated how important it is to breathe.

For decades, Frontier Park has been the preferred destination in westside Erie to do just that, and even more so in the past year and a half, with people especially desperate for a breath of fresh air. “In that first year of the pandemic, I think I saw as many people using this park walking or riding as I had in the past five,” notes Peterson. “It’s been amazing,” adds Jamie Keim, LEAF creative director.

So as much as Peterson, Showers, Keim, and LEAF’s board of directors have been reaching outward lately, they’re also aware of what an asset Frontier Park is to the community and are continuously looking inward for ways to maximize its potential. Carved into the hillside just north of the Patricia McCain Amphitheater, the newly installed Griff Slides are just the latest expression of that. “The section of the park that they were placed in was really terrible, it was totally unusable. I used to call it the armpit of the park — it was a former brick dump yard, and we found all of that while excavating the site,” explains Peterson.

Named for Erie property developer, LEAF board member, and donor Rick Griffith, the Griff Slides were inspired by similar setups found in New York City’s Battery Park and elsewhere. Although the four ground-mounted slides seemingly appeared overnight, making them a reality was a drawn-out game of Chutes and Ladders, from

the initial grant proposal being rejected (but awarded the following year in the amount of \$425,000 after modification) to difficulty finding a low bidder on the construction (Considine Biebel was eventually awarded the contract) to the manufacture of the slides themselves (LEAF was able to source them from Germany through a company called Goric).

By the time the slides finally arrived on site in March, a large portion of the grading and the footings were already completed. “Working through over a year of construction meetings with the city and Considine Biebel, we’ve finally crossed all the T’s and dotted all the I’s and got the city’s permission to do a soft opening,” recaps Peterson. “We hired an engineering firm and they said that the structure of the arch as well as the slides were actually overengineered, I’m happy to report. It’s amazing what a big draw this is to the park.”

“The first day it was open, there was pure joy coming from that area,” enthuses Keim. And not just from children, adds Peterson. “The afternoon of our soft opening, I helped two 80-year-old ladies get to the slides and they took turns filming one another going down. It really brings the kid out, even in the elderly.” Where good vibes are concerned, the Griff Slides are a prolific pollinator.

As sliding board season starts to shift into sledding season, the LEAF team reflects fondly on all of the achievements of the past year — a part-time groundskeeper hired, all the walking trails regaveled, acquisition and adaptation of a former bayfront city maintenance building into a ReLeaf staging area for tree planting (and future nursery), another popular run of LEAF Open Markets, and a successful LEAF Festival held in tandem with Erie’s Blues and Jazz Festival. With plantings until the ground is frozen and event planning and educational initiatives extending well through the frosts of winter, their efforts — and their impacts — are truly evergreen.

We’re pinning to see what’s next.

Slide into Matt Swanseger’s inbox at mswanseger@eriereader.com — but not until you plant a tree first.

By: Matt Swanseger

You wouldn’t know it by looking at their shiny new additions, but the folks at Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier (LEAF) Park are usually not the type to let things slide.

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic left many other nonprofits stumped, LEAF branched out in new directions, keeping with its mission “to generate a greater awareness of the importance of trees to our lives” by “creating educational opportunities and outdoor experiences for [the] community” — far beyond their home base at Frontier Park.

Pre-pandemic, in-house programming and facility rentals at the LEAF Education Center accounted for 20 to 25 percent of its income streams, according to LEAF executive director Vern Peterson. While Peterson foresees the building hosting its typical full complement of events and activities down the road, in the meantime “we’ve taken a lot of what we’re doing out into the community and are trying to involve as many people as we can.”

At the center of their outreach has

been the ReLeaf program, which has to date planted 1,700 trees on Erie School District properties and 5,000 trees overall. The ultimate goal is to plant a sapling for every Erie County resident — 275,000 trees in total, with particular attention paid to those low to moderate income areas with no trees and no shade canopy whatsoever.

“You really would be surprised how expensive it is to plant a tree,” expresses Rosa Showers, LEAF programs director. “For someone to buy a six to eight foot tree, it’s a couple hundred dollars — and that’s just to buy it, that’s not the labor that goes into [planting] it. So by getting these smaller trees, we’re not only able to plant more, but faster.”

To help orchestrate this, LEAF has allied themselves with Keystone 10 Million Trees Partnership, which helps unite ecologically-minded businesses, agencies, and organizations with nurseries and growers throughout the state of Pennsylvania. Not only has ReLeaf photosynthesized interest from Erie’s Public Schools, but also corporate partners like FirstEnergy (1,100 trees planted) and government

JESSICA HUNTER

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The Generational Legacy of Larry's Central Market, an Anchor in Little Italy

Family feel of Sassafras Street staple still resonates



[left] It's all about family at Larry's Central Market. The employees working on the day writer Erin Phillips visited are all part of the Adiutori family (from left): George Goikey, Larry Adiutori Jr., Emily Czerpak, and Larry Adiutori III. [right] A photo of Larry's Central Market in 1976, looking much like it does today. (Photo contributed by Larry Adiutori III)

By: Erin Phillips

For Larry Adiutori Jr., owner of Larry's Central Market at 1626 Sassafras St., it's all about family. He's a third generation owner of the small grocery business, and his children and grandchildren frequently work alongside him. It's also about the family who came before them: the walls of the store are lined with old photos of life in the shop. And then there's the regulars, generations of loyal patrons who have become like family. The story of Larry's Central Market begins with the history of his own kin, the history of the turn-of-the-20th-century building which has been in the Adiutori family since 1963, and the history of the neighborhood that has changed dramatically over the years, where Larry's Central Market stands as an anchor, remaining largely unchanged throughout the decades.

The family history of Larry's Central Market starts with Lidano Adiutori, who came to America from Acuto, Italy near Rome in 1903 when he was 18 years old. His family settled in the Little Italy neighborhood of Erie (which is loosely defined as the area spanning Sassafras Street to Liberty between West 16th and 19th streets). Around 1930, after Lidano and his wife, Mary Estelle, settled down and had their children, he began his grocery business. The original storefront for L. Adiutori and Son was located at 1526 Chestnut St.

Lidano's son, Lawrence Adiutori (Larry Sr.), took up the family business and built upon it. In 1947, Larry Sr. married his wife, Mamie, and went into business for himself, operating his grocery and deli out of a stall at the Central Market House on 16th and State. The Central Market House was established in 1895 and was a sprawling open air market on the western side of State Street, just south of the railroad overpass. This market provided residents, restaur-

ateurs, and grocers their supply of meat, produce, fruit, bread, fresh fish, etc. When Adiutori was able to, in 1959, he opened his own storefront just north of the Market House at 1412 State St. (this spot is now occupied by the elevators for the Kellar's Comedy Club building). Larry's Central Market was at this location for just four short years before they moved into the building that would be the family business for the next 58 years and counting.

The Commercial Italianate building that now houses Larry's Central Market was originally built around 1894 and has been a grocery store from its very beginning. Its original occupant was Adam Leib Grocery. Adam Leib was a first generation Erieite born of Jewish German immigrant parents. He opened the grocery store at 16th and Sassafras shortly after the building was constructed and was in business there until about 1922. After Leib retired, the building changed hands many times, but it always remained a grocery store. So when Larry Adiutori Sr. bought it in 1963, he wasn't just continuing his family's legacy, he was carrying on the building's legacy as well.

After Larry's Central Market moved to its permanent location, Adiutori's son, Larry Jr., started working in the store, shortly after he finished high school, and at 73 years old, he's still at it to this day. Adiutori reflects on his life in the grocery business: "I've never known anything different. It's what I liked, and it's what I knew and so that's what I just kept doing. It's a good living. A place like this builds character because you've got to work for everything you get and there's a personal satisfaction in doing the work." And Larry Jr. isn't the only Adiutori working in the shop these days; three of his five children work there, as well as his granddaughter. That's five generations of Adiuturis continuing a legacy started nearly a century ago. This kind of generational,

small family business is rare these days, to say the least.

While I'm talking to Larry, there is a constant flow of people through the store. It is steadily busy on a Monday morning, filled with people from all different backgrounds who have made stopping at Larry's Central Market a part of their daily or weekly routine. And Larry greets them all with a smile, a handshake, or a question about their lives. It is that kind of personal connection that makes a small business like this so special and part of why it has continued on for so long. "If we ever closed the doors, you could never open this kind of store again," Adiutori explains. "It takes too long to build up the kind of loyal clientele we have here." At one point, Larry stops our conversation to greet a friend: a man named Guinto whose shopping bag contains fresh olives, sausage, and dried Lupini beans. Guinto came to Erie from Fiuggi, Italy when he was 21 and he shops at Larry's specifically for these specialty products, although he tells me that he actually comes just to see Larry's face.

While the physical store itself hasn't changed much over the decades, the neighborhood and, consequently, the products the market carries has. When Larry Sr. started out, the neighborhood was still recognizably "Little Italy," and he catered to this population by selling mostly specialty Italian products, homemade sausages and meats, and general groceries. But like any successful business, they have evolved along with the neighborhood.

When they first took up residence at 16th and Sassafras, the Central Mall across the street was in its heyday. That provided a lot of auxiliary business to Larry's simply from the amount of people coming into the neighborhood each day. Around 1988, when most of the shops in the Central Mall closed up, the area slowed down, and Adiutori saw an opportunity to adapt to the shifting demographic of the neighborhood. It was around this time that Larry's started carrying groceries requested by the growing Latinx population of Little Italy by stocking more Goya products, plantains, bulk rice, Sofrito, specialty coffees, spices, and cheeses. Today, you can see the beautiful variety of all the products the neighbors seek out along with the same specialty Italian products they've kept through the years including imported candy, homemade sausages, cured meats and capocollo.

