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ERIE READER

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PRISON STATE

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**Local Organizations Aim
to Help Erie's Incarcerated**

D.O.C.

D.O.

**ERIE'S COLLEGE
RADIO SCENE**


**ERIE AT LARGE:
Our Starry-Eyed
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The Erie Reader is the local voice for news, arts, and culture, and is Erie's only independent, alternative newspaper. Founded in 2011, the Reader has quickly become the region's award-winning source for arts coverage, a strong cultural compass, and a dynamic resource for news and opinion. With a dedication to long-form journalism and a commitment to provoking thoughtful discussion, the Reader tells the stories of the people and places making and shaping Erie, while highlighting the events and issues influencing life in northwestern Pennsylvania. The Erie Reader is published every other week at The Corry Journal, 28 W. South St., Corry, Pa. 16407. The Erie Reader is distributed at over 250 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 901, Erie, Pa. 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct inquiries to 814.314.9364 or contact@ErieReader.com.

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From the Editors

Three facts catch our attention when it comes to the United States' prison system:

Currently more than 2.2 million people are behind bars in this country — for frame of reference that's roughly the population of Houston. Equally shocking is that forty percent of those convicted of a crime in Erie County will be back behind bars less than three years after their sentence is up — that's four out of every ten people. Perhaps more disturbing, though, is that that's an improvement in recent years, as the national recidivism rate has dropped — albeit it not by much.

Thirdly, while the U.S. has roughly 5 percent of the world's population, it lays claim to 25 percent of the world's prison population. That is, 1 in every 108 U.S. adults are incarcerated.

Whether you've been following closely or have managed to mostly tune it out, the news coverage in Ferguson, Staten Island, and most recently, Cleveland are all forcing us — whether we want to or not — to evaluate our legal system to determine just how broken it is and what we can do to fix it. In light of those facts, Dan Schank takes an in-depth look at the problems we face — notably that during the last 25 years, we've seen the prison population swell by more than 270 percent — as well as the cases being made for reform and what's being done locally to address America's prison epidemic.

It's an uncomfortable conversation to have because we're confronted with questions like: Do the goods of what has stemmed from the Broken Window theory, the notion that cracking down on low-level crimes will clean up a city through order maintenance, outweigh the draconian sentencing practices and the overuse of force that sometimes accompanied such practices?

And to ignore the racial tensions that have also followed such law enforcement measures is hard to do, too, especially in light of Ferguson, Staten Island, and Cleveland, a topic Jay Stevens touches on in his column. What Jay addresses is critical to the various discussions being had out by Monday Morning Lawyers on Facebook and the like. The "but Michael Brown and Eric Garner were lawbreakers!" arguments are being offered up at best as a means of influencing our perception that these men were not totally innocent. At worst, they're an attempt to rationalize their unnecessary deaths.

But what about a white rancher who refuses to recognize federal law and who has called in heavily armed militia members to back down feder-

al officers sent to enforce the law?

Cliven Bundy, as Jay notes, has done just that and is still a free man. And more than that, he's become a celebrity with a book written about him that he's out promoting now, while law enforcement has been backed down by his aggressive — and unlawful — stand. In short, Jay writes, "he's a thief and a bully." By definition, Bundy's also a lawbreaker, and although his case may sound extreme, he's an example of how blacks and whites face two different legal systems.

But again, these are uncomfortable conversations because they force us to deal with issues that without videos, without the Internet, without 24/7 media coverage, we could more easily ignore or simply wish away.

While the Monday Morning Lawyers are casting verdicts with the click of a mouse, another population

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has also become increasingly vocal — those who just want the whole thing to simply go away, those who are tired of hearing about Ferguson on the news, those who don't want their Twitter feed cluttered with retweets of the video of Eric Garner repeatedly saying "I can't breathe."

Perhaps *The Daily Show's* Jon Stewart said it best: "You're tired of hearing about [racism]? Imagine living it."

Now more than ever we've been confronted with the reality that we have not come as far as we would've thought — or hoped — since the Civil Rights Movement. We're also faced with the fact that we live with a broken legal system in need of repair.

So now more than ever is when we must continue to have the conversations that make us uncomfortable in hopes of finding ways to fix that system and resolve the racial discrimination and tension we tried to address fifty years ago.

Tony Bennett & Lady Gaga Cheek to Cheek LIVE!



