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From the Editors

On learning

I've often said — to my children, to myself when I make a mistake, to my husband when he loads the dishwasher, etc. — that learning is the whole point of life. Growth, empathy, understanding, change — those all come from constantly learning and adapting to new information. With learning also comes humility, and the ability to accept that we're wrong, to move forward with new faculty, and actually change our behavior accordingly. It is a challenge to the ego, and the best of us are able to recognize that and move forward. This can be small — a child learning that words matter and can hurt. This can be big — like acknowledging that children (or really anyone) having easy access to weapons of war is not in the best interest of our children's mental health or physical safety.

If a child grows up having never learned that words matter and can hurt, they become that anonymous (adult) Facebook commenter who, not taking into consideration the hurt their words cause, contrib-

Growth, empathy, understanding, change — those all come from constantly learning and adapting to new information. With learning also comes humility, and the ability to accept that we're wrong, to move forward with new faculty, and actually change our behavior accordingly.

utes to making a child feel like the school that they attend somehow makes them a bad person. Within the pages of this issue, we will take a look at Erie High School, the only fully public high school serving our city's teenagers, and one that is working, alongside the United Way of Erie County, to raise the self-esteem of and school pride in their students — to help them learn that they are doing great things and that their future matters.

We'd also be remiss if we didn't take this opportunity to have a bit of a teaching moment. While the Erie Reader is and always will be free for anyone to read, in understanding the spirit of that freeness, we ask that you don't take more copies than you need, please. Whether you agree with what we print or not, making off with, say, "hundreds of copies" because one's fragile ego can't cope with a writer's opinion, is not in the spirit of free circulation. Sometimes simple ideas that seem obvious to everyone else need to be spelled out. We're happy to help.

Segue to election season, where we are all presented with plenty of opportunities to learn, and more importantly, to change course. It's okay to change your mind, to let go of whatever beliefs you felt defined yourself as a person. It's okay to say, "Actually, this doesn't really make sense for me anymore. I was wrong and now I'm going to choose a different path." Say it over and over again, like a mantra. You'll find it will get easier the more you say it, I promise. That's what learning, and hence, what life is all about.

Erie County: The Linchpin to a Democratic Presidency

Combating Trump's pixie dust in Pennsylvania with focus on issues, energy, early voting

By: Jeff Bloodworth

Sam Talarico knew before he saw the polls. The Erie County Democratic Party chair is on the pulse of our swing county in the nation's swingiest state. With Joe Biden as the nominee, Talarico witnessed a trickle of volunteers. Once Kamala Harris topped the ticket, a flood commenced. Talarico told me "People are calling and asking, 'What can I do?' Canvassing and phone banking are way up. And interest is way up. There was a lot of energy that was just released once the change [Biden to Harris] was made. It is exponentially different."

And as Erie goes, so goes Pennsylvania — and with it, the White House.

Weeks ago, Donald Trump was throttling Biden in Pennsylvania. Across 68 polls, the Republican led the Democratic incumbent by nearly five points. Current polling shows Harris has surged to a three-point lead nationally. In Pennsylvania, an aggregate of 28 polls has the vice president with a narrow one point lead.

With money and energy, Talarico now has eight full-time staffers in his Erie office and (at last count) 200 volunteers. But Erie is merely a microcosm of the fundamental vibe shift in American politics. Mercyhurst University political science professor Joe Morris sees in the polling what Talarico senses on the ground. The longtime observer of western Pennsylvania politics told me, "Harris has completely changed the dynamics of the race. At this time, the Trump campaign is at a loss for how to manage this." Even more ominous for the Republicans is Morris' interpretation of the political mood. Morris argued, "To beat a movement, you need a movement. Harris is on the threshold of being a leader of a movement, like Obama in 2008 and Trump in 2016."

A Kamala Harris movement, if it were to emerge, would be an expression of public fatigue with Donald Trump. Talarico believes the Republican incumbent has "exhausted a lot of people" with "the same old nonsense about the size of crowds and cheating on the election." But don't take a Democratic partisan's word for it. David Urban, a native Pennsylvanian and senior advisor to Trump in 2016 and 2020, complained to me "the President needs to get refo-

WARARAT



Erie has long been a bellwether county for election results in Pennsylvania and Democratic leaders in the area are seeing an uptick in volunteerism and enthusiasm since Kamala Harris has been appointed the Democratic nominee — which has also shifted the polls, and vibes, in the Democrat's favor.

cused on the issues."

To Urban, the Harris vibe shift has shocked Trump into what are his old, bad habits. He called his former boss "one of the most gifted politicians." But in the same breath he carped "he is also one of the most flawed." What Talarico calls a "one-trick pony" is Trump's propensity to resort to what Urban calls "hand-to-hand political combat." Harris most certainly possesses the momentum, which has sent Trump into a political funk. That is the dynamic prompting the nicknames and insults, which drive even Trump's most ardent supporters batty.

The Democrat's energy is an expression of a natural anti-Trump majority in the American electorate. Composed of partisan Democrats, independents, and conservative "Never Trumpers," this majority runs across the political spectrum. For now, Harris is coalescing this heterogeneous grouping of voters. But Urban knows the vice president has potential weaknesses, especially in Erie and, therefore, Pennsylvania.

In California politics, Harris belonged to her state's pragmatic, center-left wing. But in the echo chamber of a one-party state, she drifted left in her truncated 2020 presidential run. In that

race, Harris endorsed gun buybacks, fracking bans, and the Green New Deal. These positions delighted progressive activists. But, as 2020 revealed, Twitter is not real life. Liberal activists dominate social media but they don't reflect rank-and-file Democrats, much less the larger electorate. In 2020, Harris never even made it to presidential primaries. But she learned a lesson. For the 2024 presidential race, she pivoted to the center.

Despite her swivel to the center, Harris' 2019 policies still loom as political Kryptonite in Erie and Pennsylvania. Urban said of Harris' turn, "Those are some mental gymnastics that Olga Korbut would be proud of. I would love for her to come to Pennsylvania and explain her position on mandatory gun buybacks. All the Trump campaign has to do is focus on the issues. If we make this about the issues, Republicans win." But he knows that Harris' liberal centrism is good politics. That's why he growled, "If we listen to her [now], she sounds like a f*ckin' Republican."

Despite the polls and the Harris momentum, the race remains winnable for Trump. To win, Urban urges Trump to focus upon the issues in general and Erie County in particular. Half-joking-

ly, he told me, "The Brig *Niagara* should be the new presidential yacht. There should be a national holiday for Oliver Hazard Perry." Urban knows his mercurial candidate often lacks the patience and discipline for an issue-focused campaign. But in 2016, Trump, at Urban's urging, stressed his issues — immigration, deindustrialization, and globalization — in the campaign's final weeks. In the process, he won Pennsylvania and the presidency.

Liberals may loathe Trump, but the Republican possesses a political pixie dust that delights the casual non-college voter. White working-class voters comprise over half the electorate in the Blue Wall states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. This is why Trump typically outperforms his polls in these states. As "Trump" voters, they turn out for him, and him alone. They are difficult to poll. Typifying this magic is a 2018 western Pennsylvania campaign event for Fred Keller, a Republican running for a Pittsburgh-area congressional seat. Recalling the event, Urban told me, "It was a Trump event. [But] the crowd had no idea who Keller was. All they knew is that Donald Trump was there. These voters only care that she [Kamala Harris] is not



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NEWS & VIEWS

Donald Trump.”

For now, 2024, looks to be a repeat of 2020 — a contest between Trump’s pixie dust and old-fashioned campaign mechanics. In 2016, the Clinton campaign ignored Erie County, and every part of Pennsylvania not named Pittsburgh or Philadelphia. In 2020, Erie-area Democrats organized and boosted Biden to victory in Erie County. In 2024, Erie Democrats are planning and preparing to go beyond their COVID-constrained 2020 efforts.

Talarico is touting a “coordinated campaign” that combines his staff with a recently opened Harris office, one of 14 across Pennsylvania. And Terron Sims, who helps lead the Democratic National Committee’s voter mobilization efforts, boasted, “When it comes to grassroots get-out-the-vote campaigns, no one beats the Democrats.

crats won Pennsylvania in 2020 by the barest of margins, 80,555 votes out of nearly 7 million cast. To win, Trump needs to combine his casual voters with a united Republican Party. And therein lies the Trumpian rub. Political fistfights excite his casual voter base. But even these folks want some policy bread to go with their circus. Trump struggles to find the proper bread-and-circus balance. But like a power hitter in the zone, when he finds that balance, he is a political force.

The opposite side of Trump’s pixie dust coin is dysfunction. Like 2020, dysfunction may prove decisive. Trump’s active disdain for mail-in and early voting is a self-inflicted political wound of the highest order. In the 2022 Mehmet Oz/John Fetterman U.S. Senate race, Pennsylvania Democrats had banked 1.5 million early votes prior to

To win, Trump needs to combine his casual voters with a united Republican Party. And therein lies the Trumpian rub. Political fistfights excite his casual voter base. But even these folks want some policy bread to go with their circus. Trump struggles to find the proper bread-and-circus balance. But like a power hitter in the zone, when he finds that balance, he is a political force.

We have professionals and super volunteers who have been doing this for decades.”

To his detriment, Trump values vibes over organization. An area liberal strategist told me that the GOP’s local dysfunction helped Democrats win Erie County for Biden in 2020. Four years later, Erie County Republicans have new leadership. But sources report a “major beef” between Trump forces and Erie Republicans. Bizarrely, local Republicans pay rent to the Trump campaign for a bit of space at the local Trump headquarters. A Democratic official described this arrangement as “odd.” Indeed, the Harris campaign had the opposite agreement with local Democrats.

Conflict is to Trump what the sun is to organic life. So, underestimating his pixie dust, as Democrats did in 2016, can lead to defeat. Remember, Demo-

election day. Before Fetterman’s ill-fated televised debate against Oz, the Democrat, on the strength of his early vote, already had the senate race largely won. Urban, obviously frustrated, advised, “Trump derides early voting. Republicans need to play by the rules in the Commonwealth. We need to ensure that the voters of color who are for us are registered.”

In 2024, the pixie dust may not be enough to overwhelm the Democrat’s organization. Urban sighed and warned, “If we don’t pivot quickly, it will be hard [to win]. Democrats are so jacked-up. The early vote will be a huge advantage for the Democrats.”

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

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An Open Letter About Open Containers

Local brewer weighs in on possible city council measure

By: Jeff McCullor

Hello Erie City Council members. I'd like to touch on a few points regarding the ongoing conversation around open containers in our fair town — a feature that few communities across the country enjoy.

Throughout the warmer months you'll frequently see an Erie Ale Works canopy out and about at area events. Erie's lack of open container rules are beneficial to us and our business of bringing locally made beer to the people. So obviously I'm an advocate for the current lack of rules. Our company's revenue and consequently, jobs, are directly tied to our mobile bartending business.

I certainly understand that bad actors are out there daily abusing their privileges (open container is definitely a privilege, not a human right we're all owed somehow) and ruining it for the rest of our community. And we all know alcohol has a rather bumpy history of enabling bad decisions in otherwise very well-behaved humans when abused.

I urge our city council to consider absolutely every angle of any proposed changes because any prohibition of the open container privilege has potential negative impacts on our business along with others

in the food and beverage industry. Under the current arrangement I can take my official City of Erie vending permit coupled with my Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board exposition permit and pop open my canopy at any public location I wish, just like a craft vendor or food truck.

"Clamping down on open containers has the potential to cause some serious economic challenges for those in the alcohol service industry, and with the consumer spending rollercoaster we've been on, I'd prefer more critical concerns occupy council's time for now." — Jeff McCullor, Erie Ale Works co-owner

I understand part of the new set of rules includes exceptions at obvious events like CelebrateErie and the Erie Blues & Jazz Fest. Regulatory efforts would relax and we'd all go about our lives. For non-obvious events (LEAF's Open Market, PorchFest, and The Downtown Partnership's Thursday night concert se-



ries among many, many others) I would hope there would be some sort of quick approval process, online preferably, that won't hamper the remote part of anyone's business. EAW isn't the only company out and about doing pop-up gigs, but we've certainly operated our fair share over the last 10 years.

Clamping down on open containers has the potential to cause some serious economic challenges for those in the alcohol service industry, and with the consumer spending rollercoaster we've been on, I'd prefer more critical concerns occupy council's time for now.

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

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Teens, Tension, and Technology: The Loneliness Epidemic

Delving into the reformatting of friendships and the struggle to find ‘third places’

By: Dan Schank

My favorite local place to take my kids is Headwaters Park. It's 35 acres of interwoven trails, wrapping around Mill Creek, offering a variety of bridges, pathways, rock formations, and pools of water for my daughters to explore. Its patchwork of forest is sparse enough that I can keep an eye on them without constantly intervening. They can make a mess without damaging public property. And unlike other local favorites — Frontier Park, for example — their play at Headwaters is mostly improvisational. Since there are no slides, swings, or monkey bars, they are forced to invent games. They sprint across bridges, skip rocks, and search for salamanders. Within 15 minutes, they'll typically concoct some activity with loosely-defined rules that keeps them occupied for an hour or so, often with minimal conflict.

Headwaters exemplifies the kind of childhood activity championed by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt in his insightful and occasionally annoying bestseller, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. According to Haidt, “it is in unsupervised, child-led play where children best learn to tolerate bruises, handle their emotions, read other children's emotions, take turns, resolve conflicts, and play fair.”

My kids are five and seven as I type this. And providing them with enjoyable, screen-free outdoor activities is perhaps easier now than it will be in six or seven years. Soon enough, they'll have to reckon with a firehose of unregulated digital content, the highs and lows of social media, and the anxieties of early adolescence. And their anxieties will undoubtedly differ substantially from my own teen years in the early 1990s.

Haidt's *Anxious Generation* is perhaps the most famous book to examine the so-called “loneliness epidemic” among young people. His argument goes something like this — Gen Z (born after 1995 or 1997, depending on who you ask) came of age at a time where smartphones had become ubiquitous, when social media had allowed us to quantify our experiences through liking and sharing, and when camera phones had encouraged us to endlessly document our lives through images.

Concurrently, reported mental health struggles shot up substantially (even prior to COVID lockdowns) on account of what Haidt describes as a “great rewiring” of kids' minds. He believes we have moved away from a “play-based childhood” and toward a “phone-based” one. Haidt, who wants a return to the former, argues that parents should be far less protective about physical activity (encouraging greater outdoor risk-taking, longer recess times in school, and less overprotective parenting) and far more protective about online activity (by limiting screen time, banning cellphones in schools, and only allowing social media accounts after a child turns 16).



Gen Z has grown up in the age of the smartphone and their existences are deeply intertwined. Father and teacher Dan Schank looks at the interconnectedness of isolation, loneliness, and technology — how today's youth are effected, both positively and negatively.

Anxiety and ambiguity

I decided to write this article because of the mixed feelings I have about Haidt's claims — and about the discourse surrounding adolescent loneliness in general. As I read his book, I was keenly aware of his agenda as a centrist public intellectual prone to marketable generalizations and occasional crankiness. I also couldn't help contrasting his claims with my experiences as a professor at Penn State Behrend. Like Haidt, I've noticed (anecdotally) an uptick in students who “check out” as the semester unfolds, paired with an increasing inability to meet deadlines and maintain schedules. If, seven years ago, I'd have one or two students per class who simply stop showing up, that number is now often between three and five. At the same time, I find Gen Z students cultivate sharp critical thinking skills, having shed some of the shallow optimism of the millennials that preceded them. In my experience, they are also more tolerant of cultural and sexual/gender differences than any past generation — arguably due to the influence of the same screen-based behavior that Haidt assumes is rewiring their brains.

Haidt identifies a real problem, even if I'm not fully on board with his focus on curtailing smartphone usage as the silver bullet for fixing it. Adolescent mental health struggles are genuinely way up for Gen Z. According to the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, “4.5 million youth (ages 12 to 17) had a major depressive episode” in 2022. To put that in perspective, the same survey notes that major depression among teens has more than doubled since 2004, with increases of 145 percent for girls (from about 13 percent to nearly 30 percent) and 161 percent for boys (from

about 5 percent to around 12 percent). Locally, the Pennsylvania 2023 Youth Survey shows a modest decline in mental health issues, but the results are still alarming. Using data from 34 middle and high schools in Erie County, the report indicates that “41.5 percent of students reported they felt sad or depressed most days in the past 12 months,” and “18.1 percent of students had seriously considered attempting suicide.”