The neighborhood of Little Italy now falls under the benevolent footprint of the Sisters of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Network. This organization

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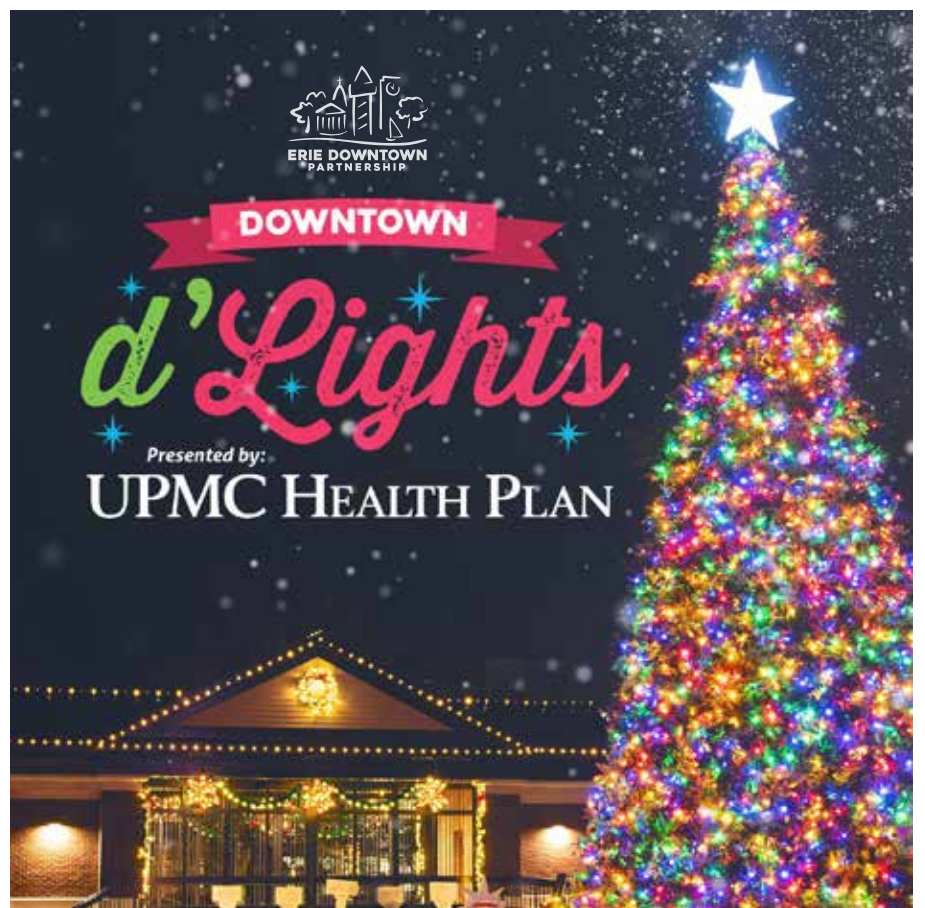
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was founded in 2000 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, specifically to meet the needs of impoverished residents of Erie's Little Italy. Since then the network's reach has expanded to include the area of the city from East Avenue to Cranberry Street and from 12th to 26th Streets. The organization provides many services to the neighborhood including community gardens, soup kitchens, emergency assistance, affordable housing, public art projects, bike programs, tutoring, and mentoring (to name a few). Through their "Youth Work Experience" program, the Sisters of St. Joseph have worked with Larry's Central Market to allow neighborhood teens an opportunity to earn wages while gaining work experience and being mentored on the job. Larry tells me, "They've done a wonderful job of preserving the neighborhood. They've worked with us and sent us kids to work in the store. The young man they sent us most recently has been one of the best employees that we've had from them."

The Sisters have also been involved with the creation of a striking mural that adorns the north facing wall of the exterior of Larry's Central Market. Partially funded by the Adiutori family along with the Neighborhood Network's sponsors, the work was completed by artists Tom Ferraro and Ed Grout and is titled *Trajan Market of Little Italy*. According to the artist's website: "Four generations of the Adiutori family grace the north facing wall of this iconic Italian market located on the eastern edge of Erie's Little Italy Neighborhood. The mural celebrates the market's longevity in a neighborhood that once boasted over 25 small family owned markets."

One can't help but speculate what the future of this kind of family business looks like. But the fact that there are multiple Adiutori children and fami-

[left] Larry's Central Market at 1626 Sassafras Street has changed little in appearance over the years, while the neighborhood surrounding it has changed in many ways. [right] A portion of the mural covering the north facing wall of Larry's Central Market that was produced in partnership with the Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network. The mural was completed by artists Tom Ferraro and Ed Grout. Depicted here (from left) are Mamie Adiutori, her great granddaughter Ashley Maldonado, and her grandson Larry Adiutori III.

ly members still involved with the market suggests it could go on for generations to come. Adiutori's daughter, Emily Czerpak, reflects on the family's dedication to the store: "Our kids will come in with us now and stock shelves. It's important that they come and know Papa's store. We're all together all the time and that's important. Some families nowadays don't see each other at all, and we get to see each other every day. If you have a problem, you have to work it out because it's not just a job, it's family and you have to step up."

While Adiutori never imagined the shop would go on as long as it has, and has never expected his children to be so involved, he's proud of what he's built and of being part of the fabric of the neighborhood for so long: "Success is measured in a whole lot of different ways. You just have to keep at it, regardless of whether it's glamorous or profitable. You just keep at it. It takes a lot of dedication to keep it going." Thankfully Adiutori, his children, and grandchildren feel the same sense of dedication and hopefully Larry's Central Market will carry on its legacy in Erie's Little Italy for generations to come.

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

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A Scientific Basis for Hope

How mass vaccination eradicated poliovirus, helped prevent repeat of 1918 flu pandemic



By: Jonathan Burdick

By the 1950s, the poliovirus had been ravaging the United States for decades. In the summer of 1916, for instance, polio had spread rapidly throughout New York City, panicking the city as it killed over 2,000 and left thousands more afflicted with lifelong paralysis. While the pathogen was not new to the world, the frequency of polio epidemics was increasing significantly, paralyzing or killing over 500,000 people worldwide each year. Images of children suffering from the paralytic effects of poliomyelitis circulated widely. Fears of ending up in an iron lung — a sealed, tubed machine designed in 1929 to offer breathing support — were genuine.

The vast majority of those exposed to the poliovirus were asymptomatic. Many experienced symptoms no worse than a mild flu. Yet, for some, if the virus entered their bloodstream and began attacking the nerves needed to control one's muscles, the effects were incapacitating and potentially deadly.

"The most intelligent thing for modern man to do is to join in the fight against this outrageous disease, for our own sake and for the sake of our children," wrote Erie Daily Times columnist Bill Walsh in 1952. He made a plea that everyone must assist "in this great campaign against one of the nation's worst threats to health and happiness."

The disease was making headlines daily in Erie by this point. Cases peaked in the U.S. that year with nearly 58,000 afflicted, 3,100 deaths, and over 20,000 left with paralysis of varying degrees.

"Probably nothing strikes more fear in a mother's heart than the word polio," Erie's March of Dimes chairman T.K. Welsh told the newspaper. He explained how children stricken with polio were quarantined at hospitals and parents often couldn't be with or even see their children for long periods of time, leaving a feeling of helplessness.

Special polio insurance could be purchased. "This is a smart move since it lessens the burden," Welsh said, but he added that while this helped individual families, the "purchase of such a policy makes no contribution toward the defeat of polio." Funds were needed for treatments, but they were also desperately needed for research to prevent its continued spread.

The organization Welsh represented, the March of Dimes, was founded as the National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who himself was afflicted with paralytic polio at 39. They took the lead in Erie County in the fight against the disease, recruiting an army of volunteers to raise money, mail informational pamphlets, and canvass to spread awareness. After a particularly rough previous year, local funds were depleting, so they organized to solicit donations, installing a wishing well at the downtown Warner Theatre and planning nighttime Mothers' Marches and Porch Light Parades throughout the county. During these events, homes wishing to contribute turned on their outside lights indicating their desire to donate. The Erie march alone included over 400 women and raised thousands of dollars.

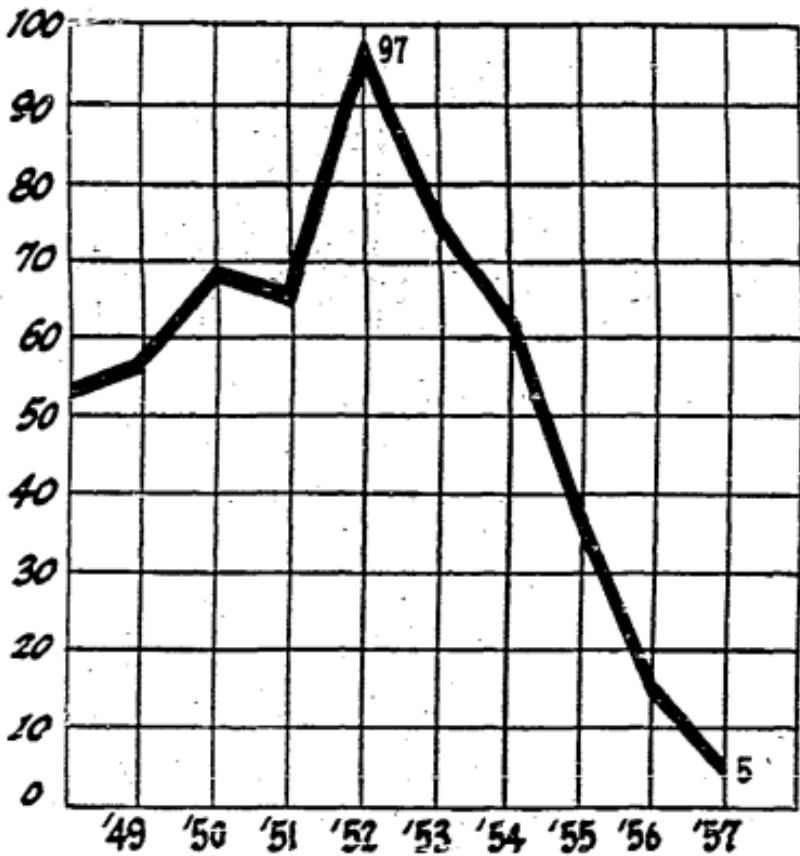
[top left] Dr. Jonas Salk, a virologist and medical researcher associated with the University of Pittsburgh, was responsible for developing the vaccine that effectively eliminated the poliovirus worldwide. [bottom right] Just five years after treating an astounding 97 polio cases in 1952, Erie's Lakeview Municipal Hospital admitted just five patients suffering from the disease in 1957, a testament to the efficacy of the polio vaccine first distributed in 1954.

Erie's Lakeview Municipal Hospital, which took in many of the county's polio patients, did not turn people down who couldn't pay, but expenses were rising and they had lost funding that helped pay for additional needed nurses. As a result, their daily rate increased from \$5 to \$12 per day. City Health Director Felix Shubert stated they did not and would not pressure families in need for payments, but the financial strain was challenging.

Local media recounted numerous stories of local hardships. There was a boy named Vern just shy of three years old who had to relearn to walk, a teenage football player told he'd never be able to play again, a young girl who could only move her eyes and required a feeder, and

a brother and sister who both suffered paralysis. Elmer Ohl, a former Titusville High School football player and World War II veteran, was operating a trucking business out of Union City when he contracted polio. He was hospitalized for three years with complications and unable to move either of his legs. When he was finally discharged from the Veterans Administration hospital, he required a wheelchair, but he had also learned to walk slowly with crutches he designed himself.

The Zem Zem Hospital also assisted with polio rehabilitation. The nurses, who lived full-time on the second floor, used their warm swimming pool, daily exercises, and other activities for physical therapy. Families could visit on Sundays, but during the week, the atmosphere was described as positive, offering patients games, movies, and other entertainment to keep up morale. "Gloom or depression don't have a chance as the small patients struggle along trying a little harder each day to reach their ultimate goal — to walk without assistance," the Erie Daily Times reported.



A record of polio cases treated at Lakeview from 1949 to 1957.

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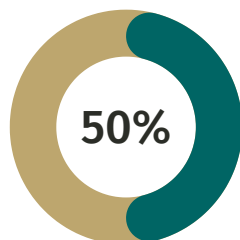
The Greater Erie Economic Development Corporation (GEEDC) and The Erie Community Foundation established the “We Believe in Erie Fund” in 2021. The two nonprofits are joining forces to inspire hope in the Erie community and bridge the gaps of economic and racial inequities.