December 11 at 8pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

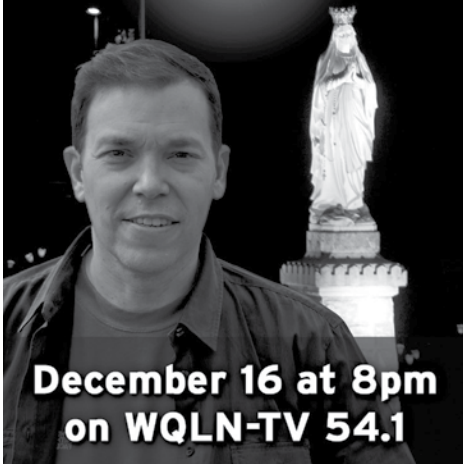
DOWNTON ABBEY REDISCOVERED



December 13 at 8pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

SACRED JOURNEYS

WITH BRUCE FEILER



December 16 at 8pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

Street Corner Soapbox

Cliven Bundy, Eric Garner, and the separate and unequal legal systems for blacks and whites

By: Jay Stevens

Cliven Bundy has been busy in recent months. He talks with journalists and reporters from around the world. He makes videos endorsing political candidates. He attends and speaks at campaign events. He's called out Attorney General Eric Holder and Sen. Harry Reid. He's even promoting a book written about him and his standoff against the federal Bureau of Land Management.

And he continues to graze his cattle – still on federal land without paying a dime in fees – unmolested by federal agents.

Bundy, of course, is the Nevada rancher that refused to pay more than \$1 million in unpaid grazing fees and court fines, and ignored several court injunctions ordering him to remove his cattle from federal land. Invoking extremist “sovereign” ideology, which refuses to recognize federal authority, Bundy in April appealed to a number of right-wing groups – including militia groups – to protect his property from federal agents. They came. Hundreds of militia members came, heavily armed, and camped on Bundy property. On April 12, armed protesters confronted two-dozen BLM officers, forcing them to return Bundy’s animals rounded up from federal land. Soon after, Bundy called on all local sheriffs to disarm federal agents in their jurisdictions.

That is, Bundy stole. Ignored court orders. Pulled guns on the officers sent to enforce the law. And then called on people to rise up against the government. And he's free. More than free, he's thriving as a celebrity, and as a hero to some.

It is not because he is a patriot or a good American. It is not because he is a beacon of freedom. It is not because he is the vanguard of a movement that will remove Americans from under the boot heel of federal tyranny. He is none of these things. He is a thief and a bully.

The *High Country News* recently requested information on threats and violence levied against public land managers and received thousands of pages of unreported incidents, from death threats to firebombing Forest Service offices to shootings. One report told of how a forest ranger on an ATV tried to pass a silver pickup on a logging road, only to have the driver get out, grab the ranger by the throat and tell him he didn't “own the road.” Another told of how a woman refused to let a ranger inspect her hunting license, claiming a deer kill was “private property,” and pushed the ranger – her husband appeared, holding a rifle on the ranger. A third told of a Forest Service firefighter on a fire prevention patrol, who was shot at by a sniper.

What they found was that federal employees in the West face systemic, violent harassment, often by people claiming “sovereignty” from or animosity towards fed-



PETER STEVENS

Cliven Bundy: A thief and a bully.

jurors that way.

“That's how grand juries tend to work.”

Some, like Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, who blame cigarette taxes for the incident – “we put our police in a difficult situation with bad laws,” said the Senator – miss the point entirely. This isn't a vast government conspiracy looking to use its iron boot to crush tax delinquents. The Garner incident is how police harassment of African-American communities works. It's “broken window” policing –

going aggressively after petty crimes in the hope that it discourages bigger crimes – and was a big part of former mayor Rudy Giuliani's crime policy. If you crack down on public urination, graffiti and, yes, illegal vending, goes the theory, you prevent drug dealing and violent crime.

The result? At best, lengthy criminal records for blacks for minor crimes – a fragmenting and debilitating obstacle to jobs, housing, and quality of life for an entire social group. At worst, violent enforcement by police that results in injury and death.

Stomping a man's head for selling pot. Choking a pregnant woman for grilling on the sidewalk. Cigarette taxes are the means, not the cause, of police harassment. D. Brian Burghart – author of “Fatal Encounters,” an attempt to catalog police killings across the country, despite the obstruction of state and local governments and local media – revealed what he learned from his research: “You know who dies in the most population-dense areas? Black men.”

And if you doubt that African Americans receive a different kind of justice than white Americans, check out the Twitter hashtag, “#alivewhileblack.” “Got raped+robbed,” tweets one woman. “Police took forever to interview me, mentioned that women sometimes like to hide 'gambling, over-spending.'” Another writes, “Pulled over with my mom. People think shes white, she was driving. Cops asked for my ID and license 'for her protection.’” “Walking to library,” writes another, “campus security stops me and asks for ID. Several times. Claims I don't 'look' like a law student.”

What Eric Garner and Cliven Bundy show is that there are two legal systems operating in the United States. One for whites, one for blacks.