But there are positives as well. According to the same survey, alcohol and tobacco use have declined substantially — only 30 percent of students claim they have ever tried alcohol, which is a 16 percent drop since 2009. Only 7 percent have reported ever smoking a cigarette. A recent study from Penn State found that students seeking counseling services rose by 40 percent between 2009 and 2015, with increases continuing up to the start of COVID lockdowns. In the University's 2023 annual report, 61 percent of students seeking mental health services had received prior counseling.

Part of this rise is the result of increased access to resources — something Haidt neglects in his analysis. For example, the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 requires insurers that offer mental health benefits to provide the same level of benefits for those services that they do for medical and surgical care. If mental health crises have reached epidemic proportions, Gen Z at least has better options on-hand and a willingness to use them. And they don't appear to be “self-medicating” to the same degree that many of us did in decades past, when our struggles were more likely to be endured in unquantifiable silence.

If we can agree that these trends are alarming, to

what degree should we blame them on technology? Doing so makes intuitive sense — who among us doesn't resent our hours spent doom-scrolling, or feeling inferior to Instagram influencers, or daring to peruse the comments on a GoErie Facebook post? But when experts tally the data, the results are more ambiguous. In a critical review of Haidt's book, psychologist Candice L. Odgers notes that several meta-analyses and systematic reviews produced by researchers have found minimal correlation between "well-being and the roll-out of social media globally." Instead, Odgers argues that "when associations over time are found, they suggest not that social media use predicts or causes depression, but that young people who already have mental health problems use such platforms more often or in different ways from their healthy peers."

What the young people are saying

You can make it through all 295 pages of *The Anxious Generation* without any clear idea of what actual adolescents think of Haidt's hypothesis. As a 40-something who fears falling prey to outmoded preconceptions, I wanted to hear more from Gen Z themselves.

Behind Their Screens: What Teens Are Facing (And Adults Are Missing) was the book I needed to help complete the picture. Social scientist Emily Weinstein and sociologist Carrie James surveyed over 3,500 teens to see what they thought about growing up in a heavily digitized world. The duo paint a more nuanced picture of modern adolescence than Haidt, one that occasionally inverts my Gen X assumptions. For example, a great deal of seemingly-antisocial smartphone behavior is actively *tending* to the friendships we fear are disappearing. This occurs through group texts, multiplayer video games, likes, comments, and reshares. And in some cases, there are real interpersonal consequences to not keeping up with the on-line habits of one's closest friends.

Take "Snapchat streaks," for example. Weinstein and James note how the platform allows users to tally how many days you've sent and received Snaps with a friend. The more consecutive days you interact with someone, the longer the "streak" continues. If you are feeling alienated, you can open your phone and see quantifiable data about how committed people are to your friendships. But many of the teens interviewed in *Behind Their Screens* also find these streaks exhausting. How long do they need to go on? And if you take a break, do you run the risk of insulting someone you care about?

Behind Their Screens makes it clear that the same young people who seem rude and affectless at the dinner table are often reckoning with a web of social protocols that would leave the friendliest of us exhausted. Here's how the authors put it in a *Time* magazine editorial inspired by their book: "Even before a social media post is made public, close friends can be pulled into photo selection, editing, and final vetting. Once posts appear, friends are expected to step up — and fast. Liking posts is the bare minimum."

For a local perspective, I reached out to some Behrend students. And I deliberately targeted video game aficionados because they are the demographic I have

(anecdotally) seen struggling the most in my classes. This led to a revealing conversation with two of our Digital Media, Arts, and Technology majors, Sean Martin (age 19) and Dev Vyas (age 20).

When given a quick overview of my article topic, Martin was quick to assert that games like *Fortnite* actually encourage a sense of community because they require people "to find ways to work together. And that leads to friend requests, which leads to conversation."

Vyas is quick to note that when games like *Fortnite* or *Call of Duty* are in multiplayer mode, "they cannot be paused," which causes conflict with his mother. She doesn't understand that if he walks away from the game, the other members of his team can no longer rely on him. Vyas has also found that a sense of community comes from playing a *Minecraft*-style game called *Genshin Impact*, "because random people can join your world and you can talk to them through chat." He also notes that a few of these friendships have carried over into real life as well.

[The Emily Weinstein and Carrie James book] *Behind Their Screens* makes it clear that the same young people who seem rude and affectless at the dinner table are often reckoning with a web of social protocols that would leave the friendliest of us exhausted. Here's how the authors put it in a *Time* magazine editorial inspired by their book: "Even before a social media post is made public, close friends can be pulled into photo selection, editing, and final vetting. Once posts appear, friends are expected to step up — and fast. Liking posts is the bare minimum."

Both Martin and Vyas have purely online friendships as well — i.e., genuine friends that they've never met in person. In Martin's case, shared interests led to a four-year-long interaction with an aspiring animator in Turkey. "We found that we have a shared passion for making films," he says. "I had an online presence at one point because I take comic books very seriously. And he had seen me online. And he was an up-and-coming artist who asked if I would take two or three minutes to see his video. And I said that's great, because I want to do animation but I'm a writing person and I don't know the technical stuff. And from then on, we just connected." Martin also says that gaming has helped sustain the friendship.

It's not all positive though. The same multiplayer games they've used to cultivate friendships can also

be havens for bullying. "There's a thing called proximity chat," says Vyas, "where you can hear everyone — even the players who are not on your team — talking. And it can get really bad sometimes. They'll say plenty of words that you don't like!"

Cultivating "third places"

I began this article by praising the time my children spend at Headwaters park. The park meets the definition of a "third place" — i.e., a social space that is not your home or where you work. Many experts concerned about adolescent mental health point to the decline of such spaces, especially for young people who are too old for the playground and too young for a bar. If "screen time" is synonymous with alienation and hang-out time is labeled as "loitering," then what exactly are adolescents expected to do with themselves?


Seph Kumer, director of community engagement at Erie's First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, is keenly aware of the problems of social alienation. The students he encounters often seem "distracted, with short attention spans, and awkward about what could be deemed 'routine and normal' social interactions." To address these issues, his team works with Gannon University to host a late-night Study Space, open from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. during finals week each semester, featuring quiet rooms and an area to gather for snacks and socializing. "We offer a time for students to gather for announcements and a very brief exam prayer," says Kumer. Students are asked to participate in exercises like "greet two people you don't know, share your major and what you are studying... or what you are most worried about during exams. By the end of the six nights, students feel very comfortable with one another, and they linger longer in the refreshment area. They speak of the space we create as extremely special and valuable."

The Study Space is part of a larger effort within the Church of the Covenant to establish ties to the Erie Community that extend well beyond traditional religious gatherings. In recent years, they've prioritized summer block parties, picnics at Presque Isle, game nights, "Sunday Supper" meals that feed the needy, and a whole host of outreach endeavors targeting our growing immigrant community. "There is something about a shared goal or task, and using your hands, that allows for some valuable interactions," says Kumer. "Enough to start or kindle a deeper friendship."

Unmediated "third places" aren't extinct yet, and the past decade has been a (mostly) positive one for Erie. Consider the revitalization of the Federal Hill neighborhood, or the rise of coffee shops like Pressed, Purrista Cat Cafe, and Ember + Forge. And if your disillusioned teenager seems like a visitor from another planet, consider your own relationship with technology. Exhausted by social media? Unable to put down your phone? Longing for a place to spend time that isn't your house or your workplace?

Maybe we have more in common with our children than we think.

Dan Schank can be contacted at danschank@gmail.com



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Changing the Culture: Erie High Becomes a Community School

The United Way breaks unprecedented ground, points way toward brighter futures

By: Erin Phillips

When you tell a kid they're not good enough — through words, actions, Facebook comments — what choice do they have but to eventually believe it? When the public's words become a child's internal monologue, how does that child find the motivation to do better? Or to have pride in the choices they make and the hard work they do? What's the point of trying if all anyone is going to focus on are the negative moments, the mistakes, the poor choices of others that are completely outside of their control? Hold these thoughts in your head for a moment.

Enter Erie High School (EHS) — the City of Erie's public high school, the historic educational facility that has housed Erie's secondary students for generations, and the product of a merger in 2017 that combined Strong Vincent and East High Schools with Central High School to create a single school that allows students to choose their own "pathway to success" through either a traditional high school curriculum or one of their many career and technical education programs.

Enter also the United Way of Erie County, their Community Schools program, and their adoption of EHS as such. The United Way has created community school partnerships in all of the city's public elementary and middle schools and they are truly leading the way with their newest partnership with Erie High. According to President Laurie Root, "We are one of the few communities in the entire country to have the full continuum of community schools from grades K through 12."

What is a community school and how is that designation helping Erie High School?

A community school is a way for, well, the community to have more of an impact on outcomes of our public schools through partnerships with businesses throughout the region that supply funding, resources, as well as either a single or (in the case of EHS) a team of community school directors to help implement programs that will affect positive changes.

These changes include goals like uplifting the public's perception of the school, positively affecting the overall culture and school pride, driving up student outcomes, improving student and teacher morale and quality of life, and the overall success of the students at that community school.

These students represent the future of Erie County — our budding workforce, our decision-makers — their success is equal to the success of Erie and involving/investing the community in their outcomes is a key component.

At Erie High, the United Way has installed four community school directors — each tasked to focus on one of the four key pillars of change the organization has identified as barriers to student success. And this is all data-driven — these are not the anecdotal



This original mural, created in collaboration with Erie High students, art teachers, and Erie Arts and Culture artist-in-residence Annie Schmitt highlights the diversity at Erie High — featuring the native flora of 50 countries represented in the student body.

opinions of CEOs, executive directors, or school administrators. These needs are dictated specifically by students, faculty, staff, and neighbors through intensive polling, interaction, and communication. The four pillars are:

1. To create a positive environment of wellness and learning — tackling attendance issues (for both students and teachers), providing onsite health and wellness resources, improving staff morale and school culture
2. Expanded learning and extracurriculars — strengthening in-school engagement, out of school time, and opportunities for expanded learning
3. School transitions and life preparedness — this pillar focuses on the needs of incoming freshmen and New American students, strengthening communication across the board
4. Family and community partnerships — honing in on parent engagement, student civic engagement, and neighborhood and community outreach which will help reframe the public's perception of the school and its students

For Meghan Easter, the lead community school director at EHS and the first to start working towards the aforementioned pillars at Erie High, this is not her first rodeo. Formerly, Easter headed up the United Way Community School model at Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary and oversaw major changes and success

through that program. She jumped at the chance to be in on the ground floor of the spearheading program at EHS.

"I'm a product of Erie's public schools. I grew up in the city. I have four children and we live in the city. I went to college for psychology and sociology and so I learned about working with people, building relationships, and how systems support or sometimes act as barriers to reaching success," Easter explains. She continues, "When this project first started, it was very interesting — because nothing like it existed in Erie and it was really about how we're supporting individual families, students, and educators to be able to do their true job. But it was also talking about systems-level change: changing processes and procedures and developing partnerships. For me, if I could have created a job based on what I wanted to do, it would be this."

Changing public perception first step in changing school culture

One of Easter's first tasks (and there are many) is to work on changing the public perception of EHS — both its students and its programs. Remember my opening paragraph? The one about public opinion's effect on a child's motivation, self-esteem, and self-worth? That's exactly what Easter hopes to tackle early on — sharing out the great things about EHS, working their way out of the negative public perception that kids who end up at EHS are somehow bad. She reflects, "They (the students) recognize the neg-

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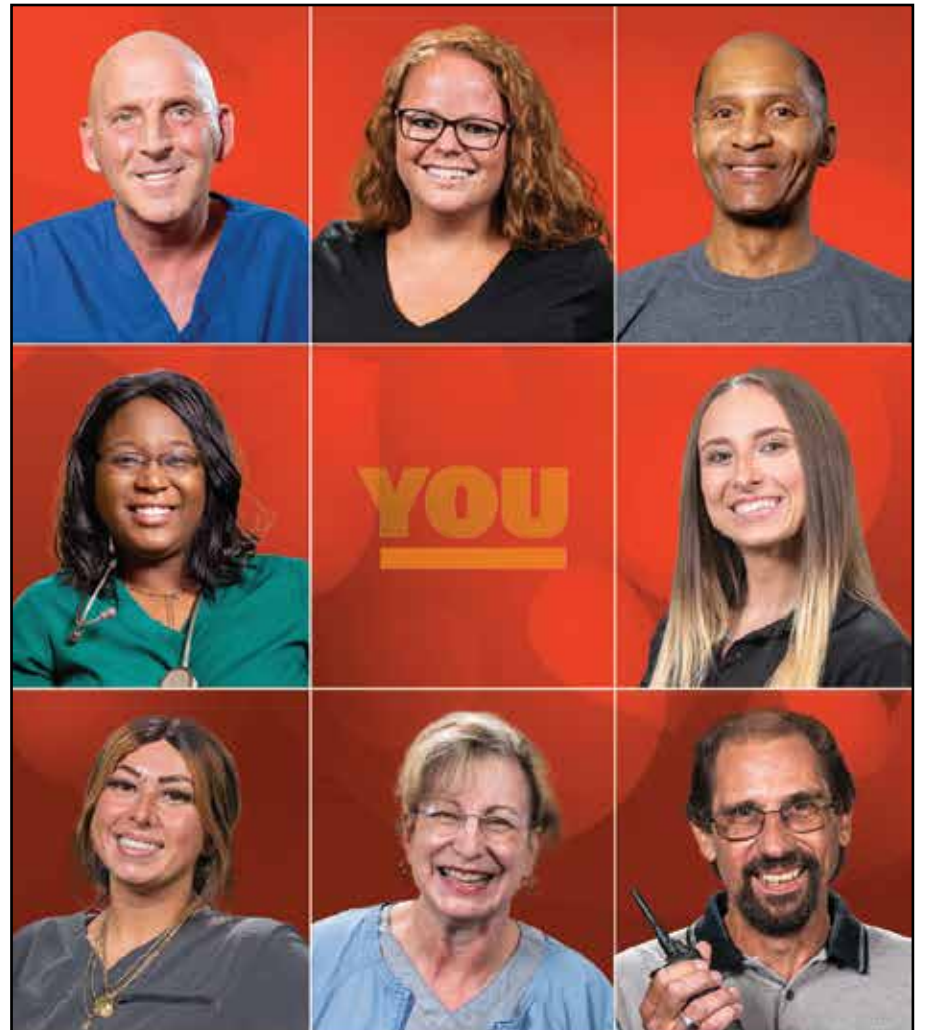
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ative impact and it's defeating for them. They know that good things are happening and they want to be proud of coming to school here, it's just that they want support from the people they're hearing from."

The United Way completed a year's worth of data collection at the high school before laying out a structured plan for implementing their community school model, which involved a team of employees from United Way spending a lot of time with students, surveying them, their teachers, and their parents, in order to get a greater understanding of the barriers that are keeping students from succeeding. And public perception and opinion showed up as a major barrier. One student shared with United Way staff that, "people only think that kids go to Erie High because we're not smart enough to go to Collegiate." That statement is not only heartbreaking, but motivation-killing as well. And Easter is working hard to combat that effect through social media messaging, public relations, parent communication, community and neighborhood outreach, and more.

Principal Donald Orlando reflects on this, "So many good things go on here — we have wonderful kids, wonderful staff, and we do great things. We have the Career and Technical Education (CTE) department which is strong. But when we're not putting the good news out, the only news that gets out are the unfortunate events. When people talk about Erie High, they think about all those negative things and not the good things because, well, we never put that out there." He continues, "I'm really looking forward to Meghan (Easter) helping with that — she's already sitting in on meetings saying 'well, how do people know that?' and we're making sure we're communicating. She's getting on social media to help us out. So we're definitely going to make an intentional push to get all the good news out there — what all our awesome kids and staff are doing every single day."