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[left] A forklift operator moves a load of Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine to a chill-room in 1956. Whereas other vaccines of the time injected weakened pathogens into patients, the polio shot was the first to inoculate them with dead, deactivated viruses. [right] Seven-year-old Eddie Randolph, on crutches, arrives at school after an eight month bout with polio in 1956. Prior to the polio vaccine's development and widespread adoption, the virus was killing or paralyzing 500,000 people annually.

"Instead of waiting to heal the ravages of polio after it strikes, we must prevent it," the head of one research organization leader declared. There were clinical trials involving a serum containing antibodies from the blood of polio survivors. It showed promise, but immunity waned within weeks.

Then in April 1955, there was a breakthrough: a safe and effective polio vaccine was announced to the world. It was developed by Dr. Jonas Salk, a virologist

and medical researcher affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh. He conducted the first human trials in 1952, experimenting with a polio vaccine that would, against conventional scientific wisdom of the time, use injected dead rather than merely weakened polioviruses. The following year, he tested his vaccine on himself, his wife, and his three children, later saying that it had been "courage based on confidence, not daring" and that his "confidence [was]

based on experience."

In 1954, the vaccine was then administered to around one million children — the "polio pioneers" — in what was the largest clinical trial in history. The results were overwhelmingly successful with 60 to 90 percent effectiveness depending on the strain. Now proven effective and safe, the next step was the promotion of mass immunization with the goal of containing and then wiping out polio entirely.

"The American public had greeted the first polio vaccine, released in 1954, with wild enthusiasm," writes historian of medicine Elena Conis in a recent article on vaccination resistance for *The American Historian*, noting that there were small pockets of polio vaccine resistance, but they made little impact. "Parents so dreaded polio that they were quick to seek the vaccine for their children, and coercive policies never became necessary."

There were mistakes made though, some even tragic. In what became known as the Cutter incident, a vaccine manufactured by the small California-based Cutter Laboratories did not properly deactivate the live virus, causing 200 children to experience paralysis in some



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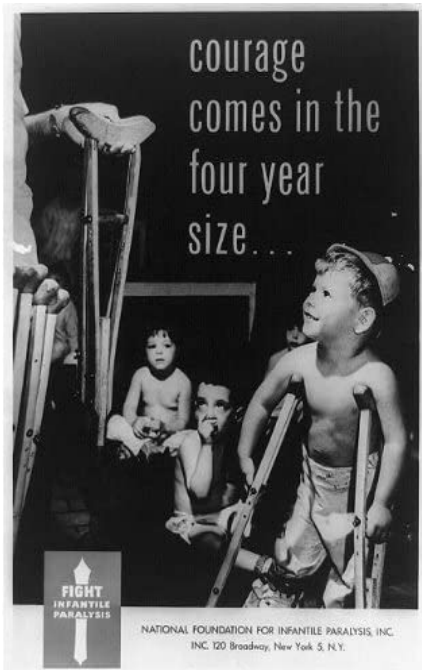
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH COLLECTION, NYC MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES

form and killing ten. Although their vaccines were all withdrawn and Cutter kicked out of the program, it threatened public trust in the vaccine and fueled vaccine hesitancy for many. There was a massive push to regain that public trust. The March of Dimes even recruited a fresh-faced Elvis Presley to publicize a polio vaccination backstage before a performance on the *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

“Is the vaccine safe? The answer to this is yes,” Dr. Hart E. Van Riper of the National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis stated. “The battle against polio ... will be won or lost this fall and winter. Success will depend on how many children are vaccinated.”

Congress designated tens of millions of dollars towards vaccine production and distribution. In Erie, health officials, with funding from the state, began working in coordination with the public schools, parochial schools, St. Joseph’s Home for Children, the Sarah Reed home, the Zem Zem hospital, private physicians, and infant clinics to vaccinate as many children as possible. 51,861 polio vaccines were administered in a joint city-school district vaccination program, targeting ages six months through 19 years old. It was described as “the largest public health project ever undertaken in the city.”

“The 7th graders were brave,” volunteer Ethel Hanes wrote of a group of North East students receiving their vaccination at school, adding that they were “indeed fortunate for having the opportunity to receive these shots.”

For a day-long city event targeting adults between ages 20 and 40, thousands of vaccines were administered for free by physicians of the Erie County

Medical Society at the National Guard Armory on Sixth and Parade. Nurses and volunteers coordinated this “city-wide battle” against polio.

It was a success. Total cases across Erie County fell to 97 that year. In 1956, countywide cases decreased to a stunning 15. Cases were halved nationwide. There was still work to do though.

In May 1957, a new program to coordinate and distribute the vaccine in Erie County was set in motion, overseen by Erie County Health Department Director Dr. James Googe. The “physicians, PTAs, county school officials, the medical auxiliary, and the city health department” all worked cooperatively to reach the unvaccinated, Googe told the newspaper.

“From our most recent reports, I would say it has been a most effective program,” Googe observed. In what he described as “remarkable,” there had been only one case and no deaths so far that year. “[I]t appears that paralytic polio, like diphtheria, smallpox, and typhoid fever may be on its way out. We can’t let this good start lull us into a state of complacency — the program must be continued until all remaining susceptible groups of the population receive the vaccine.”

As the spread of poliovirus was getting under control though, a new influenza pandemic threatened the world in 1957. City health director Shubert warned of a twin epidemic in Erie if people did not also get their flu shots, which were “feverishly produced” to make them available. Shubert stressed that they were “a safe and effective means of fighting the [influenza] disease” and reminded the public that the fight against polio was

not total victory either until all eligible were vaccinated through “vigilance and continued inoculation.”

Inoculation yet again proved its effectiveness. While the flu strain killed over 100,000 across the United States and millions worldwide — making it one of the deadliest on record — the vaccine helped prevent deaths on the catastrophic scale of the 1918 influenza pandemic. As for polio, cases were reduced by another two-thirds across the country. Whereas there had been nearly 58,000 cases nationwide in 1952, by 1957, cases fell to 7,500. In Erie County, polio was all but eradicated. Only five cases required hospital treatment in 1957. The Erie Daily Times reported how the city hospital’s iron lungs were beginning to “gather dust” and compared what medical scientists accomplished to what space scientists were trying to do by reaching the moon.

A third polio booster shot was created for the vaccinated and was strongly being recommended for full immunity and “peace of mind in 1958.”

“Polio can be prevented. This could not have been said two years ago,” the editors for the Erie Daily Times wrote. “But it can be improved to read at some future date: Polio Has Been Eliminated. Vaccine is the weapon at your disposal to give the death blow to this crippling disease.... Polio will only be a menace again by reason of negligence or indifference.”

Dr. Shubert stated that Erie could “end polio as an epidemic threat for all time” and that we had “the formula that will permit us to rid ourselves of this scourge.” The formula? Three doses of the polio vaccine, continued mass inoculation programs, and the “eternal vig-

[left] The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, founded by former President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was the predecessor to the current March of Dimes. FDR found himself afflicted with paralytic polio at the age of 39. [center] The Dec. 5, 1957 issue of The Erie Daily Times and City Health Director Felix Shubert struck an optimistic tone, as the previously prolific poliovirus epidemic hit record lows in the City of Erie, directly attributable to Dr. Jonas Salk’s vaccine. [right] The March of Dimes recruited rock’n’ roll heartthrob Elvis Presley to publicly promote the polio vaccine backstage before a performance on The Ed Sullivan Show.

ilance” of the health department who were still working diligently to get the unvaccinated vaccinated.

Medical experts warned the public from embracing a false sense of security, stating that an “increase in the number of cases could occur next year, unless a majority of the population is fully inoculated.” By the beginning of 1958, it was estimated that 34 million people under 40 had all three polio shots, but that still left 15 million children and 40 million adults under 40 without any protection, which was described as a “matter of grave concern.” Vaccination rates were slowing down. Demand had created a shortage of vaccine only months earlier, but there was now a backlog of nearly 28 million doses, which expired after six months of storage. Around this time, the Pennsylvania Welfare Department announced that all patients and employees in state institutions would be mandated to get polio immunizations, along with their smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid, influenza, and tuberculosis vaccines.

That year marked an 80 percent decrease in polio from its peak. The en-

tirety of Erie County had only one case of infantile paralysis. Crawford County had only two. There were no deaths in either county. Locally, the focus shifted from prevention and towards assisting the region's "post-polio patients."

"The fight against polio has been changed," Clarence C. Rapp, the new chairman of the March of Dimes campaign, stated. "Today, we must wage an all-out war against the ravages which old cases of polio have caused on human beings. More than 300,000 people living in America have had paralytic polio and they need help."

In 1961, a supplemental oral vaccine developed by Albert Sabin and Hilary Koprowski was made available. The following year, cases in the entire United States dropped to under 1,000. The United States has been polio-free since 1979 after an outbreak in Lancaster County. Since 1998, world polio rates have decreased by 99 percent, although in some parts of the world, it remains endemic.

"Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors," Dr. Jonas Salk once said. Even though the vast majority of those exposed to the poliovirus experienced no or few symptoms, he seemed hopeful for humanity, for there was a public willing to band together for the greater good to protect those who needed the most protection.

"Some people are constructive ... Others are destructive," he observed in a 1991 interview with the Academy of Achievement. "It's this diversity in humankind that results in some making positive contributions and some negative contributions. It's necessary to have enough [people] who make positive contributions to overcome the problems of each age."

Salk spent his final years in pursuit of a vaccine for AIDS. While it eluded him before his 1995 death, his spirit and passion for the good of humanity, for the health of the public, and his idealistic hope he expressed lives on in the medical community today.

"What is important is that we — number one: Learn to live with each other," Salk mused in a later-life interview. "Number two: try to bring out the best in each other. I already see enough evidence for this optimism."

What was he looking for? A scientific basis for hope.

"I think I've found it," he said.

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

Sacred Divine Femininity

Reconnecting women to their sacred energy with traditional practices



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: Amy VanScoter

Natural and holistic health care options are becoming more popular and widely available than ever before, and the Erie area is no exception. The approach of holistic health care takes the whole person including their lifestyle into consideration when making health recommendations, and differs in many ways from conventional medicine.

A new local business, Sacred Divine Femininity, is a traditional naturopathy (alternative medicine) and natural health and wellness practice, with an emphasis on women's health. Sacred Divine Femininity focuses on providing traditional naturopathy, traditional yoni steams, blessingways (aka Mother's blessings), and birth doula services.

Shawntá Pulliam-Brown, owner of Sacred Divine Femininity, is a certified yoni steam and natural health practitioner, certified blessingway guide, and childbirth doula. She says holding on to traditional customs of natural wellness is what sets this practice apart. "What differentiates us from other natural health practices is first, we hold on to the traditional customs of natural wellness. In addition, we work with our clients' foundations first and then recommend a supplement or alternative medicine if needed. We believe in the body's natural ability to heal itself with the proper education, encouragement, support, and a detailed health plan.

Shawntá Pulliam-Brown, owner of Sacred Divine Femininity, is a certified yoni steam and natural health practitioner, certified blessingway guide, and childbirth doula.

We don't treat a system or illness, but the body symptom that is being affected, getting down to the root cause of your illness and disease," said Pulliam-Brown.