Easter reiterates, "This is a big goal in the first year, sharing the great things. Looking at how people are receiving information and how we tap into the pockets of the community that aren't receiving our messaging."

The United Way itself is also working on this issue.

JESSICA HUNTER



The machine shop within the Career and Technical Education wing at Erie High features some of today's most state-of-the-art equipment. The curriculum, along with the equipment provided, come from recommendations of the school's advisory board. Consisting of Erie business owners, the board suggests which tools will most benefit the students as they enter the workforce.

President Laurie Root relays, "We have a new event that we're doing in place of our annual meeting which will be on Oct. 16 at the Convention Center and it is to celebrate the launch of the Erie High Community School. We will be bringing in students from the CTE program and from other areas of Erie High so that our attendees can see what's going on in the school."

She continues, "This is the main high school for our city and it's really important for our teachers and students, but also for our community, to support the school because that makes a significant difference in kids showing up and *how* they show up. We're really hoping to, this first year, put a push on changing that public perception so we can really have a sense of support for the school and students and celebrate what's going on."

Leaning in on EHS's Career and Technical Education's success

In a recent Gallup poll and follow-up story done by NPR, it was discovered that Gen Z (which includes students currently aged 12-18) is struggling to find value in school — nationally, across the board. A mere 14 percent of students polled stated that they felt that their schoolwork "challenged them in a good way." And that gap widens among students who do not want to or don't have the means to go to college. Sixty-eight percent of high schoolers say they've heard "a lot" about college while, by comparison, only 23 percent of high schoolers say they've heard a lot about "apprenticeships, certificates, and vocational programs." Meanwhile, according to employment website Indeed, those industries with the highest need for employees are health care, construction, mechanics, and tradespeople (electricians, welders, etc.).

Enter Erie High School's CTE program.

One of the most successful components of EHS is their Career and Technical Education (CTE) wing — and as I tour that area of the school with Principal Orlando, Easter, and Root, I can sense their pride growing with each area we visit. Historically, Tech Memorial/Twin Tech/Central Tech hung their hat on this program that, when the high schools merged in 2017, the public (wrongly) perceived as being eliminated. That couldn't be further from the truth, and the program is more robust now than ever.

EHS offers 18 CTE programs that prepare students for college, careers, industry certifications and state credentials, and opens a number of self-sustaining pathways for kids after graduation. These programs include: auto body technician, auto mechanics technology, childcare and support services, criminal justice, computer programming, construction trades, cosmetology, culinary arts, digital media, machine trades, medical assistant, sports medicine/rehab aide, welding, horticulture/landscaping, marketing, nursing assistant, pre-engineering, and protective services. The breadth of this program provides an unmatched opportunity for students to hone in on their interests and work toward a very real goal and having an advantage when they enter the workforce.

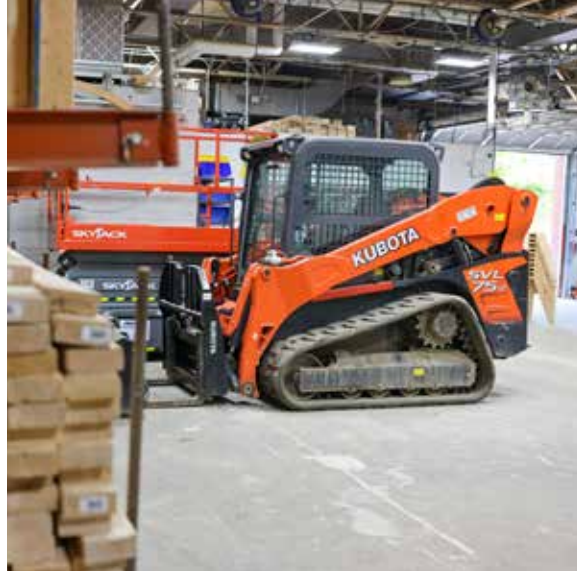
And, I'd wager a guess, that the kids in the CTE program at Erie High are "feeling challenged in a good way." The horticulture students maintain all of the school grounds and operate a greenhouse, learning about agriculture along with landscaping. Principal Orlando shares that if he were a student at EHS right now, that's what he'd choose to study. "You get to be outside for half of your school day!" The construction trade kids literally build a house within one of the

JESSICA HUNTER



Pictured from left to right are Community School Director Meghan Easter, Erie High Principal Donald Orlando, and President of United Way Laurie Root. This team will be joined by three other Community School Directors in this office space at Erie High to begin to implement the model at the secondary education level.

JESSICA HUNTER



The Career and Technical Education program at Erie High gives students another option besides a four-year college degree. There are a wealth of areas to focus on including auto mechanics and auto body (left) and construction trades (right). This program will be expanded and improved as Erie High becomes a Community School through United Way.

CTE bays, complete with framing, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, etc. This is a field that challenges the kids logically and creatively, giving them skills not just for their future employment, but also for life.

Principal Orlando explains, "About half of the student population is enrolled in the CTE program. We work with the people who work in those industries and own the businesses — they help us design the curricula, direct us on what pieces of machinery to buy, what certifications students need, etc. So when a student graduates from the program, they're immediately employable. They can go right into the workforce and make a livable wage, or they can go to a two or four-year school."

Root expands, "Many of the certifications that the student needs are paid for by the school, so they don't have to be paid out of pocket by the student. So, when they graduate, they [can] go right into the workforce."

She goes on to explain how the United Way Community School model can help expand and improve this program, "Being a Community School will help with making that connection to a broader number of businesses in this community. We've had probably about 100 business leaders that we've brought through the school in the last school year and there were a lot who did not know what was going on here. Many were very interested in making that connection because this is their future workforce. It's a really tight employee market right now, so hopefully over the next couple years we'll be able to hone a better connection with the business community and the students here."

The future's so bright

Easter and the other three community school directors — recently announced by the United Way as Bryan Barton, Shateria Franklin (40 Under 40

Class of 2023), and Kane Patron — have a dedicated space within the ample 550,000-square-foot, newly renovated school which spans four city blocks (putting to rest that negative public perception that the school is not big enough to accommodate the student body — it is, most assuredly, big enough). They will each have an office/coworking area alongside a community closet, which is an area of the school where students can access food, hygiene products, clothing, etc. to help fill some basic needs that, if not met, inhibit a student's ability to focus and learn.

Root explains, "This will be the first out of the local community schools that will actually have a team of community school directors and so the collaboration will be huge amongst the team. They all have different pillars, so all the components interconnect."

The United Way, the Community School directors, and the administration and staff at Erie High are all poised to embark on a massive journey, beginning this year — one that leads away from the negative perceptions of the past and towards a brighter future for the students, the school, and the community. We are all in the same boat, here in Erie, and what benefits each and every child is a benefit to us all. The United Way is shining a light on that connection and acting as a beacon for Erie's future success. Let's all right our ships to follow that light.

For more information on the United Way's Community School program visit unitedwayerie.org/our-impact/student-success/community-schools/

To learn more about Erie High School, their CTE Program, or for enrollment information visit eriesd.org/eriehigh

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FEATURE

Justin Dombrowski Takes On Erie's True Crime History One Book at a Time

Ghouls, grave robbers, and extortion in newest release

By: Jonathan Burdick

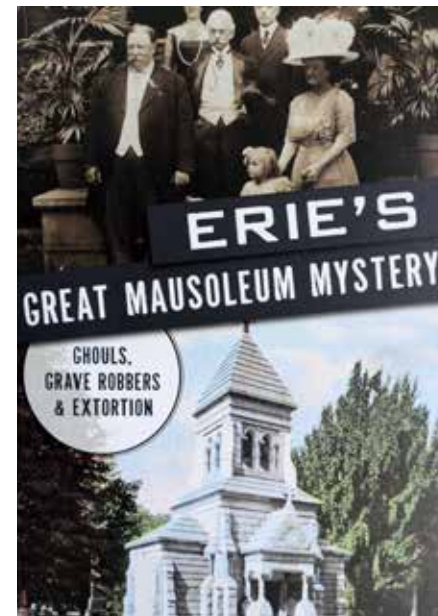
If you are into Erie history, you are likely already familiar with the work of Justin Dombrowski. In June 2022, the Central Tech and Mercyhurst University graduate published *Murder & Mayhem in Erie, Pennsylvania* in which he depicted the tales of six lesser-known true crimes from the city's past. In February 2023, he followed it up with *Erie's Backyard Strangler: Terror in the 1960s*, a stand-alone narrative recounting a series of possibly connected murders of women throughout the city. In October of that same year, he then dropped *Wicked Erie* which told seven local tales of "scandal, robbery, murder, suicide, the mob, and more."

Now, he's back once again with *Erie's Great Mausoleum Mystery: Ghouls, Grave Robbers and Extortion*, the story of the Erie Cemetery's Scott Mausoleum and the infamous 1911 case surrounding it. As described by The History Press, a subsidiary of Arcadia Publishing: "With the inside of the mausoleum heavily damaged — and a body missing — the crime set off shockwaves throughout the country during a time in which grave robbery, extortion, and murder reigned supreme. ... The case took a sinister turn when a series of letters were sent to wealthy local philanthropist Charles Hamot Strong, threatening to blow up his mausoleum and murder his granddaughter."

Dombrowski's latest book is a must-read for those interested in Erie history, but it also has a broader appeal and is accessible to anyone anywhere interested in the time period or fascinating true crime cases.

Dombrowski, who also administers the popular local true crime Facebook page *Shadows From the Boulevard*, simply hasn't slowed down these past few years. If you are curious how he researches and writes so fast, you're not alone.

"Most of my research consists of material gathered from over 15-plus years of work," explains Dombrowski, adding that he multitasks, working on two projects simultaneously and by



planning ahead in one to two year increments. The research, he says, never really ends and is a continuous process up until publication.

His first step is to organize his research into an in-depth outline with detailed citations. This serves as a guide when he begins to write his first draft. He can kick this first draft out very quickly, usually between one to two months. He then sets it aside for a few weeks before beginning revisions. This is when he can tighten the narrative, refine the dialogue, and ensure that he's adhering to the specifics of his contract.

"My writing process has not really changed [since *Murder & Mayhem*]," says Dombrowski. "However, I've learned what does, and does not, work when it comes to writing the manuscript, so each book brings with it certain challenges and constant learning experience."

Having worked with a publisher for these past four books, what has he learned about the publishing industry? Word count is key. "Word count will normally dictate the length of your manuscript," he says, "and is important towards furnishing your craft to a particular audience."

As for marketing? There's a lot more self-marketing these days with publishers encouraging authors to engage

with their audience through social media. "It's a great way to continue to connect with your audience," he notes.

When asked what drew him to the mausoleum case for his latest book, he describes how the story has always been told in such a neatly summarized manner which always left him with so many questions about the case. He sought to find the answers.

"For me, it was a constant cliffhanger," he says. "I wanted to know more about the individuals involved like Gilbert Perkins, Charles Franklin, the Strongs, and others." The initial idea for the story actually came to him while writing a chapter in *Murder & Mayhem*. "The more research I did, the more I started to realize there was a bigger story to be told encompassing several thousand newspaper clippings, court transcripts and records, and so much more information that has never been explored before."

With the help of the Hagen History Center — which he describes as an incredible asset — as well as the National Archives in Philadelphia, the National Archives at Kansas City, Jenkins Law Library, the Cleveland Library, and

various other archives throughout the country, he began piecing together the broader story. "William Hamilton Oldfield, the great-grandson of John Frank Oldfield, who was instrumental in the Black Hand case (a 1911 unsolved murder seemingly perpetrated by the shadowy Black Hand Society) as well as the mausoleum case, was also gracious to share some of the family archives," adds Dombrowski. This included handwritten letters.

Dombrowski's stories always unravel in a narrative style with a voice unique to him, which, when you learn he spent years working as a screenwriter and briefly in the film industry, makes perfect sense. There are even plans to turn *Erie's Great Mausoleum Mystery* into a three-part docudrama series.

"For me, history is full of stories rich in detail with colorful characters that rival any film media," he says. "When I set out to write a story, I make sure I know the tone I want to portray to the audience, so the task for me to transport you, the reader, back to 1911 is crucial in understanding the who, what, where, and why of what happened. The story of the Scott Mausoleum case is

no exception. I've come to believe that writing in such a way really does present history in a new, three-dimensional way."

He also learned quite a bit about Erie's Strong family. "Even in 1911, it was incredible to see just how much influence the Strong family exerted over the direction of the investigation, much to the chagrin of newspaper correspondents who flocked to Erie from all over the country," he says. "Despite their shortfalls, there remains plenty of evidence that shows Charles and Annie Strong, although wealthy, were very generous when it came to caring for the city."

If you think Dombrowski is ready to take a break after publishing four books in just over two years, think again. He has two more on the horizon — and plenty of ideas beyond that.

"I am under contract with The History Press for my fifth book on the Debbie Gama case of 1975," he says, adding that he plans to donate a portion of the proceeds to the Crime Victim Center. The first draft has already been completed. After that, he'll be writing a book about the devastating Mill-

creek Flood of 1915.

All things considered, it's been a productive and rewarding time for Dombrowski. "Overall, it's a journey that I really enjoy and look forward to every time I am able to release a book," he remarks. "The most rewarding part is being able to meet those who have read my books and appreciate the time and effort put into an endeavor such as this. Hearing what they like — and dislike — helps me grow as both an author and historian."

You can pick up a copy of *Erie's Great Mausoleum Mystery: Ghouls, Grave Robbers and Extortion* by Justin Dombrowski today at your local Erie bookstore or order through your favorite online retailer. Then be sure to buy a few more copies to share with friends and family (and don't forget to leave a review to appease those algorithms).

For more information on Dombrowski, his books, and Erie's true crime history, visit facebook.com/ErieTrueCrime

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

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How Erie's Women The Future PAC Became a Sign of the Times

Former Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper discusses importance of women in government

By: Liz Allen

Weeks before Vice President Kamala Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee, signs were already popping up on Erie lawns with two distinct but pointed messages, reading: "When Women Vote, Women Win" and "Grab Your Future by the Ballot."

The signs are the creative brainchild of Women The Future, a political action committee (PAC) in Erie organized to support women running for elected office at all levels of government. So far, nearly 500 signs have been distributed, with more being printed to meet demand in the lead-up to the Rally for Women's Rights in Erie on Saturday, Sept. 28, at 1 p.m. at the Bayfront Convention Center.

The Erie Reader sat down with Kathy Dahlkemper, a founding member of the PAC, to learn more about how Women the Future came to be, what impact the members hope to make in the Nov. 5 election and where the PAC will direct resources in 2025 and beyond.

Liz Allen (LA): The June 24, 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, overturning *Roe v. Wade*, has energized women across the country to fight back politically to restore reproductive rights. What role did the Supreme Court decision have in creating Women the Future?

Kathy Dahlkemper (KD): Women The Future, more affectionately called WTF, was born out of the outrage many women felt after the overturning of *Roe*. We were frustrated and wanted to do something. The conversation kept circling back to getting more women elected to office at all levels. We felt that most men just didn't get it, and beyond *Roe*, there were so many issues where we believed our voices were not being heard. We coalesced around creating a PAC (Political Action Committee) as an effort to change the dynamic.

LA: Even before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, you were encouraging women to run for local office. Why is it critical for women's voices to be heard on issues that affect our region?

KD: I have a strong belief that when more women are at the table where decisions are being made, when the number of women in office is closer to

men in office, our communities will all be better off, much better represented. Women bring a different perspective to the discussion, a perspective that is essential. I've personally found women to be more open to listening and willing to consider other points of view, to compromise. If only men are at the table, if there is no diversity of race or gender, of age and socio-economic background, then we are not really representing our community. This goes for all levels of government, including local, as so many issues that affect our daily lives are decided at the local level. In many ways local government and school board decisions impact your family more directly than those made on the national level.

LA: Can you share some examples on how having women at the decision-makers' tables has made a difference for Erie?