The name Sacred Divine Femininity comes from traditional practices as well. "Just as our Creator creates, we have been gifted with that same divine power, whether we are birthing children, birthing visions, manifesting ideas, creating innovative businesses, or nurturing ourselves, as well as others. Our sacred divine feminine energy, is what brings life into the world, that has mothered not only our own families but humanity as a whole. If you look back at previous generations, even centuries, women have almost always been the natural healers, caretakers, nurturers, and have had a divine connection with the Creator and nature," said Pulliam-Brown.

Although the practice has an emphasis on women's health, they serve all individuals and provide natural health consultations and complementary health recommendations for almost all body system difficulties. The modalities and services offered include iridology, pH balance testing, herbal remedies, aromatherapy, Bach flower essence, birth doula services, and blessingway ceremonies. Many of these services are new offerings to Erie. "Herbal remedies have always been a practice my family cherished, so it always came natural to me," said Pulliam-Brown.

Pulliam-Brown said her own experiences and successes with these practices were also a factor in wanting to share them with the community. "I have been creating and implementing programs to uplift humanity with a focus on women's self esteem and health for 20 years. I have witnessed the power of natural healing through spiritual grounding, naturopathy, foundational health, and alternative medicine, after experiencing a nervous breakdown in 2001 that had left me on disability suffering from de-

pression, anxiety, and PTSD."

One of the more popular services offered is the traditional yoni steam. Yoni or vaginal steaming is an age-old natural remedy said to cleanse the vagina and uterus. Pulliam-Brown says the service at Sacred Divine Femininity is different from many of the yoni steam services currently trending. "Most of the yoni steams being offered in beauty salons or spas are not providing the service the way it was intended traditionally as well as culturally, so what you're seeing is a trending service providing a physical steam without the individual health and herbal consultations, and providing only one type of herbal blend for everyone," said Pulliam-Brown. "At Sacred Divine Femininity we are certified yoni steam and natural health practitioners that focus on each client individually. We provide five different traditional yoni steam throne packages based upon the individual needs of our clients, offering one-on-one consultations to share your womb story. We also incorporate prayer and/or affirmation blanket wraps (based on beliefs and preference), music meditation, and other requests based upon our clients needs, creating an overall mind, body, and spirit uplifting experience for our clients."

"My goal is to give my clients the knowledge that was once given to us for health and wellness from the beginning of time, to empower us to not be compromised but holistically well, mind, body and spirit. It's a blessing to carry out this work into the Erie community and I'm excited and grateful to all the people who will benefit from the services I offer," said Pulliam-Brown.

Sacred Divine Femininity is located at 4906 Richmond Street in Erie. For more information call (814) 299-9550 or go to sacreddivinefemininity.com

Amy VanScoter is a certified yoga instructor and meditation teacher at PACA and SchoolHouse Yoga in Erie with a passion for wellness, and a marketing and communications professional. She can be reached at avanscoter@gmail.com

Huge Boulders, Tiny Dragons

On Allegany State Park, Thunder Rocks, and newts



FLICKR @MIKE K

By: Jeff Bucki

When I was a kid, I always looked forward to visiting Allegany State Park. It's about an hour from where I grew up near Buffalo, and only an hour and ten minutes from Erie. We would always stay in a cabin. You know the kind. The ones that are probably not nearly as big as you remember them being, though they play an outsized role in your memory. At night, we would try to attract raccoons to our cabin with marshmallows from the campfire. Most people try to avoid creatures like that. We hoped to encounter them.

Covering 65,000 acres, Allegany is filled with cool critters, including white-tailed deer, black bears, and the rare spiny softshell turtle. But if you look a little closer in the right places, you'll find some special amphibians, too.

One of those places is Thunder Rocks. This unique geological formation was crafted by Mother Nature approximately 165 million years ago due to a number of factors (but not glaciers). It features more than 25 massive rock structures that you can climb on (well, the smaller ones). The sprawling sedimentary rocks are dotted with white stones that look like tiny eggs. Plus, Thunder Rocks is home to a variety of Appalachian plant species that are quite uncommon in Western New York.

A friend told me about Thunder Rocks and we visited for the first time last year. It was my wife and I, our four adventurous kids, and my parents.

As we were having a great time exploring the rocks, my intrepid son, Nolan, came upon a startling discovery. A tiny, bright orange amphibian that was out and about, traversing the rocks as we were. It was an eastern newt. We were all really excited to see this little guy. And this one discovery set off the Great Newt Search of 2020.

We started looking to see if we could find another newt. As it turns out, there were plenty. My kids found them. My wife found them. My mom. Even my colorblind dad. Me? Nope. I looked hard and found nothing. I turned over log after log. I went deep into the forest, determined to find a newt. I came up empty.

Here's the cool thing about eastern newts that we learned from this. The little orange fellas we were finding are actually juveniles of the species known as red eft. They live on land for two to four years. Then, remarkably, their color darkens and their tail grows flatter as they return to ponds and streams as adults. So they go from landlubbers to water-dwelling. Basically, a reverse Little Mermaid.

This was fascinating to learn because when we weren't trying to attract rac-

Located about an hour and ten minutes away from Erie in Cattaraugus County, N.Y., the 65,000-acre Allegany State Park makes for a very photogenic visit.

coons as kids, we were looking to catch newts in the nearby pond. They were brown and yellow, so apparently those were the grown-up version of these newts. This blew my mind. I thought for sure these were two different species entirely.

Since I was shut out on the first Allegany trip, we returned a second time last summer. Once again, my wife and kids found newts, while I came home empty-handed. At this point, I was starting to feel cursed. Why was I so bad at this?

But this June, the third time was the charm. I was determined to end my sad streak. By moving slowly and carefully examining my surroundings, I finally did.

I should mention that the timing of your visit likely makes an impact on whether you'll see newts. A recent rainfall that has the forest floor damp seems to be ideal.

It's heartening for me to know eastern newts seem to be populous in Allegany. Because globally, the picture for all amphibians is becoming bleak. Chytridiomycosis, an infection caused by the chytrid fungus, has spread rapidly and decimated amphibian populations in more than 60 countries. The global pet trade has played a role in the spread of the disease, which is exacerbated by climate change. No effective measure is known to control the disease in wild populations. Chytridiomycosis has caused declines in more than 500 frog and salamander species.

Amphibians have always been close to my heart. Learning that their numbers are dwindling all over the planet saddens me. When we were kids, one of the highlights of summer was our annual frog race. Just imagine leopard frogs and bullfrogs navigating an obstacle course. You could say we didn't get out enough as kids, though maybe we got out too much.

But it's not too late to help amphibians.

The land-dwelling juvenile form of the eastern newt, also known as the red eft, can sometimes be spotted traversing Thunder Rocks, a unique geological formation within Allegany State Park in Western New York.

ans. For starters, don't use pesticides in your yard. That kills amphibians and the insects they eat. Give frogs, toads, newts and salamanders a place to live. Don't waste water, and help protect the wetlands in your region.

Allegany is New York's largest state park, and it's open year-round. Plus, the park is celebrating its centennial, so it's a fitting time to stay in a cabin, campsite, or cottage. Every time we go, we never have enough time to do all the things we'd like to. That's the mark of a good place.

I should add that Red House Lake in Allegany is a terrific place to go fishing or boating. There's a nice kayak and canoe launch on the main pier, too. During our most recent visit, my daughter Bridget slipped off the dock, but fortunately all those swimming lessons came in handy. Maybe she was taking to the water to emulate the eastern newt.

We're lucky to have another state park like this in our region. You don't need to go to a tropical rainforest to see extraordinary amphibians. Just trek out to Thunder Rocks. If you're lucky, you may observe some remarkable, shape-shifting newts — though it may take a few tries.

That's the beauty of nature. It happens all around us, whether we can see it or not. Slow down and take a look for yourself.

Jeff Bucki is a copywriter at Delaware North and a freelance writer for the Buffalo News. His work has appeared in Buffalo Magazine and Discover Magazine. Visit JeffBucki.com.



JEFF BUCKI

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The 2021 Erie Gift Guide

Ditch the smiley boxes for a more local holiday

By: Nick Warren

Ever since October ended, it's been Christmas-time in the city. The seasonal Christmas creep has fully overtaken the month of November — Thanksgiving be damned! Though, amidst these sprawling holidays, is there anything we can be thankful for?

One precious thing, perhaps the greatest gift that we get out of our more recent monthly Reader production schedule is *time*.

This is our seventh annual Made in Erie Gift Guide, and it's the earliest one we have put out yet, and for good reason.

Maybe you're the type of person who gets their presents sorted out in August. If so, who are you, and can you life-coach me? I always find myself waiting until the last minute to do everything.

Rewind a bit, if we may, to Halloween. Did your costume turn out exactly the way you wanted it to? If you're one of the lucky ones who answered "yes" to that question, then you know how helpful it is to stay on top of things. It's okay to throw together a Jim Halpert-esque costume for ourselves, but do you really want to do that when it comes to picking out a gift for your loved ones? Don't stuff a shirt in a plastic bag; take the time, and get the teapot.

Do you know what this extra time also affords us? No need for free two-day shipping. Stop feeding the Bezos, and start supporting your neighbors — not just with a smile and a wave, but with your dollars. Put that love into the community, you won't regret it.

Here we have a few suggestions to get you started. Things to spark your mind and get your gifts in order so you don't have to spend Christmas Eve staying up all night wrapping presents.

Virtually Anything from a Local Shop



This one might be obvious, but it's the most important. It's also the easiest one on the list, and offers the most room for personal flair and impulse buys alike. Just go into a locally-owned store and buy something. It's as simple as that. Avoid the upper Peach jam and

venture out, oh intrepid shopper!

Try Village West, for example, with its 20 adorable specialty shops situated on West 26th Street. Check out The Shops at the Colony, with another 20 storefronts on West Eighth Street to browse to your heart's content. Drop by the West Erie Plaza off of Pittsburgh Avenue, or take a stroll down to the Shops on the Hill north of 26th on Peach Street.

There are tons of wonderful locally-owned boutiques to visit. Need more tips? Just go to our Best of Erie list and check them off one by one.

A Gone Local Gift Box



There's one company that this list was *made* for, and that's Gone Local. Founded by Kristen Santiago around an important mission: "To promote Erie's 'shop local' movement by uniting its diverse artists, makers, and small businesses in one place."

In one convenient online spot, Gone Local brings dozens of Erie businesses together. Some of their bestselling offerings are their curated Gift Boxes, with nearly 30 unique selections to choose from. Like the name implies, they come nicely packaged, ready to wrap. From coffee to BBQ to drinkware and body care (and a few items on this list), there's a cornucopia of great ideas here.

Find them at Gordon's Meat Market, or order online to ship to you or pick up at Andorra's Bubble Tea. // gonelocalerie.com

Wanna Chill & Color?

Forget Netflix, let's color. Local artist Jason's Amatan-gelo has transformed his 3D relief paintings into sleek, linear outlines just waiting to be filled in by colored pencil, marker, crayon, or whatever. With 63 pages of hypnotic worlds to enliven, this book offers days and days of fun that's not traditionally geared towards grown-ups (pro-tip: Pair this with one of Calypso Enterprises' fine products and enjoy). Amatan-gelo's work is oftentimes



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

nonrepresentational, with bold, interwoven shapes that lend themselves perfectly to a psychedelic palette.

For more info, go jayart23.com or order at barnesandnoble.com

Esther's Piñata Shop



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Start a new holiday tradition with a locally-made piñata from Esther's Piñata Shop. Founder Esther Ortiz was born in Mexico and lived in California before moving to Erie in 1994. Her interest in crafting piñatas began after a trip to Colorado, and from then on, she's been using them as a beautiful and festive means of creative expression. It's a way to celebrate her culture (as well as this writer's) in both an authentic and modern way. Ortiz teaches classes for all ages on how to make piñatas, and has found colorful inspiration for holidays like Día de Muertos, birthdays, and Christmas.

For more info, go to facebook.com/pinatashop09 or find them at gonelocalerie.com

Rope & Bloom Macramé

If looking for a gift has got you tied up in knots, you may want to hang out with Rope & Bloom Macramé. Browse their Etsy shop and take a look at the dozens of options on hand. Sure, they have gorgeous plant holders, perhaps the most-often-seen macramé item, but there's so much more, both big and small. Grab a Christmas ornament or key chain for under \$20, or go big and get a 50-inch wall hanging to tie the room to-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

gether There are also options, each complete with reclaimed driftwood for spaces of all sizes.
For more information, go to etsy.com/shop/RopeandBloomMacrame or visit facebook.com/ropeandbloommacrame/

Erie Beach Glass Items



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Speaking of driftwood, one thing that’s fascinated local beachgoers for decades is beach glass. Its tactile, well-worn textures have been finding their way into the pockets of many an eagle-eyed stroller for years. There are a handful of wonderful artisans who have crafted beach glass into jewelry, most notably Relish Inc. on West 12 Street, along with Angela’s Beach Glass Jewelry by 26th and Poplar. One very cool item perfect for a stocking stuffer is a beach glass pen from Agatha & Emily — they also have bottle stoppers, keychains, and bracelets lovingly utilizing a map of Erie.
For more information, go to relishinc.com, facebook.com/angelasbeachglass, or gonelocalerie.com/collections/agatha-emily-llc

Waldameer Season Pass

While our heads are stuck at the beach, let’s go slightly south on Presque Isle to



NICK WARREN

Waldameer & Water World. You know it, and you love it, and you probably don’t go there as much as you want to. Get the jump on summer now by picking up a season pass. It pays for itself after a couple of visits, and who wouldn’t want a quick Ravine Flyer II session during their lunch hour? Being a former passholder myself, that was one of the coolest benefits of such a privilege. Great for kids and kids at heart, give your Christmas some summer fun.
For more information, go to waldameer.com

Local Christmas Spirits



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Always a mainstay of our holiday list: It’s alcohol! One thing Erie knows how to do is make some good drinks. From the wineries in North East, to the breweries downtown, to the distilleries dotting the map, there’s no shortage of imbibable goodies to gift. Anyone who enjoys a nip now and then would love to see a bottle or two under the tree — and for the non-drinkers in your life, there’s also Blind Tiger Spirit-Free Cocktails. But hey, even one of the most popular egg-nogs around is Pennsylvania-made.
For more information, stop by a Fine Wine & Good Spirits, or your favorite Winery, Brewery, or Distillery

Honey - It’s the Bee’s Knees



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Just in case your holidays weren’t sweet enough, there’s a plethora of sources to grab some locally made honey, and they’re all pretty delicious. One of the best sources around is Hogs and Honey in Waterford. They have spring, summer, and fall harvest varieties available of natural wildflower honey — unheated and unpasteurized. You can also find a healing and protecting lip balm, as well as lavender, coconut, and unscented hand and body cream — all totally natural.
For more information, go to hogsandhoneyllc.com

Your Very Own Erie Sign



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Last year, we saw the sign, and it opened up our eyes. Along the West Bayfront, near Pontiac Field and the Bayview Park, there’s an immediately recognizable Erie sign that’s perfect for photographs. Fabricated by Gene Davis Sales and Service for Our West Bayfront, it didn’t take long at all for this to become an iconic landmark in town. While the 10-foot metal original is wonderful, TC3DDesign was able to make a 3D-printed likeness that fits on your desk, bookshelf, or anywhere else you want to show love for your hometown.
For more information, go to etsy.com/shop/TC3DDesign

Nick Warren would gladly accept any of the gifts mentioned above, and resolves to only do their last-minute shopping locally this year. They can be contacted at nick@eriereader.com

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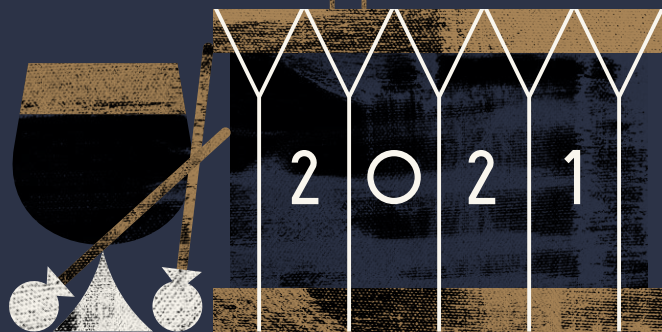
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PACA's *Now And Then* Pours a Drink with a Twist



(Left to right) Adele Crotty, Stephen Kovacs, and Mike DeCorte star in the PACA production of *Now and Then*. The set of Mulligans bar, constructed by J.R. Fabin, is among the most convincing you'll ever see.

PACA / DAVE SCHREIDER

STARTING FRIDAY, NOV. 5

Sitting in on a rehearsal for *Now and Then* at Erie's Performing Arts Collective Alliance (PACA), I was struck by two things. First, the set is gorgeously impressive, and secondly by the familial

feeling between the cast and crew putting it all together. The play premiered at the Peninsula Players Theatre in Wisconsin in 2018 from playwright Sean Grennan. It centers around four characters, meeting at a bar.

Taking place in 1981, we begin as Jamie (played by Stephen Kovacs) closes up the bar he works at, when an older man named Jimmy (Mike DeCorte, in his first role on stage) comes in and the two start talking. Later, we meet Abby (Adele Crotty), and a mysterious woman (Lisa Simonian), all of whom have equally substantial parts throughout each act.

"When I read it, I thought to myself, this is a little bit *Twilight Zone*-y to me," explained director B.J. Waide. "It's super sweet. And I don't want to give anything away, obviously, but the twist in the middle, you go from reliving old memories to *What? What did he just say?*"

Actor Stephen Kovacs noted that "one of the cool things about this play is how it makes you think about choices you make when you're younger, and how that affects things even as someone

who is older." Getting to the core of the play's theme, Kovacs said that "it draws in everyone who has had either a wanting, a wish, or regrets and holds that to each and every one of these characters from a different perspective of where they were in their lives."

As for the bar itself, the aptly named Mulligans, it looks dead-on real. Constructed by J.R. Fabin, it is the most realistic and convincing set I've ever seen in Erie. It looks so uncanny it has to be seen to be believed, right down to the working arcade machine.

In PACA's intimate black box setting, that's more crucial than usual. "The big thing is, you go to places like the Playhouse, who make great sets, yet a lot of them are just painted backdrops, and you're 50 feet away from the audience," Fabin said. "Whereas here you're immersed in it."

— Nick Warren

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All An Act's *Funny Money* is Time Well Spent

STARTING FRIDAY, NOV. 5

Bringing back one of their all-time favorite productions, Erie's All An Act Theatre is presenting Ray Cooney's *Funny Money*. This isn't the first time they've done the show by any means. It was actually the company's first production back in 2004, and this will be the fourth time they've taken on this particular show. "There was a running joke that we did it every leap year," mused director David W. Mitchell, in a show he calls "a side-splitting good time."

"It's basically a 'fast fortune' kind of story, where Henry Perkins (played by Dave DiCola) picks up the wrong briefcase on the subway, and instead of his personal belongings, he finds over a million dollars." Rightfully guessing that the briefcase's contents came about by some sort of criminal enterprise, Perkins intends to quickly skip town with his wife, who doesn't want to leave her life behind. "In the meantime, Henry's actual briefcase is found attached to a body that's been shot

and thrown in the river," Mitchell summarized. The police soon get involved, as does the criminal boss "Mr. Big." What follows is a hilarious farce involving mistaken identity as the cast centers around the mcguffin that started it all.

With a show they've run several times over two decades, both Mitchell and DiCola were able to play different roles in the show, something that both actors are excited to do.

The cast includes DiCola, Amy Welker Rowe, Shantel Kay, Mitchell, Chad Santos, J.D. Mizikowski, Karl Seaman, and Wayne Gardner — All An Act regulars who have made their home at the beloved theatre company.

Continuing their tradition of giving back to the community, \$1 of every admission will benefit Community Shelter Services and Erie's Homeless. All proceeds of the Nov. 27 in particular, will benefit the Community Shelter Services Christmas Drive, which provides winter coats, boots, and presents to Erie's children in need. — Nick Warren

Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 3 p.m.



All kinds of commotion ensues after Henry Perkins (portrayed here by Dave DiCola) picks up the wrong briefcase on the subway in the All An Act production of *Funny Money*.

through Nov. 27 // All An Act Theatre, 652 West 17th Street (17th & Poplar Street) // Adults: \$15, Seniors (55+) and students: \$12, Children (6-11): \$5 // For tickets and more information, go to allanact.net

Erie Phil, Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre Team Up for *The Nutcracker*



ERIECBT.ORG

SATURDAY, NOV. 27

When one calls to mind the Christmas season, *The Nutcracker* is a staple. As the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the world, live performances were dearly missed by many. *The Nutcracker* was no exception.

Tying together a handful of Erie's most venerable organizations, the performances are presented by The Erie Philharmonic and The Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre in collaboration with Bethesda Lutheran Services, taking place at the Mercyhurst University Performing Arts Center.

There will be two performances, one Saturday evening, and a matinee show on Sunday afternoon.

On Sunday, Nov. 21, children ages two through 10 are invited to the annual Sugar Plum Tea afternoon at Lakeshore Country Club from noon to 1:30 p.m., featuring a preview of the show, and a

visit from the Sugar Plum Fairy herself.

Matthew Kraemer, guest music director, and Sharon Downey, choir director, helped put on the joyful holiday classic, along with the Erie Philharmonic, the Erie Philharmonic Youth Chorale, and The Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre. This traditional holiday production features elaborate costumes and memorable sets — offering a whimsical concert experience for all ages.

The production will feature Tchaikovsky's iconic score, setting the scene for a magical adventure that is shown through the eyes of pint-sized Marie as she makes her journey through a fantastical land made entirely of candy. — Anna Malesiewski

Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. // Mercyhurst University Performing Arts Center, 501 East 38th St. // Both matinee and evening tickets range from \$20-\$45, and can be purchased at eriephil.org

Ana Gasteyer: Sugar & Booze Ginning Up Holiday Joy with MIAC



SHERWIN LAINEZ

Multi-talented SNL alumna Ana Gasteyer makes her way to the stage of the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center for "Sugar & Booze," featuring holiday standards and humorous originals from the album of the same name.