KD: Erie was ahead of its time in the 1980s when Mayor Joyce Savocchio and County Executive Judy Lynch were leading our community and they collaborated and got things done. The voters appreciated their hard work and lack of drama by re-electing them multiple times. As a U.S. Congresswoman and as county executive I saw how women could more readily think of the greater good as they make decisions. The Blasco Public Library was built during the Judy Lynch era and soon became the catalyst for bayfront development. Mayor Savocchio is touted for fearlessly tackling city budget deficits and is heralded for leading the charge to invest \$180 million in the city's Wastewater Treatment Plant, actions that directly led to achieving the goal of making Presque Isle Bay clean enough for swimming after decades of pollution. I authored the amendment to the Affordable Care Act which allows young people to remain on their parent's health insurance until 26 years of age — a law that has saved thousands of young people's lives and kept many more from going bankrupt.

LA: What issues are top of mind right now for Erie women, whether they live in the city, the suburbs, or a rural area?

KD: We conducted a survey among our members and the top issue was a women's right to choose. There is a fear of the slippery slope when you start to



Former County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper sat down with Liz Allen to discuss the creation of the Women the Future PAC, which was organized to help support women running for public office at all levels of government.

lose rights, particularly about personal issues. Gun control was the second most concerning issue. The ongoing mass shootings at schools and public events is very top of mind for mothers, grandmothers, and all women everywhere.

LA: When you brought women elected officials together previously for monthly lunches, you stressed the need for women to work together across the aisle. Is that a guiding principle for the PAC?

KD: Absolutely. The divisiveness in our politics today makes it hard to govern, to do the best for all our citizens. When you are elected to office, you are there to serve all the people, not just a particular party. Working across the aisle should not be a dirty word. Compromise is essential and studies have shown women are better at finding that middle ground.

LA: Other organizations have sprung up in recent years to support women running for public office. Does WTF coordinate with those groups, such as She Should Run?

KD: Yes, we're not here to duplicate

the work of others. We want to encourage women to run for office and then connect them with the resources they need, whether it is training and education, mentoring or financial advice.

LA: How does WTF work to reduce the challenges or barriers that women candidates face?

KD: Our members are very engaged, they don't just write checks. They want to help break down those barriers through mentoring and volunteering, by making connections. We invite women to run, we encourage women to volunteer in campaigns, we mentor those who do decide to run and we support them financially. Our membership is made up of a diverse group of women from elected officials, past and present, to business owners and educators, young and retired, concerned women in our community who want to help bring more equity to our elected offices.

LA: One of your yard signs plays off Donald Trump's crude quote from his *Access Hollywood* tape, without mentioning his name or his political party. The message on the other sign is non-partisan. Both signs were printed

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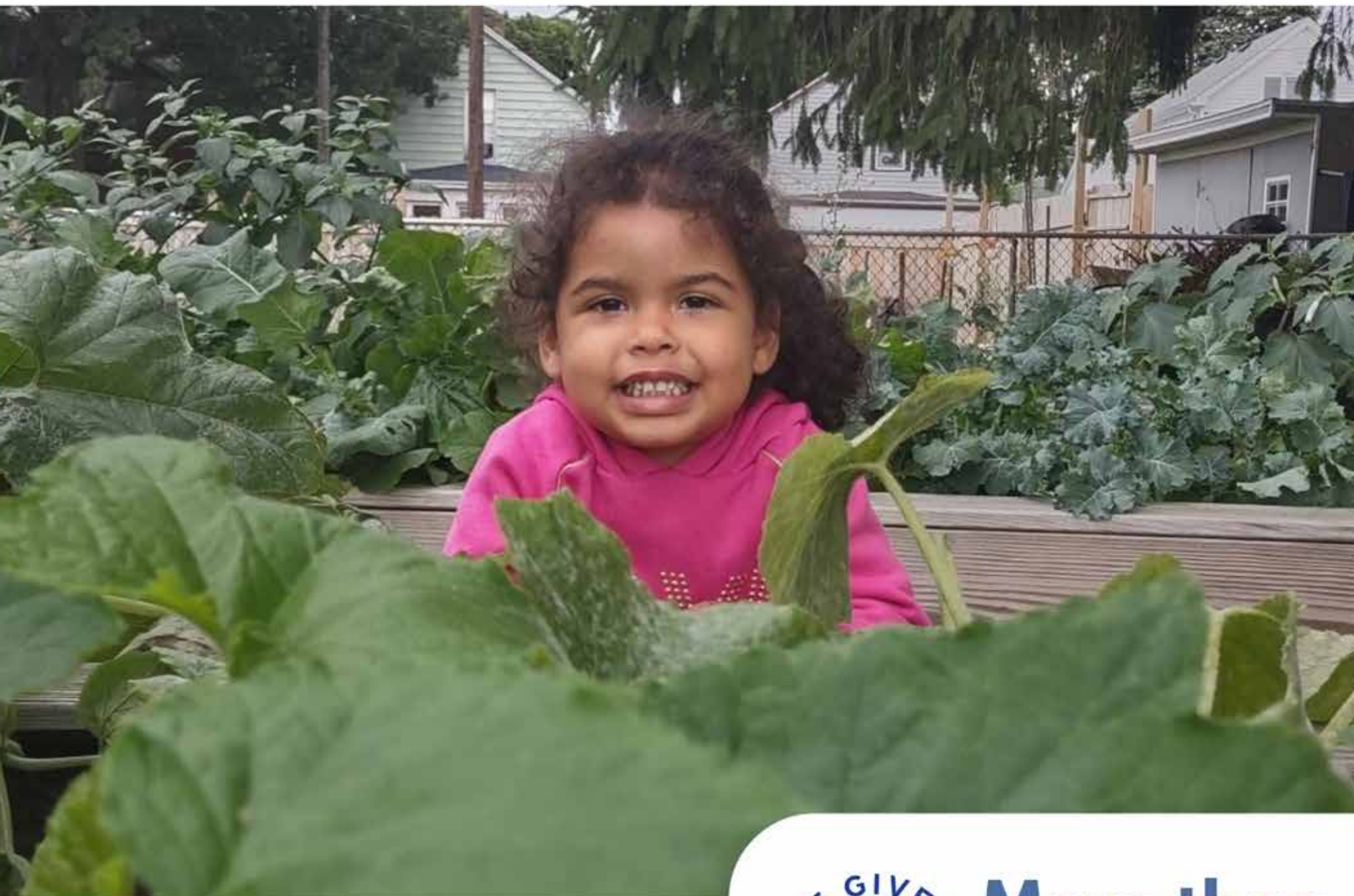
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FEATURE

before Kamala Harris replaced Joe Biden on the Democratic ticket. Can you take credit for being prescient about how the 2024 presidential race would change?

KD: Ha! No, but we felt that the messages were clear, that you have to take charge of your future by voting and that when women vote, we win — meaning our issues win. I do believe that women and young voters will decide this election and the energy and enthusiasm that Vice President Harris has generated is motivating young voters and women alike. But I will say our sign stash was quickly depleted after Harris became the presumptive nominee. Timing is everything in politics!

LA: Your PAC is a major sponsor of the upcoming Women's Rights Rally. Will this rally replicate the success of the Erie Women's March on Jan. 21, 2017?

KD: Our hope is that the rally will remind women of the importance and impact of this election and what it means for women and our children's future. We believe it will also serve as a get out the vote effort for anyone

who might still be on the fence as to whether their vote is important. Momentum is growing for the rally and I do believe it will be a huge success.

LA: What is the best way for Erie people to get involved in Women the Future?

KD: We welcome women to learn more about us at womenthefuturepac.com and we love new members! We want women to not only think about the 2024 election, but consider running for office locally in 2025 or joining us in supporting those women who do decide to put their name on the ballot. The more members we have, the more women we can reach and the more women we believe will run and be elected. Because when Women Run, Women Win!

Liz Allen put a "When Women Vote, Women Win" sign in her yard and neighbors quickly clamored to get their own signs, too.

The Erie Women's March will take place on Saturday, Sept. 28 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier. For more information visit: eriewomensmarch.com



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Erie Roller Derby On a Roll, Looking for Recruits

Strap on skates or stay in the stands, it's time to get down and derby

By: **Chloe Forbes**

Donning a Derby Dad T-shirt last week, a fan filed past wedding-goers at the Bayfront Convention Center as he entered the circuit space for Erie Roller Derby (ERD). Other spectators wore macabre-inspired merch decorated with zombies and bats, but the team spirit was alive and well.

Roller derby — a fast-paced, full-contact sport where players skate counterclockwise on a circuit track — is played in two 30-minute “bouts” made of “jams.” A “jammer” is designated and scores a point for each opposing “blocker” they lap. Meanwhile, blockers work offense and defense to keep the opposing jammer back while helping their jammer get ahead.

Since its conception in 2010, ERD has evolved from marching to the beat of a camp-centric cadence to one equally focused on athleticism and expression.

“Tee-zer, Tee-zer” cheers erupted as jammer Teezer racked up points for the team.

Next up, “Interstella” exploded through blockers with astronomical speed. After a second of celebration, Interstella turned to high-five the opposing jammer and exchange a quick laugh.

Across the room, another team member smiles. Sometimes, it's all in a name. “Stella is the brightest person ever,” they remarked. It's that feeling of community that keeps skaters coming back.

“So I have actually retired and come back three times because for me, personally, it's one of the most satisfying physical and social things I've had in my life,” said coach Gretchen Gueguen (aka Grätel Vön Metäl). “To have that community is so great, the feeling that you're not alone in the world.”

Skaters Jackie Thomas, 23, (aka Jack Rabbit) and Cassy Ellsworth, 22, (aka Cass-a-Roll) joined the team just under a year ago. Thomas frequented roller rinks for birthday parties growing up, while Ellsworth could skate as young as she could walk and later worked as a carhop at Sonic. When a friend proposed the idea of joining ERD, they happily obliged.

“You do it, you like it, and then you think you like it a little too much, and then you realize that you're so invested that you just can't leave,” Thomas remarked. “It's not a cult,” she clarified. “It's a religion.” Ellsworth smiled.

Thomas agreed with Gueguen that the team is always there for her when she's in a jam — on the circuit and off. She said she gained a whole new family that day she signed up for derby.

“We are extremely friendly to all sorts of walks of life, especially the LGBTQIA+ community and people of color. I feel like we are not lacking in any of that sort of diversity, and it makes it very comfortable and accepting to be there,” Thomas said. “You can be your true self. You don't have to hide anything — it's derby. We're just hitting people.”

As an adult, Gueguen said it can be hard to find people who share a similar mindset and work together toward a goal outside of the workplace. Roller derby

ACTION SHOTS



Catch a glimpse inside the action at an Erie Roller Derby bout, at their upcoming Bayfront Bruise Fest (a six-game, day-long roller derby extravaganza), or at one of their upcoming Skate Camps which recruit and educate new rollers.

not only provides that but also creates a supportive space. In a sport dominated by women, every body type has a role to play.

“I think as women, [it's important] having something where you feel powerful and you feel like your body is appreciated no matter what size it is,” she said. “Everybody has a role to play in the game. It's not like in other sports. If you're really big and hard to move, that's really important, but if you're really tiny and quick and agile, that's also really important.”

The team ages range from 19 to 50 years old and includes everyone from librarians to health care workers, teachers, hourly workers, and everything in between; Erie Roller Derby is a safe haven for all walks of life. That is, unless you're on the opposing team.

Thomas and Ellsworth noted that their confidence increases two-fold when they step into their derby identities.

“I am not nearly as confident in real life,” Thomas

began.

“As she should be,” Ellsworth butted in.

“When I am playing roller derby, I am very confident, and I'm very loud all the time... That is not how I am in real life. In real life, I do not scream, and I do not shout,” Thomas continued.

But when the whistle blows, Thomas sees red. “In normal life, you would not look at her or talk to her and be like, ‘wow, this is someone who is just going to cold-blooded body slam you,’ but at derby, she is,” Ellsworth inputs.

“It's very nice to catch people off guard, I will say,” Thomas said, smiling sweetly.

Derby names are a signal of that identity, including wordplay, alliteration, and pop culture references. Skaters like Lorna Doome, Mourning Dove, Tyrannosaurus Wrecks, Butch Lite, Mae B. Dangerous, and more have found their place at ERD.

“The derby name has really stayed, and I think

there's something to that," Gueguen said. "You don't want to go over the top, but you do want to kind of declare who you are. It comes back to that empowering aspect of it like you have the ability to decide what your name is."

Like their names, bout-fits are another expressive outlet for skaters who wish to fully adopt their skating persona during matches. It's not about the flashiest gear, though.

Gueguen maintained that it's all about having a good time, and the team tries to make it as easy as possible to partake in. "If you want to try it, come down and try it. We will lend you gear, and then if you want to invest, you can invest to the degree you want to," she said.

The prime opportunity is on the horizon, too, as ERD is hosting its annual Skate Camp. It will run from Sept. 30 to Nov. 20, meeting 8 to 10 a.m. on Sundays and 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Mondays at Gem City Skate, 3162 W. Lake Road.

The eight-week, \$60 course introduces skaters with zero experience or beginner-level skills to roller derby. And the team is looking for fresh faces, too. Gueguen said recruitment is crucial because derby is an outlet that should always be available to the community. ERD is a team of hometown pride and often partners with local charities and participates in local events to ensure its presence in the community is felt.

After the pandemic, participation dropped, and

they are looking to boost numbers again and continue the team's lineage. Throughout the year, the team has two-hour practices twice a week, and Sunday practices are optional.

For those who want to be part of ERD but are on the fence about skating, Gueguen said they are accepting skating and non-skating members. Volunteers could be EMTs, announcers, or officials, helping keep track of the game.

To get a better idea of the game or simply root on your favorite skaters, the Bayfront Bruise Fest kicks off on Sept. 14 as Erie Roller Derby hosts the Youngstown Area Roller Derby, Durham Region Roller Derby, and Hogtown Roller Derby. The day will include six games in a round-robin format, affording each team an opportunity to play three Women's Flat Track Derby Association-sanctioned games. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. with the first whistle to follow, and action will last into the night at the Bayfront Convention Center (1 Sassafras Pier).

For more information on the teams, to learn more about ERD, or to sign up for Skate Camp, visit erierollerderby.com.

For tickets to the Bayfront Bruise Fest, roll on over to tickets.eriereader.com. Tickets are \$15 for the entire day.

Chloe Forbes is a local journalist and now a local derby-enthusiast. Bounce derby name ideas off of her at chloeforbes14@gmail.com.



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Erie's Farm to School Program

Building community and sprouting new ideas about food

By: Amy VanScoter

You may have noticed the outside of Erie's schools look a little different than they used to as more gardens are sprouting up, many with colorful markers and well-cared-for raised beds.

Erie's Farm to School program has 14 school gardens throughout the Erie School District. As students go back to school, many will be building community by learning hands-on gardening and culinary skills. The program connects students and their communities to fresh, local food by cultivating relationships with local farmers and producers, involving them in the practice of growing and preparing produce, and highlighting careers in the food system.

"The chances of the students eating the food that they grew is so high. They grew it and picked it and the pride they feel is really positive and beautiful. Almost any student can participate — it's a really nice way to engage all of the students and you can see some of them are really interested in certain aspects of the program such as cooking or botany," said Stephanie Ciner (Erie's 40 Under 40 Class of 2023), the program's gardener. Ciner has worked with Erie's school gardens and Erie Farm to School for eight years as a gardener and educator. She currently supports agricultural and culinary programming at the district's middle schools and Collegiate Academy.

Doreen Petri has established the theme BELONG within the program: **B**ecoming **E**mpowered by **L**iving **O**ur **N**atural **G**ifts. Petri was a science instructor for 40 years and is currently the project manager of Erie Farm to School for the Erie City School District. During her tenure in the district, she has overseen student energy audits, waste cleanups and recycling projects, water quality assessments, and the installation of 14 school gardens. She develops science curriculum, manages grant-funded projects, facilitates professional development workshops and serves on Pennsylvania state committees.

The program maintains a garden at each of Erie's public elementary and middle schools and one at Collegiate Academy. Each garden provides an outdoor classroom and hands-on learning space for curricular lessons, after-school programs, and summer activities. Food harvested at the gardens is shared with students, families, school staff, neighbors, and community partners including food pantries and farm stands. The gardens are sustained by a dedicated network of volunteers and through local, state, and national grants.

Each of the 10 elementary schools offers fall and spring garden clubs. "Schools also participate in a Harvest of the Month program by taste-testing and learning about seasonal foods such as peppers, the September food of the month," said Ciner. Middle schools host a series of garden and culinary club sessions throughout the school year focused on special topics of student interest including indoor growing, cooking, and composting. A gardening and environ-



The raised garden beds installed at Erie's public schools are a result of Erie's Farm to School program, which provides resources, education, and hands-on experiences for students to learn about growing, cultivating, harvesting, selling, and cooking the food they grow on campus.

mental club meets year-round at Collegiate Academy with a special focus on environmental justice and community food systems.

"The chances of the students eating the food that they grew is so high. They grew it and picked it and the pride they feel is really positive and beautiful." — Stephanie Ciner, gardener with the Erie School District's Farm to School program

Students at Erie High have also been a part of the Farm to School program. Several enrolled in its Career and Technical Education horticulture program have relayed to Ciner that they decided to study the subject because of their early involvement in the garden club. Erie Farm to School was also involved with the unveiling of a mural created in the school by students, teachers, and Erie Arts and Culture artist-in-residence Annie Schmitt, which features a

beehive design with drawings of native plants representing the more than 50 countries of origin of Erie High's students. During the mural's unveiling, an urban farmer made food using all of the horticultural ingredients featured in the mural.

In the springtime, the students prepare the beds, plant seeds, and prepare to nurture the garden throughout the year. In the fall, students harvest produce and put the beds to rest for the winter. Some students and their families participate in summer programming, as well.

"Students also come in the summer — we did a summer camp this year for the first time and we visited bakeries, farmers markets, and farms — students got to see everything involved and we got to eat a lot of meals. We try to nurture those opportunities wherever we can. We will suggest summer jobs (such as with the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network or Groundwork Erie) to students if we see an interest," Ciner said.

You can contact your Community School Director to register your student for a Garden Club. For more information on the program or get involved, visit eriefarmtoschool.my.canva.site

Amy VanScoter is a writer, advocate for fresh local foods for all, and the founder of Infinite Love Yoga, LLC. She can be reached at avanscoter@gmail.com



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Legenderie: Records and Coffee House

Rocking and roasting

By: Larry Wheaton

There are some things that just go together — wine and cheese, Lennon and McCartney, and a cup of coffee while listening to records. When it opens on Sept. 13, Legenderie: Records and Coffee House will combine the love of music and the love of the bean (and a little bit of McCartney and Lennon, when it's in stock).

Located in the former Coffee Culture building at 5761 Peach St., Legenderie aims to provide their customers with unique coffee drinks blended with a one-of-a-kind shopping experience for vinyl records. The business is owned and operated by husband-and-wife duo Ishmael and Allana Trainor, both born and raised in Erie. After living in Arizona for a few years and returning during the pandemic, they embarked on realizing their dream of owning a business by combining the two things they love.

Ishmael said that his "favorite album to listen to while drinking a latte or cappuccino is *The Best of Sade*," (a record his wife of 20 years bought him for his birthday) while his wife Allana can "chill to anything by Alicia Keys, with a warm cup of coffee in her hands, especially on a rainy day."

He explained why vinyl records are so important: "I think that since we are always in a digital space, the next level of fandom, if an artist really means something to you, is the physical album. I think of vinyl as buying a piece of the artist."

He went on to speak of the personal importance of music: "If a song or moment means something to you and is very special to you, like a moment in time, you have that piece of that artist, so to speak. 'I remember listening to this record when that happened,' or 'I got married and that was my wedding song.' I think that's why vinyl is making a comeback."

It's also partially about the experience of vinyl hunting. "It's the art of discovery — sometimes you are going through and find yourself surprised, and it might not have been what you were looking for but you know that's a good record."

Opening a new business can have many challenges — making sure that everything from inspiration to execution is just right. The Trainors are taking a unique approach on how they acquire the records that customers see on the shelves. While they continue to work to lock down a vinyl distributor, their current inventory is sourced from the personal collections of local record collectors.

Ishmael states, "From a business standpoint, it makes it easier on me — vinyl can be expensive, especially when you are buying in bulk. Consignment made it easier, because we were able to have the inventory that we do have, without having a major business expense."

How it works is that those interested can email them at info@legenderie.com, fill out an inventory sheet with about 20 to 50 records listed on it and assign prices. Legenderie then adds a slight mark-up for housing them in the shop and makes them available for pur-



Husband-and-wife duo Ishmael and Allana Trainor, co-owners of Erie's latest small business Legenderie Coffee and Records, are reinventing the former Coffee Culture space on upper Peach Street. With consigned records and creative coffee blends ready to rock, the couple also has plans for future growth and expansion.

chase.

If a record doesn't sell in a certain amount of time, Legenderie returns it to the collector and replaces it with a fresh selection. This helps strengthen connections within the local record collecting community, with Allana saying that they "can reach out to those who are consigning with them and see if they have something that was requested by a customer at Legenderie, and get that for the individual."

Speaking of perfect pairings — Millcreek Coffee Company is providing the beans that Legenderie will be using to make all their beverages. Ishmael says that they are working on a fun collaboration, "We are working with them to produce roasts that are music-themed. We have a double-caffeinated blend called the Heavy Metal and a Smooth Jazz blend that's half-caffeinated."

Legenderie will also be providing baked goods and breakfast sandwiches during its first phase, but are planning on expanding to a lunch menu in the near future. The Trainors also intend to have coffee flights where someone can get 4 ounces of three different blends of coffee, along with a self-service coffee station for those that just want a quick cup on the go.

The name of the business derives from the owners' passion for making their shop a space for everything local. "How did we get the name of Legenderie? It was supposed to be, at first, like launching an [independent] record label — [spotlighting the talent of] local legends."

This love of local music will be featured on the walls within the cafe, "Artists can have their project on the

wall for a month and someone comes in and scans the QR code that's on the poster and it will go right to the artist's Spotify or YouTube," says Ishmael. He goes on to say, "We are very keen on local music because Erie has a lot of talent, from cover bands to original artists. I think this feature will be able to showcase that."

As the records spin and the beans brew, Legenderie is hoping, in the near future, to offer record player accessories, mid-level headphones, and start-up record players. They are also planning on having live music both inside and outside of the venue, hoping to get artists traveling through Erie to do some in-store appearances, as well as hosting record fairs in their parking lot during the warmer months.

Ishmael continues, "We also want to expand into the digital space where we have something akin to NPR's Tiny Desk Concerts, with our own YouTube series, *Midnight Mocha Sessions*."

Legenderie will have a ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday, Sept. 12, with regular business hours of 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday. They will be closed on Sundays unless they are hosting a live music event. For more info visit: legenderie.com

Larry Wheaton had been an avid record collector since buying his first album in the fall of 1993 (Pearl Jam's VS). He has amassed a collection of music in the thousands, that crosses all musical genres, and enjoys sharing his knowledge of music to anyone willing to listen. He can be reached at wheaton1138@gmail.com

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Gem City Style: Featuring Teachers from Erie High School

Passion and profession in lockstep for three women

By: Jessica Hunter

I've recently had the pleasure of touring Erie High, getting to know more about their programs, their new Community School status through the United Way, and was able to speak with three of the teachers about their inspiration, challenges, and accomplishments.

Erie High School Staff: Jessica Cosme (Secondary English Teacher), Kimberlee Nikolai (Marketing Teacher), Stephanie Welsler (Art Teacher)

Jessica Hunter (JH): What inspired you to become a high school teacher, and what do you enjoy most about teaching high school students?

Jessica Cosme (JC): I truly feel called upon to teach. Growing up, I loved reading all the board game instructions and then teaching everyone else how to play. Everyone else loved that most of the time. When I got a little older, I was often asked to tutor younger family members and friends. I found out I really enjoyed the smiles of confidence lighting up the faces of those who just came to understand something they previously did not. Then, in college at Penn State Behrend, I took a creative writing elective with George Looney. He taught me how to read like a writer and that changed everything. Through that new lens, the whole world became clearer. Now, I'm a teacher and what I enjoy most is that "aha!" moment when a student "gets it." What I love about teaching in high school is seeing how much the students grow into themselves from ninth to 12th grade. That, and teenagers are hilarious. My job is never, ever boring.

Kimberlee Nikolai (KN): My high school math teacher Mrs. Jackson is who inspired me to become a teacher. I enjoy being able to help the students and be a positive role model for them. I hope that I make an impact in their lives.

Stephanie Welsler (SW): My mother was a Kindergarten teacher for over 30 years in my hometown. So I was able to see the impact that she had on the community and the hundreds of students she taught over her career. I wanted to do the same. I initially wanted to teach elementary school, like my mom, and started my Erie Public School career teaching kindergarten at Wayne. When Wayne closed and the district restructured I was moved to a middle school art position and fell in love with the big kids. This is my fourth year at Erie High and it is exactly where I'm meant to be. I adore my students and my colleagues. Being able to work with young adults and encourage them to be their best selves is incredibly rewarding. Hopefully I can be a positive and encouraging influence to my students for many years to come.

JH: How do you create a positive and inclusive classroom environment that fosters student engagement and learning?

JC: At our school, before we even dive into the content, we spend the first couple days setting the expectations and building relationships. I learned many students do not automatically trust me, and respect is something that must be earned. Being genuine, really

listening, and being respectful goes a long way. I try to learn as much as I can about my students' interests and learning styles so I can try to connect the learning content to what they know and care about in a way that is accessible to them. Keeping students engaged is challenging — especially when teachers must compete with cell phones. I am actually more hopeful than ever about our new cell phone policy this year. If a student is using their phone in class, they are reminded to put it away. If they take it out again, they are warned to put it away, or it will be taken. If they take it out that third time, the administration will really come and confiscate the phone until the end of the day. I know we're only two weeks in, but this is definitely the most effective solution I've seen yet. I must say, I really am proud of my students because I know how difficult it can be to ignore a notification. We also have a school-wide positive behavior plan in which students earn points for meeting expectations like keeping their phones away. They can use the points to buy rewards like snacks, phone chargers, T-shirts, raffle tickets for large prizes, and even entry to pep rallies and dances.



Kimberlee Nikolai is a marketing teacher within Erie High School's Career and Technical Education program.

KN: The main goal is to build positive relationships with each student. To build these relationships, you must show respect and also show interest in each student's lives.

SW: Getting to know the students and being my authentic self really helps the students feel comfortable in my class. I also like making the classroom cozy and comfortable. Decorating the room with artwork and things that make me happy creates a fun and relaxing vibe that students enjoy.

JH: Can you describe a project or lesson that you



Jessica Cosme is an English teacher at Erie High School.

have designed that you are particularly proud of, and how did it benefit student learning?

JC: One of my favorite lessons would have to be the graphic novel project I assigned to my creative writing class. Students learned graphic novel terminology, like panels and speech balloons, and then had to find examples of them in the graphic novel collection in the library. They compared the effects of the different techniques used by a variety of authors and illustrators. Next, they were paired into groups of two and planned their own graphic novels. They brainstormed both written descriptions and sketches. Students were given access to multiple planning sheets for their characters, settings, and plot, and were able to complete them in any order. After that, they made rough drafts, and their final products. This project took three weeks, but the results were worth it. Students usually spend a lot of time analyzing the characters and setting of stories written by others, so this was a good opportunity for them to be the creators.

KN: We held a trade show for the staff last spring. Each student had to pick an item from the school store to showcase. They had displays, samples, and interactive games. The students had to use math, English, art, public speaking skills as well as their marketing skills to promote their product. It allowed them to integrate their academic skills with their career and tech skills. The students were extremely proud of their projects.

SW: I recently had the opportunity to work with an artist-in-residence, Annie Schmitt, on a mural project for the school through Erie Arts and Culture. Myself

JESSICA HUNTER



Stephanie Welser is an art teacher at Erie High and helped to execute a collaborative mural with Erie Arts and Culture with her students.

plants that are significant to our students' cultures/countries. It was a great use of our students' talents and learning more about their cultures in the process. I loved collaborating with different members of the Erie community throughout the process. We were able to install the mural over the summer and the students absolutely love seeing their hard work on display for the whole school to enjoy.

JH: Can you give an example of a time when you had to adapt to a new teaching strategy or method, and how did you approach this change?

JC: Two instances immediately come to mind. The first is COVID, when we all had to learn how to teach remotely. I approached that change with the Serenity Prayer. The second is happening now. I am teaching reading using the Read 180 program. This curriculum has very specific procedures, routines, and even scripts I must read word for word. I am used to being able to use my own creativity and having a lot more control over how I teach and what I say. I have been able to adapt by realizing even though I am reading the same "lines" in every class, every class is still different. I still have to help every individual connect those ideas to their own individual knowledge and experiences in order for it to make sense. Besides, I realize the goal is student learning, not my creative expression. So, I am trying to see these limits as a way to force creativity much like the way the rules of specific types of poetry force the imagination of the poet.

KN: I taught math for my first 22 years so I naturally

adapt math standards into my career and tech classroom. It provides connections for the students and helps them with their academics. It has also been a big change going from teaching math to teaching a career and tech lab. In a career and tech lab, most of the learning is project based with real world examples and math is more structured with independent learning.

SW: The biggest change that I had to adapt to was teaching remotely during lockdown. Seemingly overnight we had to learn a variety of different learning systems. And when teaching art it was especially difficult; I hadn't really taught digital art because of lack of technology. Now we were 1 to 1 with Chromebooks, and had this opportunity to learn a new type of art. I do have a background in media art, but adapting that to the free programs that were available to my students was just another new thing to learn.

JH: What is one thing that your students would be surprised to learn about you?

JC: I hope it's not a surprise to them that I have my dream job, and there isn't anything else I would rather be than their teacher.

KN: I grew up in the country and only graduated with 53 people.

SW: Even as an adult, I don't have all the answers. I'm constantly learning and evolving trying to make myself a better person. Education doesn't stop once you graduate, it continues throughout your life.

Jessica Hunter can be found at jessicahunterphotos.com

and fellow art teacher Heather Riehl each had a class work with Schmitt on coming up with the concept and creating the artwork. We choose to showcase the beautiful diversity of our school population through

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EVENTS

Hope Springs Eternal

The Shawshank Redemption brings classic themes of hope and friendship to Erie Playhouse

PREMIERES FRIDAY, SEPT. 13

Arguably, one of the most memorable lines in *The Shawshank Redemption* is: "Remember, Red, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." Brendan Daugherty agrees. Daugherty is directing the stage adaptation of the Oscar-nominated film based on Stephen King's novella, *Rita Hayworth and The Shawshank Redemption*, for the Erie Playhouse.

"This stage adaptation is a little different from both of those, but it still has some of the iconic scenes that you know from the movie, as well as the same message and beautiful ending," he says. "I love the overall message that the story centers on, which is hope," the director adds.

Daugherty, a 2024 40 Under 40 inductee, has been involved in Erie theater since he was young. He says he was inspired by his father, who recently passed away. "He used to do shows here back in the '70s and '80s and I developed a love for theater and music from him. He's why I decided to get involved myself, when I could," he recalls.

Daugherty was cast for his first show 12 years ago and has been involved in various productions, in various ways, at multiple venues ever since. He is co-directing this show with Erie theater veteran Kate Thiem. "She and I are close friends and have shared the stage together several times, and also are now co-workers."

The cast of 12 actors include some who are making their debut at Erie Playhouse. They include Ryan Sanders, Ron Williams, Tristan Howells, and Dan Winston as lead character Andy Dufresne. "He is doing an absolutely perfect job portraying the character of Andy," says Daugherty. "I'm excited for our audiences to get to see him and the very talented Hayes Moses who is playing Red," he adds. Red is Ellis Boyd "Red" Redding, the character famously portrayed by Morgan Freeman in the film.