TUESDAY, NOV. 30

If you're of a certain age, the name Ana Gasteyer evokes memories of SNL (warbling with Will Ferrell or imitating Celine Dion, the best singer in the world) and *Mean Girls* ("But you love Ladysmith Black Mambazo!")

What you might not know, then, is that this triple-threat (acting, singing, and comedy) is in fact a trained singer, with Broadway credits to her name.

So when she released her 2019 album *Sugar & Booze*, a jazzy, swingy, modern-album-with-a-throwback-feel, it was to delighted reviews, which singled out her "high-octane vocals" (naturally) and marveled over her exuberant approach to holiday music.

Ms. Gasteyer is bringing her act to the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center in late November, all the better to kick off the most festive season of the year courtesy of the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture.

With the same band that's accompanied

her since 2016, the evening, entitled "Ana Gasteyer: Sugar & Booze," will feature holiday standards alongside original compositions — by none other than the songstress herself.

It's difficult to imagine Gasteyer could keep comedy out of the act entirely, so audiences can expect clever, rollicking lyrics, as well as big, brassy sound and toe-tapping percussion that keeps in theme with the '50s and '60s vibes of the album.

"So pour a nip into that 'nog, and let it light your fuse," she sings, "because the best part of the holidays is sugar and booze." Find the lie!

If you typically find yourself Grinch-ing out once December starts, consider *Sugar & Booze* the tonic. If you happen to need gin with that, well, you'd surely have Gasteyer's vote of approval. — Cara Suppa

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // Adults: \$30 - 45 // For more info and to purchase tickets, visit: miac.mercyhurst.edu/events/ana-gasteyer-sugar-booze



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by Sean Grennan

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FASHION

3RD Official Clothing Pushes For Nationwide Exposure

Fashion entrepreneur Khyre Drayer embarks on cross-country trip



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: Charles Brown

Khyre Drayer, founder of 3RD Official Clothing, has been hitting the streets of Erie with his line of clothing for almost a decade now. After expanding his brand with new logo designs and colors to widen the collection, the Erieite decided to hit the road this past summer to do something that most people with a product would be afraid to do — give it out to strangers for absolutely free.

From Aug. 25 to Sept. 19, Drayer embarked on a lengthy road trip from Pennsylvania to Arizona to bring more awareness to the 3RD Official brand. Stopping in nine different states in between, Drayer's adventurous vision of spreading his clothing line came to fruition. "I just wanted to give out free clothing and have people understand my brand in other places and get some feedback," says Drayer.

And the feedback was nothing short of amazing, as people from all over were photographed rocking the 3RD Official logo — an elephant with the warrior tusks. There was no road map for Drayer's trip, nor was there even a list of locations; instead he decided to keep things spontaneous with an obvious desire for the best. "I mean, I didn't have a clue. I was just stopping and giving in random spots and it worked out for me in the long run," says Drayer. "I got new clients all over and at the end of the day, a lot of people are wearing and know about 3RD Official Clothing."

The leap of faith led the fashion entrepreneur to places such as Mis-

Khyre Drayer (second from right), founder of 3RD Official Clothing, recently embarked on a nationwide tour to promote his clothing brand, identifiable by its signature elephant logo.

souri, Oklahoma, Colorado Springs, and Phoenix, encountering unfamiliar faces but with similar reactions — all smiles and satisfaction. And though this act of charity may have been done before by other thread ambassadors, it still comes across as a rare occasion. "The response was dope actually," Drayer says. "They never really met a person giving out free clothing so it was all love and (they) treated me great."

Drayer even found himself at the breathtaking Grand Canyon passing out hoodies for no charge, surely a special moment. But when I had asked what the best moment on his escapade was, he had this to say: "The best moments were just riding and stopping in random places that I've never been and going out passing out business cards; mingling in all the great food spots. The experience helped me greatly. I met a lot of good people and got my following going in different states. That's all I wanted out of it."

If you find yourself traveling at all in the latter part of this year, or decide to go on a cross-country car ride, and you stumble upon a few people wearing a 3RD Official hoodie, don't be taken by surprise. The creator himself of the Erie threads was already there.

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

"The Sleeper Has Awakened!": *Dune* May be Too Big for Its Own Good



★★★★

For a supposedly "unfilmable" book, *Dune* certainly has a lot of film adaptations. We've seen the 1984 film, a Sci-Fi channel mini-series, and even an aborted attempt by surrealist Alejandro Jodorowsky. Now Denis Villeneuve (*Arrival*, *Blade Runner 2049*) attempts to bring Frank Herbert's sci-fi epic to the big screen and the result is a massive, ambitious undertaking — too massive to even be contained in one film. It's a decision that will overjoy fans of the novels but may leave other audiences more than a little confused.

Set in the year 10191, we are brought into a space empire centered around a mysterious resource known as The Spice. Responsible for all interstellar travel, it is the most valuable resource in the universe and can only be found on the hostile desert planet of Arrakis. Young Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) comes to the planet after his family is charged with overseeing Spice production. But he soon learns that other forces are at work and that he is at the center of a prophecy that may unite the indigenous people of

Arrakis.

From a visual standpoint, the film is absolutely gorgeous. Not since Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* has a fantastical literary world been so fully realized on screen. However, the story is so complex that audiences may have trouble keeping up with everything. It also lacks the campy charm of David Lynch's under-appreciated 1984 adaptation. In keeping everything from the book, the film had to be split into two parts, leaving this film basically climax-less. That said, it is a feast of the senses, and hopefully that will be enough to keep audiences invested for the conclusion. — Forest Taylor

Directed by: Denis Villeneuve // Written by: Denis Villeneuve, Eric Roth and Jon Spaihts, based on the novel by Frank Herbert // Starring: Timothée Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac, Zendaya, Jason Momoa, Stellan Skarsgård, Stephen McKinley-Henderson, Josh Brolin, Javier Bardem, Sharon Duncan-Brewster, Chang Chen, and Dave Bautista // 155 minutes // Rated PG-13 // Warner Bros. Pictures

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MOVIES

For Love or Honor?: *The Last Duel* Modernizes the Historical Epic

★★★★★

Ridley Scott's first feature, *The Duelists* was a period piece following a decade-long rivalry. Now the octogenarian is returning to familiar territory with his newest film, *The Last Duel* — but in this one, he's less interested in the conflict itself than he is with the recording of the truth. Particularly, the truth as told from a woman in a world where political, social, and religious customs all work to obfuscate her words. The result gives us a complex, multi-faceted character study capped off with an exquisitely filmed and edited action sequence.

The story is based on the true account of Jean de Carrouges (Matt Damon) and Jacques Le Gris (Adam Driver), two battlefield friends who turn bitter rivals after a series of legal and political maneuvers. However, their animosity reaches its boiling point after de Carrouges' wife Marguerite (Jodie Comer) accuses Le Gris of rape.

Le Gris denies the accusations and de Carrouges challenges him to a duel to the death for his wife's honor, an act that may put Marguerite's own life in mortal danger.

Told *Rashomon*-style with three characters presenting their side of the same story, the film begins disjointed but becomes more fascinating as the conflicting stories reveal more pieces of the puzzle. It all comes together in the incredible final third as Marguerite, mostly a side character until this point tells her side of the tale. Scott and Comer both do an incredible job of presenting the hardships of a woman's voice being heard in an overwhelming patriarchal system. In the end, while set firmly in the past, *The Last Duel* says much about the social structures of this time as well. — Forest Taylor

Directed by: Ridley Scott // Written by: Ben Affleck, Matt Damon and Nicole Holofcener, based upon the books by Eric Jager // Starring: Jodie Comer, Matt Damon, Adam Driver, Marton Csokas, Harriet Walter, Clare Dunne, Zeljko Ivanek, Nathaniel Parker, Michael McElhatton, Alex Lawther, and Ben Affleck // 153 minutes // Rated R // 20th Century Studios



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Five Books from Local Authors to Add to Your Winter Reading List

By: Ally Kutz

***Don't Mind Me, I Came with the House* by CJ Zahner (2021)**

Zahner's at it again in this laugh-out-loud comedy that follows Nikki Stone, a recently divorced mother who just wants to be noticed. She gets her wish when she's offered the CFO position at work, popular professional golfer Blake Andersen falls in love with her, and she gets to spend her weekends traveling with him around the country. But when feminine problems begin to arise for the 47-year-old, she thinks illness is sure to ruin her future – until she gets the news that she isn't dying, she's pregnant. Determined to keep it a secret until Blake proposes, Nikki winds up an overnight sensation thanks to her unsuccessful efforts in hiding it all.

***Tucker, Ripley, and Friends Visit Asbury Woods* by Eugene H. Ware (2021)**

In the follow up to his 2019 children's book, Ware takes us on another adventure with Tucker and Ripley, this time joined by their friends Ben Beaver and Billy Blue Jay. In this newest children's book from the Erie native, the gang decides to head to Asbury Woods, a nature preserve not far from Tucker and Ripley's homes on Presque Isle. Good for children and adults alike, this new adventure is sure to both entertain and educate, shining a light on the wonders of Asbury.

***Flying with Dad* by Yvonne Caputo (2020)**

While this title was released in 2020, it has recently been making the rounds again with Erie native Yvonne Caputo returning to the city to discuss and promote it. *Flying with Dad* chronicles her

journey with her father, a WWII plane mechanic turned B-24 navigator, and the relationship they built over time. Described as both a heart-wrenching and heartwarming story, this book shows a soldier's struggle to open up about his experiences and forge the kind of relationships they and their families deserve to have.

***When All Light Fails* by Randall Silvis (2021)**

The fifth book in the critically acclaimed Ryan DeMarco series, *When All Light Fails* follows the fictional detective as he takes on the case of a nine-year-old Michigan girl looking for her biological father. The road trip to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan allows for DeMarco and his partner, Jayme, time away to heal from their most recent case, but simplicity soon becomes chaos when they realize that this investigation is quickly turning deadly.

***Accidental Paradise* by David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak**

Released last year after the publication of our 2020 local books list, *Accidental Paradise* combines breathtaking photography with phenomenal story-telling to capture Presque Isle in all its fantastic history and beauty. Answering questions ranging from where the sand came from to the more complex explanation of who dictated the road system's engineering, this is the perfect companion guide for those interested in the history of our peninsula. Detailing the history nearly 13,000 years back, *Accidental Paradise* brings the past and present together in such a way that allows readers to enjoy the marvel that is our own small piece of paradise.

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Our Monthly Podcast Picks

An infotainment feast to nourish your noggin

Storytime With Seth Rogen
 Hosted by: Seth Rogen
 Earwolf



It's quite easy to be bitter about celebrity-led podcasts. After all, podcasting was originally intended as a barrier-lowering medium — a leveling of the entertainment playing field. So, when rich TV stars recap their own show (see *Fake Doctors*, *Real Friends with Zach and Donald*) or Conan O'Brien jumps in with a show, you ask yourself: "did you need to dominate this too?"