This is a well-known story but Daugherty promises some surprises. "I wanted to throw in something a little different than typical shows do and people will have to come see it to know what that is all about. Just know when



Dan Winston (left) and Hayes Moses (right) play the iconic characters of Andy Dufresne and Red respectively in the upcoming Erie Playhouse production of *The Shawshank Redemption*, directed by recent 40 Under 40 inductee Brendan Daugherty.

the lights come up for intermission, things might not be as you expect." — Edwina Capozziello

Fridays and Saturdays, Sept. 13 through 28 at 7:30 p.m., Sundays Sept. 22 and 29 at 2 p.m. // Thursday Sept. 26 at 7:30 p.m. // \$15.88 - \$21.40 // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // For info and tickets visit erieplayhouse.org

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Theresa Musatto Debuts Her First Album at the King's Rook Club

Release party will feature special guests Elle Taylor and Shadow Plea

SATURDAY, SEPT. 14

Local musician and painter Theresa Musatto is set to celebrate the debut of her first full-length album with a special release party at the King's Rook Club. The party will take place on Sept. 14, beginning at 9 p.m., and will run into the early hours of Sept. 15, concluding at 3 a.m. Tickets are just \$5 and fans are encouraged to arrive early for performances by special guest Elle Taylor as well as Dave Tamulonis, who performs under the name Shadow Plea (and will do so at this year's 40 Under 40 Experience at FEED Media Art Center on Friday, Oct. 11).

Musatto, a seasoned indie-folk artist, has been creating music for over 20 years and has poured a decade of songwriting into this album. Her music, available on all major streaming platforms, specializes in emotional storytelling that captures the highs and lows of human experience.

"I wrote, recorded, and produced this album completely alone," she shares. "I re-recorded a couple of songs that were done in other studios so that sonically,



Releasing her first full-length album, local musician Theresa Musatto will be hosting a show at the King's Rook Club with friends Elle Taylor and Shadow Plea to celebrate the achievement.

they would be the same recording and production style."

While this first release features solo acoustic tracks, Musatto has plans to incorporate more full-band elements in future projects.

"It's taken a tremendous amount of work and time to get to this point," she says. "I have multiple other albums on the way that I'm very excited about. I feel very grateful for the support and interest in my music thus far."

The King's Rook Club, a favorite venue among local musicians due to its open and inviting atmosphere, will provide the perfect backdrop for what Musatto hopes will be the first of many album releases. Fans can follow her musical and artistic journey on Instagram @theresamusatto_music and @theresamusatto_art. — Aaron Mook

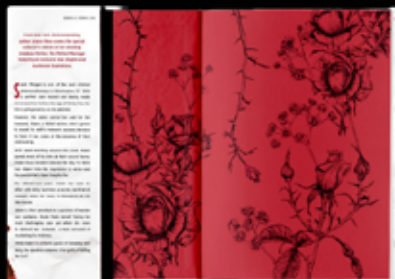
9 p.m. // King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. // \$5 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

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Ron Freeman and Matt Texter Together Again

The two longtime collaborators gear up for a special show at Haggerty's

SATURDAY, SEPT. 14

When you ask Matt Texter about Ron Freeman, you can thoroughly feel the admiration he has for his fellow songwriter. "Ron's always been an amazing songwriter and there's a lot of people that you don't even realize in this town that probably have been influenced by him before he left," Texter asserted.

Both share the same predilection for thoughtful Americana songwriting, merging alternative country with folk, gospel, bluegrass, and rock. The two would also regularly meet up with other local songwriters at Freeman's apartment to hash out song ideas in an intimate workshop setting. Texter and Freeman were a perfect pairing, playing countless local shows together in the early and mid 2000s before Freeman relocated to Columbus, Ohio.

Fast forward nearly 20 years later and they've only played together on a scant few occasions. But that's all going to change at Haggerty's Bar & Dinor on Sept. 14, as one of the last shows for their Summer Patio Series.



"I'm extremely excited to be able to host Matt Texter and Ron Freeman, specifically for the nostalgia of the Forward Hall and Stage Right days, when I would bartend during their acoustic sets," explained Meghann Legler, now the general manager of Haggerty's. "I'm trying for an *MTV Unplugged* style vibe, but we have had full bands — such as Half Glass who packed the patio full of people."

Freeman has certainly been no slouch in his time in Columbus. While consistently releasing music as both Lost Orchards and Ron Freeman & the Revelators, he's brought the spirit of musical fellowship from the Gem City to the Arch City. Freeman's YouTube account is filled with local musicians, including an entire series where they cover Freeman songs, all sitting on an old church pew at his home.

So between bar stools and church pews, you'll find Matt and Ron, two friends with stories to tell and a lot to catch up on. Cheers. — Nick Warren

8 to 10 p.m. // Haggerty's Bar & Dinor, 1930 W. 26th St. // 21+ // Free // For more info, to find Freeman and Texter on Facebook at @ronfreemanmusic and @RustBeltTroubadour respectively



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EVENTS

Homegrown Happiness

Goodell Gardens & Homestead hosts 18th annual harvest festival

SUNDAY, SEPT. 15

Goodell Gardens & Homestead is a historic public garden, accredited arboretum, and community gathering space located in Edinboro. Founded in 2001 with the intention of building an educational environment for those sharing a passion in horticulture and gardening, late heiresses Carrie and Margaret Goodell have successfully achieved their wish.

On Sept. 15, Goodell Gardens will hold their 18th annual Homegrown Harvest Festival as a celebration of the harvest season and capstone to summer.

With over 60 vendors, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Attendees can look forward to fresh produce and products by local farmers and artists, a variety of children's activities, live music, food trucks, raffle auctions, and more.

Executive Director Amber Wellington highlights the festival's significance as "a way to support local farmers, food producers, and artists, and a way to gather the community at Goodell for one last big hurrah before the weather changes."

Wellington spoke fondly of how the

event has grown over the years: "It started as a mum festival and has slowly grown into an absolutely beautiful autumnal event."

Events organizer Brit Skrzypczak credited several sponsors in and around the Edinboro community who have helped make the festival possible every year: "All proceeds from our Homegrown Harvest Festival not only provide a special event for local children and families to learn and gather, but will continue our mission to offer affordable programs, access to the gardens, trails, labyrinth, and other amenities, and to further develop the 80-acre former Goodell farm into a community asset."

Skrzypczak continued, "All of the special events and programming supports our mission of creating beautiful gardens and natural spaces where people can visit to enjoy, gather, learn, and refresh." — Cassandra Gripp

Noon to 5 p.m. // Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford St. // Free // For more info: goodellgardens.org/harvestfest

CONTRIBUTED



This September, Goodell Gardens and Homestead will be celebrating their 18th annual Homegrown Harvest Festival. This free event celebrates the bounty of the season with over 60 vendors including locally grown produce, handmade goods, and arts and crafts with plenty of live, local music and food to go around.



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EVENTS

Lake Erie Lit Fest Turns New Page at Frontier Park

A literally awesome day for the whole family

SATURDAY, SEPT. 21

Each of us has our own unique story to tell, and the Lake Erie Lit Fest is here to help give a voice to those stories. Formerly presented by the Erie Art Company as the Washington Irving Lit Fest, this year's iteration has Werner Books teaming up with Erie Arts and Culture to present the Lake Erie Lit Fest at Frontier Park.

This free event will host a multitude of workshops, activities, and vendors — meaning there's something for everyone. Workshops will be hosted in the LEAF building throughout the day, on topics such as comedy, poetry, community theater, and self publishing. They are free to attend, but individuals should register prior to attending.

Performances will also take place throughout the event at the amphitheater adjacent to the LEAF building. An onsite marketplace will feature many local authors, booksellers, artisans, and

food vendors.

"We are incredibly excited to bring the Lake Erie Literary Festival to Frontier Park," said Ash Carr, director of the festival. "This event is a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the power of storytelling."

Be sure to bring the little ones along, too — a children's area, organized by Sarah Sebald, is one of the highlights Carr is most looking forward to: "Like many people, my love of reading and stories started quite young, and a core element of our mission is to reach the next generation of readers."

The children's area will feature crafts and activities, book giveaways, and story times each hour that are perfect for the whole family. — Ally Kutz

Noon to 6 p.m. // Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. // Free // For more info: erieartcompany.org/2024-lake-erie-literary-fest/



2024's Lake Erie Lit Fest will expand upon last year's festival, bringing all things literary to the Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier. Expect book sales, workshops, vendors, activities, performances, food, and children's activities — turning Frontier Park into a literary wonderland for bookworms of all ages.

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SOS 4 KIDZ is a non-profit organization run totally by volunteers. It was created to level the playing field for the abused and neglected children of Erie County who frequently are unable to participate in school and community activities based on the costs associated with them. We have funded things such as music lessons, classes, gymnastics, dance, sports, homecoming, prom, YMCA memberships, class trips, camp, Waldameer passes, etc. We also have purchased things to enhance self-esteem such as haircuts, braiding, contacts, glasses, bikes, trendy clothes, yearbooks, etc.

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EVENTS

The Music of Phil Collins/Genesis

Erie Philharmonic ready to 'turn it on again' for new Pops Season

BEGINNING SATURDAY, SEPT. 21

Phil Collins's rock'n'roll style of drumming is coming to the Warner Theatre as the Erie Philharmonic kicks off its Pops Season with "The Music of Phil Collins/Genesis," featuring Jeremy Saje as vocalist. With a career of over 50 years, Collins has helped shape rock music for generations with his iconic prog-rock approach — highlighted by exceptional technical ability, complex time signatures, and revolutionary use of electronic drums.

"From 'In the Air Tonight' to 'Invisible Touch' to 'Tarzan,' Phil Collins is responsible for some of the most cherished musical moments from the '70s to the present day," the Philharmonic describes. "His songs from the legendary band Genesis and his solo work are a consistent soundtrack to our lives and will be presented in a way they've never been heard

before — reimagined for full orchestra with a phenomenal front-man and all-star band."

Collins began playing drums at six, inspired by The Beatles, The Who, and the Northwest London-based band The Action. Collins' dedication to music after the breakup of his first band led to him to audition for Genesis in 1970, learning the songs by ear as he listened to the other auditions at singer Peter Gabriel's house and getting the job as the band's fourth drummer. After Peter Gabriel left the band in August 1975, Collins took over as lead vocalist starting on the 1976 album *A Trick Of The Tail*, released to critical success and acclaim on the U.S. and UK charts due to its mainstream rock style.

Saje, the frontman performing with the Erie Philharmonic, currently performs with Seriously Phil, a South-



ern-California-based tribute group for the music of Phil Collins and Genesis that has performed across North America, with orchestral performances by the Niagara Symphony Orchestra and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. —Thomas Taylor

Saturday, Sept. 21 at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 22 at 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$17-\$66 // For tickets and info visit: eriephil.org

The Bastion Opens its Doors for Gallery Night

Owners and artists encourage visitors to rediscover the space

FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

Historical architecture, live entertainment, food by the Que Abides, and plenty of local artists sharing their crafts are promised for the inaugural gallery night at The Bastion. The building is owned and operated by 10/20 Collective (Rick Bowser and Sarah Moody) who purchased it from former owners Bill and Emily Kern in April 2023. Bowser and Moody have breathed new life into the art studio house with additional renovations, redecorating, and leasing the space as private studios for artists, musicians, and creators.

"We intend to carry on their intention of the space being an art house. We kept the name The Bastion, meaning fortress, because of brand recognition and how fitting the name is," said Moody. "The building is fully occupied with artists and creative business owners. It has been exciting and fulfilling to witness our tenants collaborating and creating together."

One of the few remaining examples of Second Empire architecture in the city, the 7,600-square-foot mansion is located on 21st and Peach, has a signature Mansard roof, decorative iron roof cresting, and pedimented windows. Built by Daniel Illig and his wife Mary Schultz in 1876, it had been "always pointed out as one of the first, fine old homes in the city" (John Elmer Reed, *History of Erie*



10/20 at the Bastion is hosting their very first Gallery Night, in conjunction with the Erie-wide event spearheaded by the Erie Art Museum. The historic Daniel Illig house at 21st and Peach will be open to the public and all of the individual artists who have studios at the Bastion will have their work on display.

County, Pennsylvania, 1925). Illig came to Pennsylvania from Germany in 1857 and owned a tailor and clothing shop on State Street. It was in this home where they raised their 14 children.

The structure was compromised, renovated, and poorly converted to offices in the 1970s and then left abandoned for many years. In October 2016, Bill and Emily Kern purchased the building, named it The Bastion, and peeled back the layers upon layers of bad renovations that took place throughout the house's history. The Kerns spent three years working on restoring the original elements that remained in the house, while replicating and replacing what had been removed.

Moody says they are currently hosting their first artist-in-residence, Ana Balcazar, who will be painting a mural on the

building's awning with a grand reveal on gallery night. "The entire building will be open from 6 to 10 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 27. Everyone will have their studio space open with additional vendors in the lot behind the building." Going forward, she says we can expect biannual open studios and additional small gatherings hosted by tenants.

Artists at the Bastion include: Andre Jones, Rachel Berlin, Emily Crisman, Nicholas Gore, Brian Matthews, Matt Retkowski, Ellen Hill, Kelvin Sanchez, Ana Balcazar, Hollin Nies, Jamie Keim Pomorski, Raeann Krugger, Sara Garrity, Megan Leo, Ashley Stack and Lori Radder Spicer. — Amy VanScoter

6 to 10 p.m. // The Bastion, 2016 Peach St. // Free // For more information: 1020collective.com

GALLERY NIGHT FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 27TH

Erie Art Museum

FOR A FULL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS, PLEASE VISIT:
[ERIEARTMUSEUM.ORG/GALLERY-NIGHT](http://erieartmuseum.org/gallery-night)

BACKGROUND IMAGE: FROM A DISTANCE, QIAN LI

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EVENTS

Pour Me Another Taste: Winefest 2024

North East pillar event continues to age finely

BEGINNING FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

It's that time of year again, when the air along the Route 20 Lake Erie Wine Country corridor is redolent with the scent of ripe grapes, and there is music, chatter, and laughter filling Gibson Park in the heart of one of Pennsylvania's northernmost towns. It can only mean one thing: Winefest is back again, produced and put on by Enjoy North East, a subset of the North East Chamber of Commerce.

Along with all the expected favorite activities that happen in Gibson Park, according to Jennifer Smith, executive director of Enjoy North East, there will be an expansion of events for everyone to enjoy.

"The main event is still in Gibson Park, but across the street at Heard Park (where you'd go for the Cherry Festival) we are adding more food, fun, and vendors with a family-friendly focus," Smith explained.

Winefest features all the delightful extras you've come to know and love, including a 5K, a car show, and bicycling rides to different wineries, as well as the return of an old favorite: grape-stomping.

"Step up onto the stage at Heard Park and experience the feel of grapes between your toes!" Smith said. "Or take a pic in our faux grape-stomping station, if you'd rather not get messy."

As always, you must have proper ID (21+) to purchase a wristband for wine-tasting, though anyone over the age of 21 can purchase bottles and ad-



Celebrate the bounty of North East and Lake Erie Wine Country at this year's North East Winefest. With festivities planned at Gibson Park as well as nearby Heard Park, attendees will have a variety of offerings to explore as they sip their way through downtown North East.

mission to walk around, shop, purchase food, and generally people-watch.

Said Smith, "We're proud to bring this event to North East and welcome so many guests to the community that we love." — Cara Suppa

Friday through Sunday, Sept. 27 to 29, Friday 4 to 10 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday noon to 4 p.m. // Gibson Park and Heard Park, North East // \$25 to \$55 // For more information, please visit: nechamber.org/community-events/

Our West Bayfront's Porchfest: Five Years of Rocking the Neighborhood

Unique event brings multiple local music acts to multiple houses

SATURDAY, SEPT. 28

To celebrate the fifth year of successfully executing a massively collaborative local music event, the volunteers and residents of Our West Bayfront are featuring the number five: five musical acts per hour for five hours, with the finale happening at the Hagen History Center at 5 p.m., featuring the Barry King Blues Band.

The event, organized by West Bayfront residents Dave Tamulonis (40 Under 40 class of 2022) and Chuck Nelson, features local music throughout the day on porches around the West Bayfront and includes a variety of styles and genres. Scheduled for this year, among others, are Royek, Saturn to Brazil, Phunkademic, This American Song, Familiar Spirit, Piano Punk, Slim & Red, and Key West Express Lite. Festival goers are encouraged to walk, bike, or take the (free) trolley to enjoy the event.

Tamulonis expresses, "We're excited to bring the Porchfest back to the West Bayfront Neighborhoods. This event is the perfect celebration of people, places, and Erie's amazing local talent."

New to the event this year will be a historic group bike ride organized by the writer of this spotlight. Beginning from Gridley Park (598 Liberty St.) at 11 a.m. (an hour before the event kicks off), local history buff and writer Erin Phillips will lead a group bike tour stopping at a number of the homes/properties hosting music during the fest. This will allow concert-goers to learn more about the



The neighborhood of the West Bayfront will transform into a gigantic concert venue as 26 porches host various local music acts throughout the day for the fifth annual PorchFest. Prepare to walk, bike, or ride the free trolley to all the different properties to take in the true breadth of Erie's local music scene.

history and architectural style of those homes before they visit them to enjoy all the music.

Additionally, Gridley Park will be host to The Gridley Park Grub Hub with the folks from Erie Ale Works slinging some suds as well as multiple food trucks available to fuel festers as they meander between venues.

Nelson encourages folks to come enjoy the neighborhood, "Porchfest is just an awesome opportunity to get the neighbors out and share our neighborhood with others." — Erin Phillips

Noon to 5 p.m. // Various locations throughout the West Bayfront // For a full schedule and more information visit: ourwestbayfront.org

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GALLERY NIGHT

September 27 | 5-8 PM

419 State Street | Erie, PA 16501

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Steph Montgomery

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BOOK REVIEW

Book Review: *The Cemetery of Untold Stories*

Some stories need to be told, even after they've been long buried

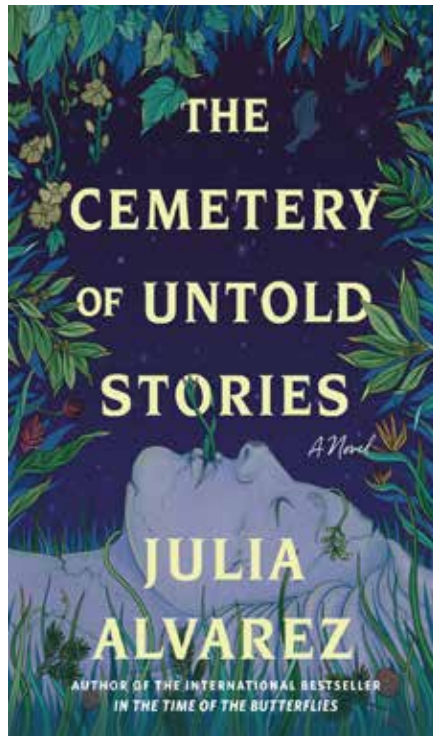
For many writers, the unfinished stories that lie dormant in their minds and in their files often haunt them — their characters not resting until their arcs have some sort of resolution. In Julia Alvarez's *The Cemetery of Untold Stories*, these tales gain a life of their own.

Alma Cruz is an author who wants her characters to be able to rest in peace. Unlike other friends and colleagues in the writing world, who often drive themselves to the point of madness over their stories, Alma finds solace in the idea of allowing hers to be laid to rest when she can no longer continue them.

Inheriting a plot of land in her home country of the Dominican Republic, Alma decides to build a cemetery — but not a traditional one. Instead of people being buried here, the land instead holds the graves of the stories she's been unable to finish over the years for one reason or another. Among them are the story of Bienvenida, the second wife of dictator Rafael Trujillo, and that of her own father, a doctor who escaped an oppressive regime to the United States for a better life.

But these stories demand to be told, and when a local woman hired as groundskeeper begins hearing these characters tell their tales, she becomes their listener.

Alvarez' novel intertwines historical fiction with magical realism, allowing readers to step into another time in another world, immersed in Dominican



culture as well as much of its brutal history as seen through the eyes of both those with privilege and those without.

Lyrical, moving, and with wit and charm woven throughout, *The Cemetery of Untold Stories* is some of Julia Alvarez's finest work and is sure to inspire any who read it to continue their stories, as each tale we tell is never really finished. — Ally Kutz

Algonquin Books // 243 pages // Historical Fiction, Magical Realism

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FOOD

The Erie Cook Book Revisited: Tomato Dates

Making 'dates' out of your bounty of summer tomatoes

I make an exception for any recipe where the tomato takes center stage as a dessert, and on page 186 of the 1881 *Erie Cook Book*, Laura Sterrett presents a bombastic method to preserve the prima donna of summer: the tomato. More of a savory date than a sweetened tomato, these bites are perfect to share over supper or spread onto the ever-poetic hunk of crusty bread. I've anticipated these all summer. I'm thrilled with how they turned out, and something tells me I'll be even happier come November.

1 pint cherry tomatoes

1 1/2 cups brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon of kosher salt

Powdered sugar for storing

Place the cherry tomatoes in boiling water. Remove the tomatoes with a slotted spoon after 5 minutes and submerge into a bath of ice water. Cut a small slit into the bottom of the tomato and gently squeeze the skin off, keeping the tomato intact. Discard the skin. In a small saucepan over medium heat, add the sugar and peeled tomatoes. Cook for 30 minutes, stirring gently every so often. You're getting close to the end of their cook time when the tomatoes start sticking lightly to the bottom of the pan.

Remove the tomatoes from the syrup and set out to dry in the sun all day or on the countertop overnight.

Toss the tomatoes in powdered sugar until coated and store in a glass jar.

Recipe by Laura Sterrett, revision by Morgan Yezzi



All the World's a Stage

Sing Sing is an emotional and personal story of hope



It is incredibly difficult to make an inspiring story centered around America's prison industrial complex. While it is still an inhumane system that seems mostly concerned with oppression, recidivism, and some barbaric notion of "punishment," it was (or at least was supposed to be) a place of rehabilitation. And Greg Kwedar's *Sing Sing* proves that there is no better source for emotional catharsis and spiritual awakening than in the arts. His film is all the more invigorating in that it is based on a true story, and from that he crafts a beautiful film that is able to find hope and joy in a broken system.

The plot follows John "Divine G" Whitfield (Colman Domingo), a wrongfully incarcerated inmate of Sing Sing Prison who, along with several other inmates, creates a program called Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA) — which, twice a year, puts on theatrical productions created and performed by the inmates. In creating this, he and others are able to reconnect with their humanity and discover talents they never knew they had.

Kwedar is clearly interested in realism with this film — shooting in natural



lighting and with mostly handheld camerawork. He fills most of the cast with actual former members of RTA. The story itself is about the transformative power of creativity and how anyone in any situation can be an artist. It's a wonderful message and the play they create, a time-traveling comedy involving ancient Egyptians, pirates, gunslingers, gladiators, Hamlet, and Freddy Krueger is the ultimate statement of the power of creativity.

In a world where art is increasingly the domain of the privileged, this film is a

special reminder that art can uplift those even in the most dire of situations. *Sing Sing* is currently playing in select theaters. You can find information about the next screenings at see.singsing.movie. — Forest Taylor

Directed by Greg Kwedar // Written by Kwedar and Clint Bentley // Starring Colman Domingo, Clarence Maclin, Sean San Jose, Paul Raci, David "Dap" Giraudy, Patrick "Preme" Griffin, Mosi Eagle, James "Big E" Williams, Sean Dino Johnson, and Jon Adrian "JJ" Velazquez // A24 // 106 minutes // Rated R

Space Madness

Slingshot is tense sci-fi thriller



Hollywood seems to be of two minds when it comes to science fiction. Some filmmakers are interested in stories about the realities of space travel and the psychological and emotional tolls it takes on people, while others are content with making simple action movies in space. Mikael Hafstrom is clearly concerned with the former and his film *Slingshot* is well-acted and has moments of quiet intensity and emotional devastation. He's clearly going for something Tarkovsky-esque (i.e. deliberate and dreamlike in the fashion of famed Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky) and while it doesn't meet all of its goals, it's always nice seeing a story about mood and character rather than action set pieces on the big screen.

While part of a two-year mission to Saturn's moon Titan, astronaut John (Casey Affleck) begins to suffer from the effects of long-term hibernation and is haunted by memories of the woman he loves (Emily Beecham). His struggles intensify when the other members of his crew



(Laurence Fishburne and Tomer Caspone) have conflicting thoughts about the integrity of their ship; a conflict that may turn to violence before the mission is over.

Hafstrom's main concern is what long-term space travel does to a person's psyche, similar to Duncan Jones' *Moon* and James Gray's *Ad Astra*. While *Slingshot* doesn't match up with these films at their best, the film is still an interesting thought experiment. Most of the film is a two-man show between Affleck and Fishburne and their performances are expectedly strong,

with Hafstrom making great use of the claustrophobic set design. The third act gives us multiple twists (some fairly predictable, others genuinely shocking) that may turn off some audiences but for those interested in tense, character-driven sci-fi, it's worth a watch. — Forest Taylor

Directed by Mikael Hafstrom // Written by R. Scott Adams and Nathan Parker // Starring Casey Affleck, Laurence Fishburne, Tomer Caspote, Emily Beecham, David Morrissey, and Nikolett Barabas // 109 minutes // Bleeker Street // Rated R

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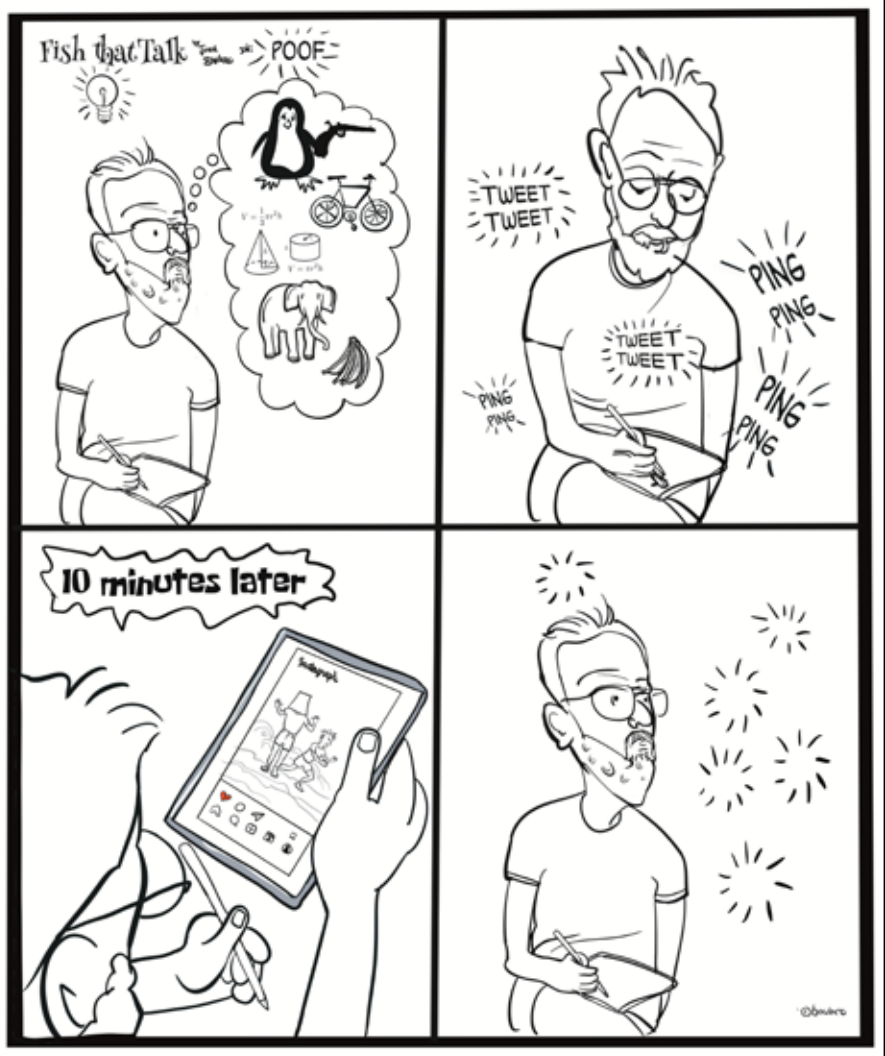
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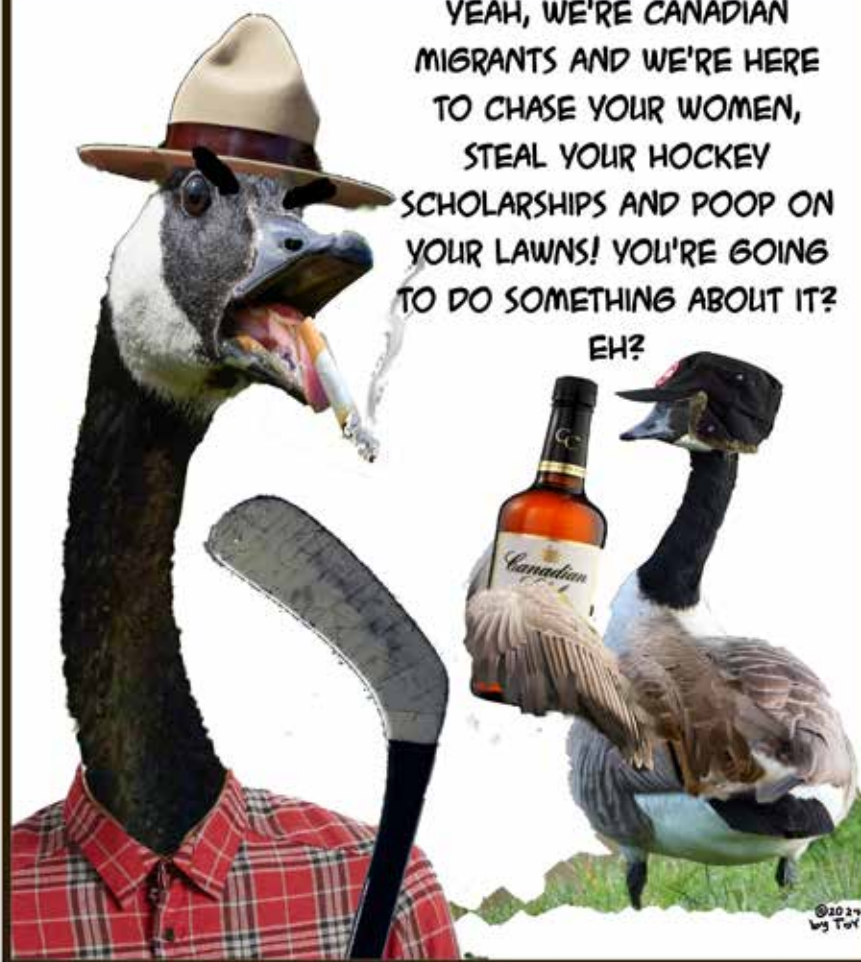
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JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY

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FRIDGE COMICS BY Anthony @art+house





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The JAM Team Foundation is recruiting substitute ECE teachers! Visit www.JAMteam.org/jobs or scan the QR Code for more information!



Beabadoobee

This Is How Tomorrow Moves
Dirty Hit

★★★★

On *This Is How Tomorrow Moves*, Beabadoobee loses part of her charm in favor of musical clarity.



After four advance singles, the Filipino-English singer and songwriter (real name Beatrice Kristi Llejay Laus), released her third studio album on Aug. 9, 2024. Touted by many as her first “adult” record, much of the anticipation surrounding the record came from the new personnel brought into the fold. Specifically, legendary producer Rick Rubin was the driving force behind the board. Rubin’s industry clout and the singer’s relative popularity allowed Laus and her team to record in some of the most iconic studios in the world, from Abbey Road to Shangri-La.

In theory, these additions would seem to set the stage for an improvement over her previous effort (*Beatopia*), but the same cannot be said in practice. In creating a more polished version of her formula, Beabadoobee has lost part of her stylistic charm. Laus’ previous music was bolstered by bedroom pop aesthetics. Even while on a major label, the records sounded quaint and lo-fi. Even the covers felt hand-made. That level of sentimentality is missing.