This is a long way of saying that Seth Rogen's *Storytime with Seth Rogen* eclipses all this preconceived disdain by way of a strong hook, superior production/sound design, and a rabbit hole narrative approach. The first episode features Quinta Brunson (*A Black Lady Sketch Show*) and her journey from Jehovah's Witness to aspiring comedian. Central to this journey is a chance meeting with the naturally inspiring Paul Rudd (who's announced in heavenly fashion — he basically appears as guardian angel to Quinta). From there, we get to hear from Rudd, along with the humorous admission that he doesn't remember this meeting; we hear about Rudd meeting his hero Dan Wilson (frontman of band Semisonic); and Rogen then attempts to contact Wilson's hero (again, rabbit hole mentality here).

The episode and show boils down to memory, along with how this podcast can cleverly depict those recollections. That takes real effort. That takes a celebrity persona not just looking to cash in on podcasting, but one that actually cares about the format. — Christopher Lantinen

Second In Command
 Hosted by: Matt Walsh and Timothy Simons
 kastmedia.com



Okay, maybe I'm just a sucker for television rewatch podcasts, especially ones that feature actual alumni from the show. The newly-launched *Second In Command* is one of those, a rewatch of the massively acclaimed series *Veep*. During its run, the show was a virtual Emmy machine, winning 17 during its time. Not only did hosts Matt Walsh and Timothy Simons co-star in all seven seasons of the show, but they're master improvisers (Walsh even being a co-founder of the Upright Citizens Brigade). Dictated by the form of the show itself, *Veep* became a haven for some of the best comic improvisers in the world.

This was, of course, great for the show, but serves the podcast equally well. Walsh takes a much more passive, winking tone, with Simons characteristically bringing excitable energy to the mix.

The show moves chronologically through the series, and has barely scratched the first season. So far, they've featured Tony Hale (*Arrested Development*) as a guest star, who played Meyer's personal assistant, Gary.

In their roles of director of communications Mike McLintock and White House intern and later (spoiler alert) Congressman Jonah Ryan, the hosts themselves were a pivotal part of the show, but are quick to point out that they're on the lowest rung of power, with top spots given to showrunner Armando Iannucci (*The Thick of It*, *In the Loop*), and who else but Selina Meyer herself, Julia Louis-Dreyfus (*Seinfeld*). — Nick Warren

Blank Check
 Hosted by: Griffin Newman and David Sims
 audioboom.com



Full disclosure, *Blank Check* is my absolute favorite podcast. I'm not exactly sure what it is, perhaps it's the patented secret of #thetwofriends, Griffin Newman and David Sims. The two have a natural rapport that's difficult to beat. Newman is an actor (*The Tick*, *Draft Day*, *Beware the Gonzo*) while Sims is a longtime culture writer and film/television critic for *The Atlantic*.

In essence, the podcast is about "filmographies, directors who have massive success early on in their careers, and are given a series of blank checks to make whatever crazy passion projects they want. Sometimes those checks clear, and sometimes they bounce, baby."

The two are joined by their faithful producer (and man of a thousand nicknames) Ben Hosley along with a different guest or guests each week, ranging from more well-known names like Jason Mantzoukas and Paul Scheer to surefire hitmakers like Emily Yoshida (the mother of Blankies), and J.D. Amato.

The show actually began in 2015 as a 30-some episode series about the *Star Wars* prequels, and was brilliantly hilarious right from the start (#wattotho). After the George Lucas well had been mined, the duo shifted into the format it holds today, choosing a director and making their way through their films. It's not a groundbreaking format, but it's perfect. Episodes have ballooned in size to at least two hours per episode, and you'll still be left wanting more. — Nick Warren



Erie County Human Relations Commission

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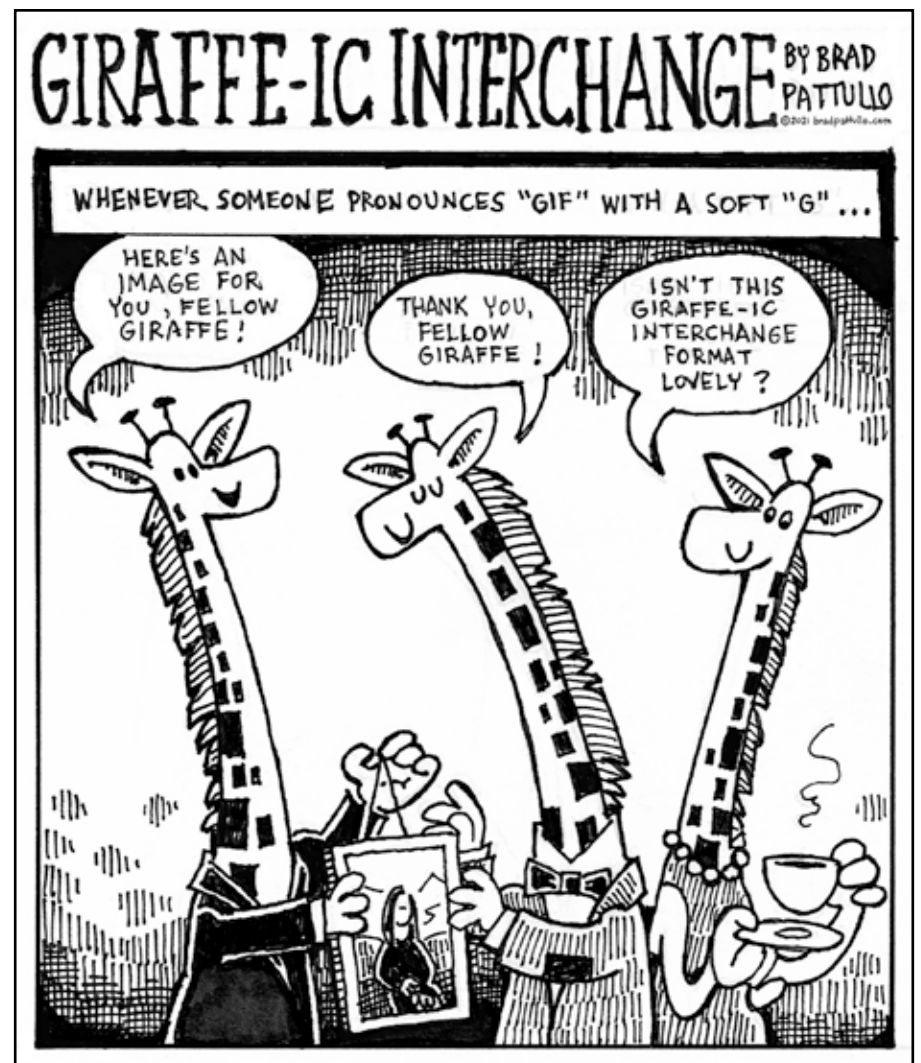
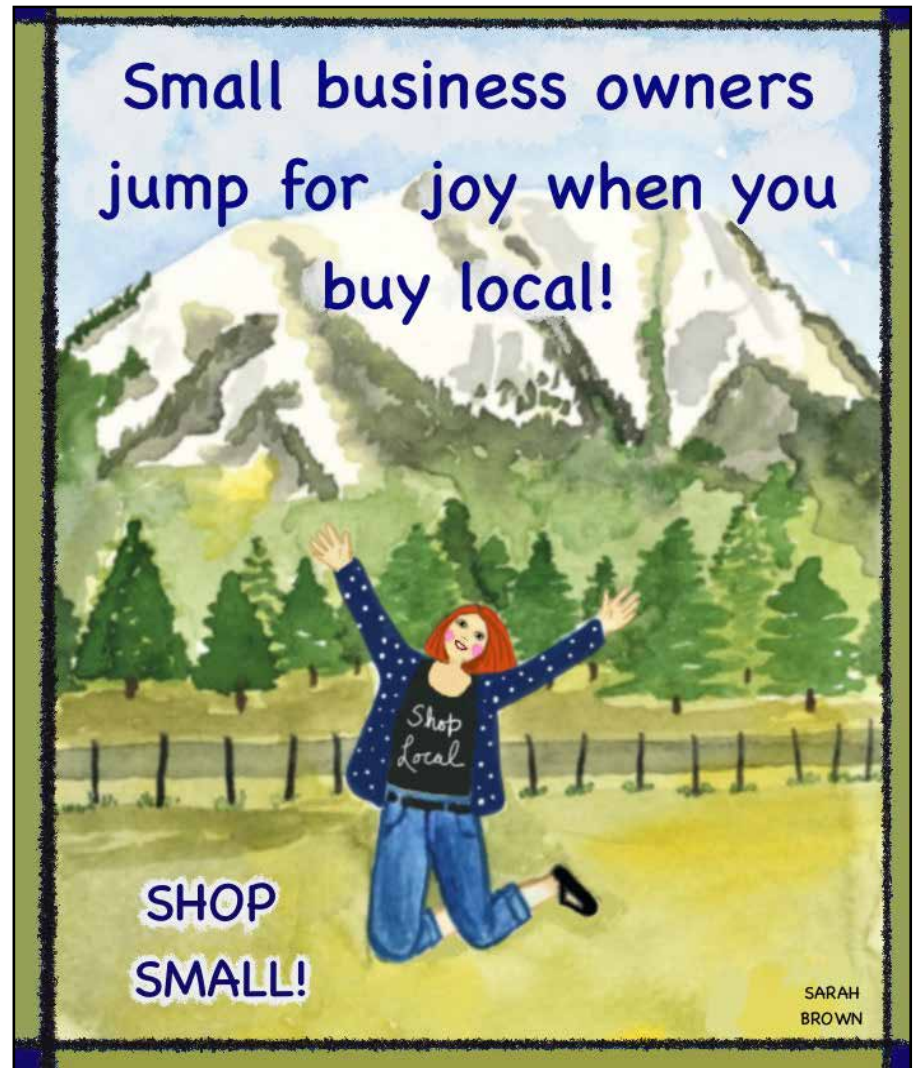
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ALBUM REVIEWS

Elle Taylor
Taken Me Awhile
Self-released
★★★★★

This may be Elle Taylor's first full-length effort, but her songs are crafted as well as any seasoned songwriter. She had been writing for years, but didn't turn her poetry into song until she started playing the ukulele in 2017, later moving to guitar in 2019. That doesn't mean that she abandoned the ukulele; you can still hear it on the song "Life by the Sea." Lyrically, she delves deep into her past life experiences to paint honest and descriptive pictures for the listener. Songs like "You're Not Mine Anymore" and "Fool" are as painful as they are beautiful. The 17 different musicians accompanying her on *Taken Me Awhile* read like a who's who from the Erie music scene; however, their contributions never outweigh Taylor herself. The instrumental work of both Teddy Rankin and Nick Warren should be noted for adding another layer to the songs, while Zoe Weslowski's vocal harmonies stand out as some of the strongest. One of the most interesting contributions comes on the track "Trick," which features a small string arrangement. The diversity of the songs, along with the themes of love and loss are reminiscent of other indie favorites such as Bright Eyes, Magnetic Fields, or M. Ward.

— Larry Wheaton



Fog Giant
Fog Giant (EP)
Self-released
★★★★★

Do you like fuzzy, slow grooves that demand to be played loud? Like really loud? Fog Giant is your band then. A stellar example of doom metal hailing from Erie, PA, the quartet has released their debut EP, following their 2018 two-song (and 14 minute) demo. This record gives you everything you'd want from the band. It's a beefy EP to boot (with a gorgeous, black-light ready cover by MontDoom) — coming in at over 29 minutes, it might as well be a full-length album. Some of the best moments come when the riffs pick up, like during the midpoint of "Sesspool." The band is able to move as one lurching beast, occasionally going on a rampage or two. Vocalist Andrew Vickery's lyrics are richly dark and perfect for the genre, though the majority of the time is spent deep in riff paradise. Descended from the throne of Black Sabbath (note that Fog Giant also has a simultaneously titular and eponymous track at the record's center), the lineage of doom, sludge, and stoner metal is a storied one, with Fog Giant able to go toe-to-toe with just about any of their peers.

— Nick Warren



Smilo & the Ghost
Fingers Crossed & Godspeed
Self-released
★★★★★

Tyler Smilo, always the prolific songwriter, continues to grow and mature seemingly from album to album. On the second full-length album from his folk outfit Smilo & the Ghost, *Fingers Crossed & Godspeed* mines some of the catchiest moments in the talented artist's career, with all the heart and passion that fans have come to expect. For this album, Smilo's voice in particular seems more natural and free of affectations, abandoning some the warbling howls that he used to gravitate towards. Here we see Smilo at his most vocally pure. The songs here are also some of his most lovable. This is because of — not in spite of — their heartfelt emotionality. There's the sober ruminations of "Whiskey Speaks," leading into the passionate pleas of "Hideaway King," both early standout tracks. From the uptempo, dust-stomping frenzy of "Hollar Below," to the gang-vocals and biographical examination of "Ohio," there's not a wasted track amidst these 11. Backed by expert musicians Adam McKillip, Jassen Wilber, and Dominick DeCecco, Smilo & the Ghost have found the perfect balance. Be sure to check out the band's album release party on Nov. 13 at Altered State Distillery.

— Nick Warren



Gabe Poland
No Turning Back
Self-released
★★★★★

In his first solo album, local troubadour Gabe Poland (The New Morning Sunrise, East Clintwood) finds himself crafting a wonderfully weird folk album that's worth several attentive listens. There are more than a few moments that seem very Bob Dylan-inspired (like "King of Satisfaction" in all its "Subterranean Homesick Blues" glory), melded with the dark, morbid baritone of Johnny Cash. The ten-track album was written, performed, and recorded all by Poland himself, at his Burn Forever home studio. The tracks have a warm and intimate feeling that's perfectly in tune with the tone of the record. Crisp, acoustic chimes lathered in reverb showcased in tracks like "I Don't Want to Wake Up" provide a watery backdrop that pairs with Poland's slurred, hypnotizing vocals. Easily one of the most underrated artists in the Erie area, Poland proves once again that he has plenty to say, and he says it beautifully. There's a haunting feel in all of Poland's work, with *No Turning Back* dwelling on metaphors of death ("Dead Man") and inevitable change ("Seasons"), painting a gorgeous retro picture of an artist doing exactly what he's best at.

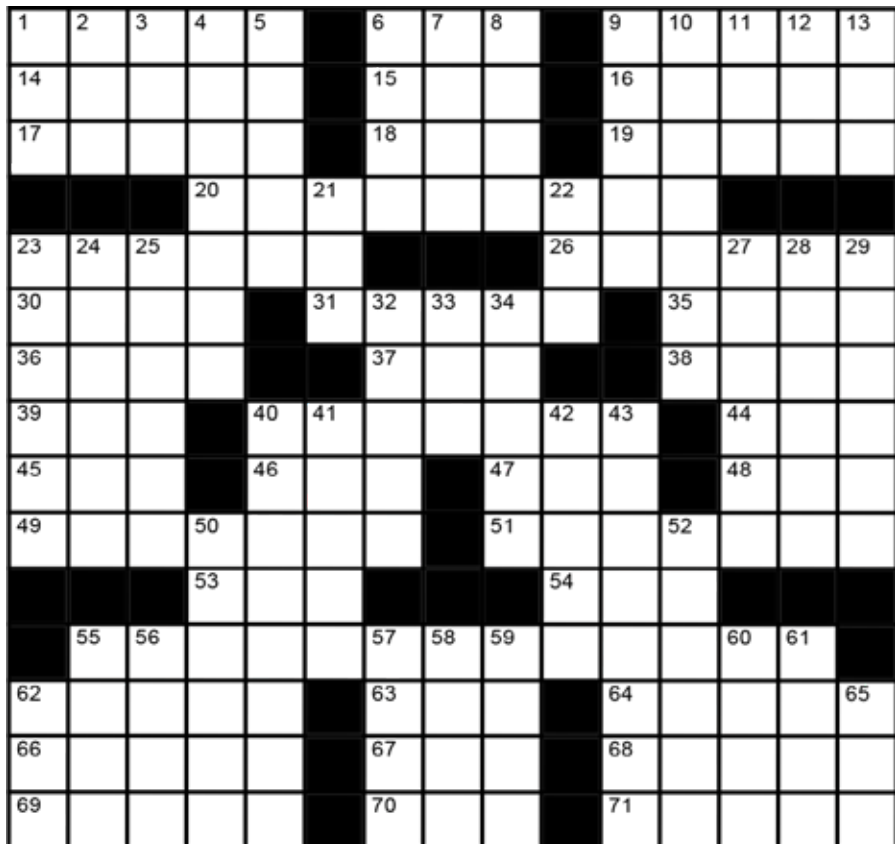
— Nick Warren



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CROSSWORD



Across

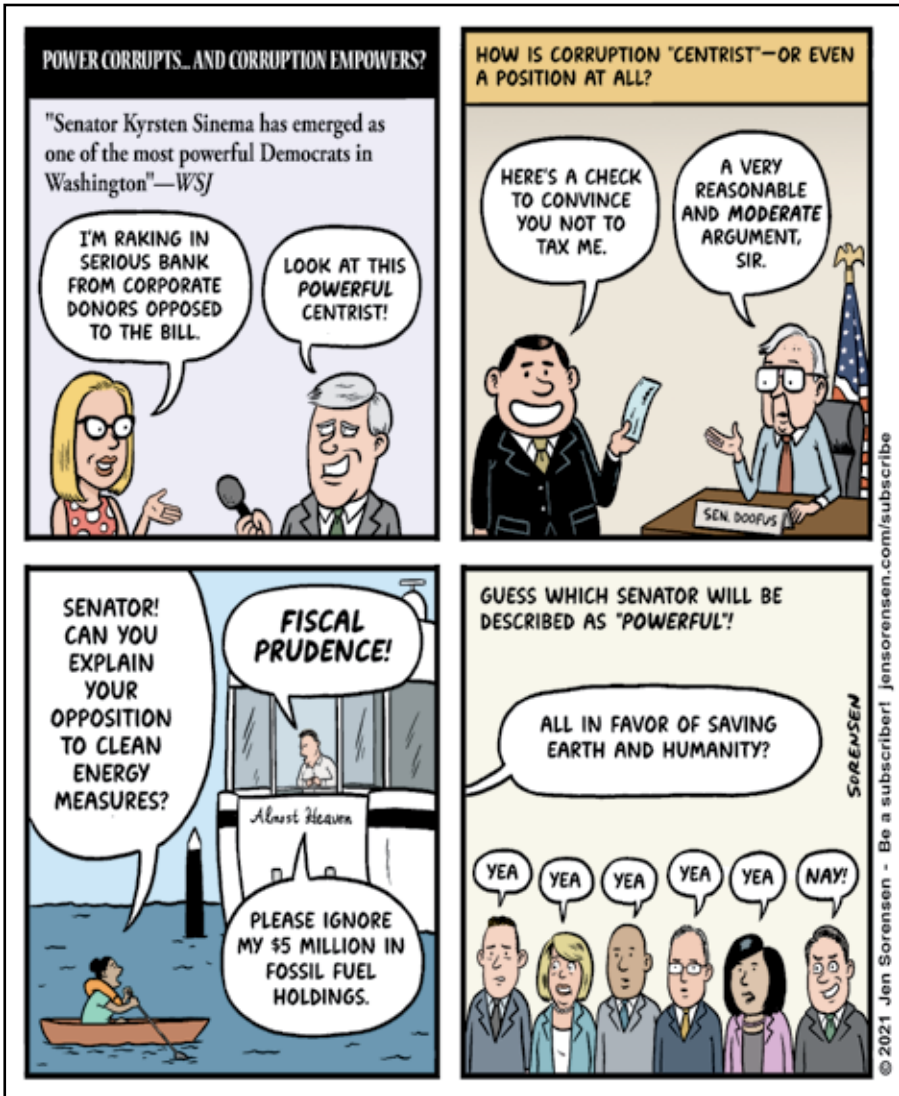
- With 71-Across, popular children's book series by Jane O'Connor
- Like cabernet sauvignon
- March Madness, with "the"
- Quintet followed by "... and sometimes Y"
- Electric guitar, slangily
- MD you don't need an appointment to see
- Like someone associated with a blue, pink and white flag, for short
- Surveillance device, briefly
- Item on a wrist
- Popular children's book series by Megan McDonald
- Treat leniently, with "on"
- "Yippee!"
- Eldest Stark son on "Game of Thrones"
- Cling wrap brand
- Bleak genre
- Reddit Q&A sessions
- Middle of Venezuela?
- With no assistance
- "Fresh Air" network
- College course that might be taken by someone who read 1-/71-Across, 20-Across and 55-Across as a child (it rhymes too!)
- Message afterthoughts: Abbr.
- Stuff in cigarettes
- Afore
- Destructive 2021 hurricane

- USS Enterprise captain Jean-____ Picard
- Woodworker's device, informally
- Nickname of the Mexican drug lord Joaquín Guzmán
- Necessary: Abbr.
- Barely squeak (out)
- Popular children's book series by Peggy Parish
- Author Calvino
- Part of a journey
- Al ____ (pasta order)
- 1998 De Niro crime thriller
- "You're it!"
- Sign that indicates "Quiet!"
- Genre featured at Tokyo's Comiket convention
- Activist/artist Yoko
- See 1-Across

Down

- The 1% in 1% milk
- ____ Lingus
- Long of "Boyz n the Hood"
- Scams
- ____ Islam, AKA Cat Stevens
- Titillating
- Major event on a syllabus
- Version that's just for show
- Fresh haircut
- They may come with a children's menu
- Big name in home security systems
- Youngest woman to serve in the U. S.

- Congress, familiarly
- Acad. or univ.
- Drying-out hurdle, for short
- Have title to
- Endowments for the arts
- Two notes from a tuba
- Pizza chain in many malls and airports
- Ado
- Prepares for a Mr. Universe competition, say
- Pitcher Jesse with a record 1,252 regular-season appearances
- Ancient worshipper of Tezcatlipoca and Tlaloc
- "Parks and ____" (2009-15 TV show, informally)
- American Eagle intimate apparel brand
- Video game starting point
- Like many dinar spenders
- Waited at a light, say
- Attached
- Qualifying race at the Olympics, for short
- State capital founded during a gold rush
- Buckets
- ____-pedi
- Palo ____
- Noggin
- Brand with a Buzzy Bee Waffle recipe
- Aerosmith's "Love ____ Elevator"
- Suffix for symptom or problem
- Roth ____
- Trick ending?



Answers to last puzzle





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