This Is How Tomorrow Moves has numerous great tracks — however the extra sheen leaves the music lacking elements that made Beabadoobee stand out. — Nathaniel Clark

The Decemberists

As It Ever Was, So It Will Be Again
YABB Records

★★★★★

If the TV show *Portlandia* stepped through a looking glass, the band The Decemberists might emerge on the other side — Pacific Northwest alt-rock, folk-revivalist, multi-instrumentalist thespians. Six years after their last release, *The Decemberists* appear to be tracing steps back to their origins. So much so that the album could be mistaken for a retrospective of earlier B-sides — which is a good thing. Tight orchestration defines much of this work. The tracks undulate between traditionally shaped shanties and ballads and pop tunes reminiscent of bands like The Waterboys.



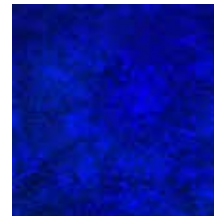
Even the saddest and darkest themes are delivered with the upbeat storytelling signature of lead Colin Meloy, who seems, at times, to evoke Tom Waits, if he was bitten by radioactive They Might Be Giants. The band spins varied rovings to create works like the impressive 19-minute track “Joan in the Garden” with its shadows of Nick Cave, Pink Floyd, and O.M.D. (*Dazzle Ships*). One can imagine The Byrds taking the stage with the memento mori track “Burial Ground” or Pentangle with the guest accompaniment of Townes Van Zandt on “William Fitzwilliam.” Influences are heavy, yet *The Decemberists* are like none other. — Melissa Sullivan Shimek

Jack White

No Name
Third Man Records

★★★★★

No Name is a return to form for the indie guitar rock hero Jack White, with the album’s monochrome cover, ironic title, and stripped-down blues sound highly evocative of his earlier work with the White Stripes.



The opening track “Old Scratch Blues” grabs the listener and continues through the rhythmic “Bless you,” which transitions into one of the poppiest songs from the album, “That’s How I’m Feeling.” The latter has the catchiest melody and chorus on the record, which, along with the track “What’s The Rumpus,” are sure to become crowd favorites on his current small club tour (which has been selling out within minutes).

While “It’s Rough On Rats” and “What’s The Rumpus” are reminiscent of the *De Stijl* era and early Raconteurs material, “Number One With A Bullet” has the most modern sound and would feel right at home on any of his recent releases. The record closes on “Terminal Arch Enemy Ending” which takes a step back and slows down to wrap up this blistering modern blues affair.

The White Stripes only released six studio albums during their tenure, and with this being White’s sixth solo release, it is no coincidence that he has embraced the band’s sound that he has been in the shadows of ever since their breakup. — Larry Wheaton

Jared Cooney

Therapy
Self-released

★★★★★

Bursting with life and energy, the sophomore full-length from Erie’s Jared Cooney finds the artist at a new stage of his career.



For years, Cooney has been one of Erie’s most underrated virtuoso guitarists, and currently plays with Mayflower Hill, Six Year Stretch, and Matt Crays. If you’ve seen Cooney play at all, you know that the man can shred an electric guitar. Recorded with Josh Karickhoff at Fastrax Studios in Edinboro, the 13 tracks of *Therapy* showcase the depths of his heart, as he makes an expert turn from an instrumentalist to a bona fide singer-songwriter. His lyrics are filled with inspiration and encouragement, a bright exodus perfect for a wooded fall drive. Following Cooney’s self-titled 2015 instrumental acoustic album, *Therapy* carries over Cooney’s nimble, percussive playing, with fingerstyle fervor, thoughtful syncopation, and a tasteful harmonic thrown in at the right time. With the kind of urgency, passion, and alternate guitar tunings that made early Dashboard Confessional and the Goo Goo Dolls so special, Cooney more than proves his worth as a solo artist. The opening track “Fly” gives a brilliant “stomp-clap” introduction, cueing Cooney’s fleet-wristed acoustic delivery. Some personal favorites include tracks like “Hourglass” and “No Friend of Wisdom,” which blend captivating storytelling with impressive technical prowess. — Nick Warren

TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



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Thu 9/12

Featured



Guest Speaker Series 2024: Growing Mushrooms Indoors (Eric Laughery)
 @ 7pm / Free-\$10
 Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street, Edinboro



Sat 9/14

Featured



Race for the Ribbon
 @ 9am / \$25
 5850 Firman Rd



Featured



Theresa Musatto's Album release party!
 ft. Elle Taylor and Shadow Plea
 @ 9pm / \$5
 King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Fri 9/27

Featured



SEPT. 27 Farm-to-Table dinner at the Yellow House
 @ 7pm / \$150
 Yellow House, 436 Walnut Street, Girard PA, 436 Walnut Street, Girard



Fri 9/13

The Hottest Day on Earth: Media Art from Biosphere 1
 @ 5pm / Free
 FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

Featured



Bayfront Bruisefest
 @ 9am / \$15
 Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier



Sun 9/15

The Hottest Day on Earth: Media Art from Biosphere 1
 @ 12pm / Free
 FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

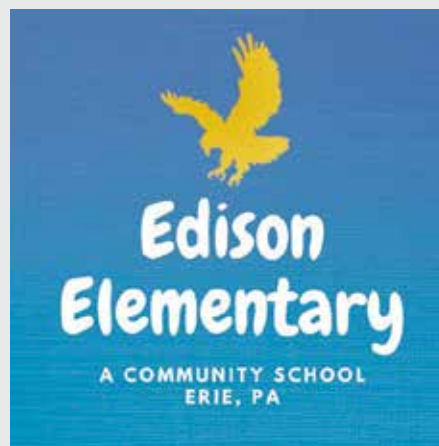
Pippin
 @ 2pm / \$20
 PACA, 1505 State Street

Thu 9/19

Melted Wax Painting Class with Marcia Hatton
 @ 5:30pm
 Presque Isle Lighthouse, 301 Peninsula Drive

Fri 9/20

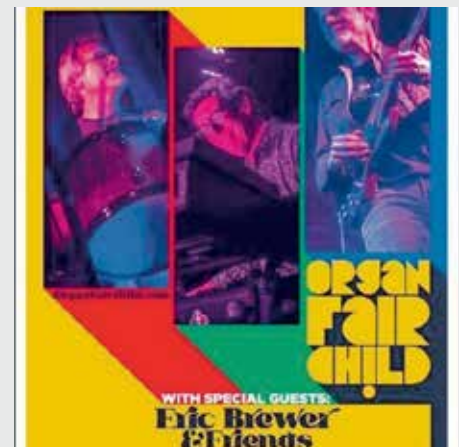
Featured



Edison FEST
 @ 4:30pm / \$10-\$275
 Perry Hi-Way Hose Co, 8281 Oliver Road



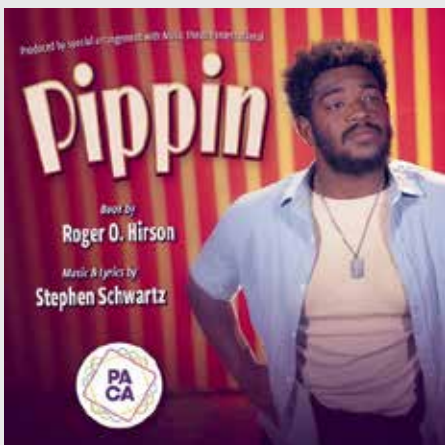
Featured



Organ Fairchild w/ Eric Brewer & Friends Live on the PATIO
 @ 9pm / \$7
 King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



Featured



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



The Hottest Day on Earth: Media Art from Biosphere 1
 @ 12pm / Free
 FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

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

Sun 10/06

Be The One: Harbor Creek Huskie Hustle 1 Mile Run/Walk Benefit
 @ 9am / Free-\$20
 6375 Buffalo Rd, Harborcreek

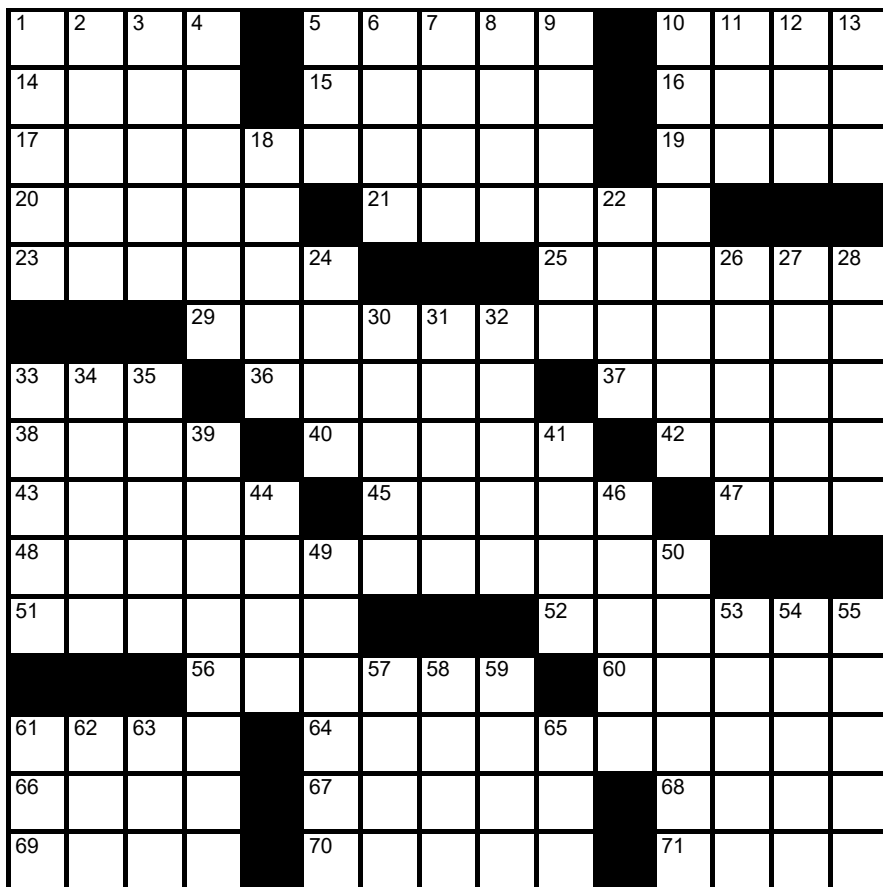
Thu 10/10

Golden Hour Photo Club
 @ 5:30pm / Free-\$150
 Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street, Edinboro

The Woman In Black
 @ 7:30pm / \$20
 PACA, 1505 State Street

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

CROSSWORD

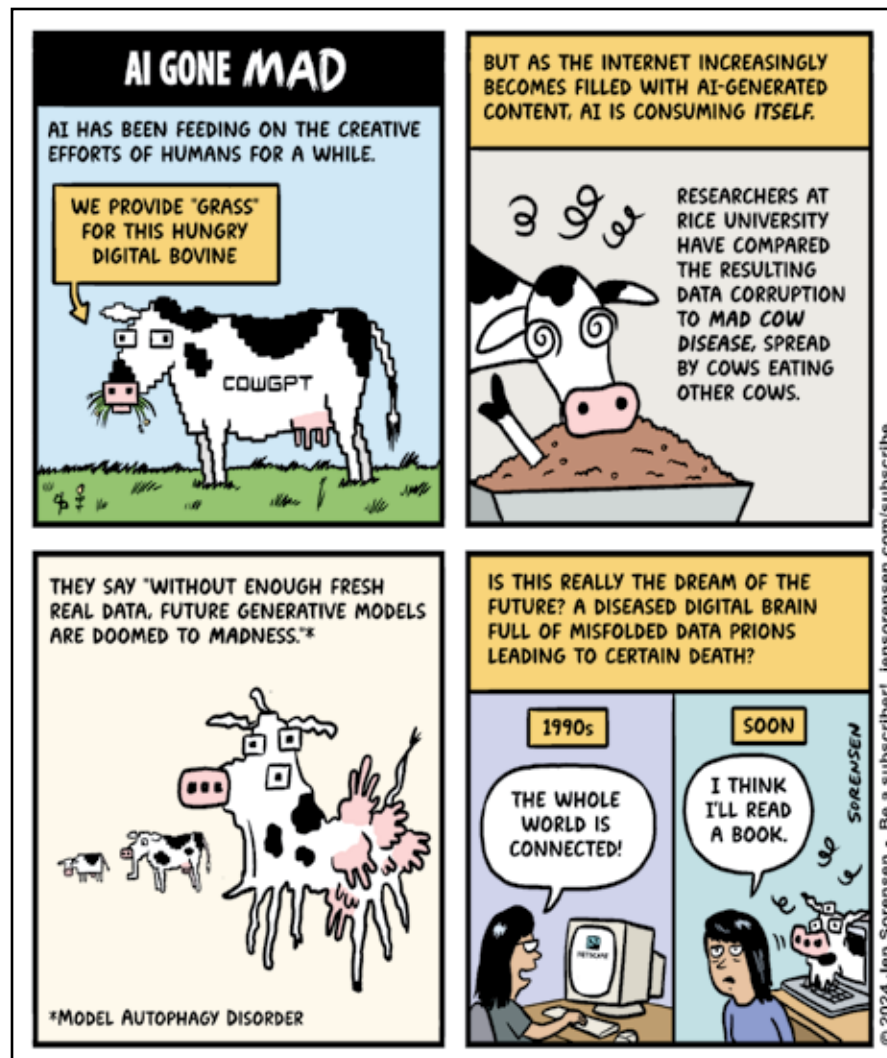


Across

- 1. Verified information
- 5. "Buzz off!"
- 10. Kamala Harris's middle name
- 14. Kinda pale
- 15. ___ Lumpur, Malaysia
- 16. Major Norse deity
- 17. One of Cinderella's siblings
- 19. "Snail mail" org.
- 20. Group with 27 member states
- 21. Putting a curse on
- 23. Sources of immunity
- 25. ___ Brothers (former investment banking firm)
- 29. Phrase used for winners of vacations on game shows
- 33. At the back of the boat
- 36. Holiday song
- 37. Untrustworthy
- 38. Fought (for)
- 40. Modem units, back in the days of dial-up
- 42. Stuff in a skein
- 43. Street sign symbol
- 45. City on the Erie Canal
- 47. Leather shoe, for short
- 48. Particle physics concept
- 51. Words after "the powers"
- 52. Ghostly specter
- 56. Sci-fi transport

- that's "dimensionally transcendental"
 - 60. "Ad ___ per aspera"
 - 61. Home of Xenia, Youngstown, and Zanesville
 - 64. Subject of a story where wishes come with great consequences
 - 66. Mystic Persian poet
 - 67. Fro-yo topping, e.g.
 - 68. First name of the Phantom of the Opera
 - 69. Worn out
 - 70. Lowest possible turnout
 - 71. Turns bad
- ### Down
- 1. Forgoes food
 - 2. "___ World Turns"
 - 3. Yell for the team
 - 4. Prepare, as a report
 - 5. Go downhill fast?
 - 6. Easy, like some jobs
 - 7. Put on a scale
 - 8. Trebek who's the subject of recent collectible stamps
 - 9. "Taxi" actress Henner
 - 10. Pillsbury mascot introduced in 1965
 - 11. Mag execs
 - 12. Big name
 - 13. Plug-___ (software patches)
 - 18. Plant that can be poisonous
 - 22. Pharrell Williams group until 2018
 - 24. Picket line crosser

- 26. "___ Secretary" (2010s CBS drama)
- 27. ___ Crag ("mountain" at the end of "Nickelodeon Guts")
- 28. "Tearin' Up My Heart" album of 1998
- 30. Brat condiment
- 31. Sonic ___ (Thurston Moore's former band)
- 32. Radio playlist staple, often
- 33. "Halt!" to a sailor
- 34. Colin of "Love, Actually"
- 35. ___ firma
- 39. Follow through on the deed, slangily
- 41. Garbage transport
- 44. Fever/Dream group?
- 46. Grand display
- 49. Where "butterfly" is "Schmetterling"
- 50. Peace Prize sharer with Shimon
- 53. Head of tech support, perhaps
- 54. Attribute
- 55. Atlanta team
- 57. "Alice in Wonderland" bird
- 58. Proto-___-European (early language)
- 59. Graphic for creating a Sims character
- 61. Spherical object
- 62. Color wheel choice
- 63. "___ little teapot ..."
- 65. 112.5 degrees from S



Answers to last puzzle





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SMALL BUSINESS OWNER.
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