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What Eric Garner and Cliven Bundy show is that there are two legal systems operating in the United States. One for whites, one for blacks.

Jay Stevens can be contacted at Jay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Snevets_Yaj.

Erie At Large

Starry-eyed Politicians

By: Jim Wertz

Suggestion is powerful. Especially when it validates an otherwise farcical reality.

Remember Herman Cain? He was the pizza pushing hack who ran for the Republican nomination for president in 2012 because someone told him his experience serving as the executive of a pizza chain qualified him to be President of the United States.

After all, aren't the best politicians petered-out CEOs?

As we meander our way through the Erie region's 2015 municipal election season and turn headstrong into the 2016 presidential contest, you'll see a lot of this. But it won't stop there.

The 2017 Democratic mayoral primary – our fair city's true executive election – is going to be a

meat grinder of subpar talent vying for the region's top job because someone told each and every one of those candidates that they should run for mayor.

It's going to start like the high school prom. Everyone will be well dressed and polite. But it will end like *Carrie*, where the "winners" point and laugh at the candidates who probably should have stayed home, if only it hadn't been for the chorus of whispers in their ears telling them they were going to be king or queen of the prom.

The problem with anointing by flattery is that, over time, it distracts the players from their actual jobs, the very position that otherwise makes them a potentially viable candidate for the office they so covet. That's because they begin to

believe the trumped up accolades of loved ones and hangers on, and by virtue of their newfound hubris, they begin to believe that they are imminently qualified and no longer need to perform the critical duties that will ultimately

The 2017 Democratic mayoral primary – our fair city's true executive election – is going to be a meat grinder of subpar talent.

make them stronger candidates.

We're only approaching 2015 and already rumors of stonewalling and information hoarding on city council have begun to circulate. Such posturing and power grabs

do little to advance an agenda of cooperation and collaboration that is so desperately needed to keep Erie's bow pointed into the wind.

That's because it seems that various members of city council are getting starry-eyed over the open field mayoral election, and it's beginning to blind them from the task at hand, the task they were elected to carry out.

It's only going to get worse as challengers from the private sector begin to emerge, propelled by their own sense of superiority and righteousness about the future of Erie.

The competition is healthy as long as the candidates are strong. Therein lies the problem.

The pool of candidates is bound to include a few folks whose names would be better placed on the speakers list at the next council meeting than on an electoral ballot.

It reminds me of Anthony Bourdain's lament from his autobi-

ographical tour of the culinary underworld, *Kitchen Confidential*, that too often in the restaurant business there are affable folks who throw nice dinner parties and serve as entertaining hosts until one day a party guest says, "You should open a restaurant."

They've got some capital laying around, so why not?

But their table service for eight did little to prepare them for the rigor of the restaurant business, and in due time, the restaurant shutters, and their dreams of glamour and grandeur are gone.

There's plenty of time before the official election season begins. So let's throw a few more dinner parties and invite critical feedback and introspection before we start serving the public. That way, we're less likely to have a bad taste in our mouth when it's all said and done.

Jim Wertz can be contacted at jWertz@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Jim_Wertz.

The Way I See It

Millcreek School District Should Say 'Yes' To Putting a School in a School Building

By: Rebecca Styn

Before it closed its doors back in 2013 due to major budget deficits in the Millcreek School District, Ridgefield Elementary School was one of the last remaining "neighborhood" schools, where education was the focus and a family atmosphere was clearly present.

For nearly a year now, that building has remained empty. Back in August of this year, two organizations came to the forefront with an interest in purchasing the vacant building – Montessori Regional Charter School and Process and Data Automation, an engineering firm.

Seeing a great opportunity for expansion, Montessori Regional Charter School offered \$1.1 million for the building while the engineering firm placed a bid of \$950,000. Additionally, due to the nature of the organization, the engineering firm would have had to seek a use variance (the charter school would not) to rezone the land in order to use the property.

On the surface, the decision should have been a simple one.

The charter school would maintain the original mission of Ridgefield by providing a competitive academic environment for students and would also allow neighbors and organizations to use the school's playground and four to five acres of sports fields. Maintaining this facility as a school, with these amenities, would also help to maintain existing property values.

The school district, however, voted unanimously in favor of the engineering firm.

Their stated reasoning? The firm was a for-profit business and would have to pay real estate taxes – and it would not take money from the school district.

However, had the School District done a little research ahead of time, they might have come to realize that Mill-

creek's Zoning Ordinance contains strict requirements to rezone – the most obvious requirement being that any applicant for a use variance would "have to prove that the property cannot be used for any purpose for which it is currently zoned."

Which, clearly, was not the case.

As a result, recently, the purchaser pulled out of the deal, and the group is back to square one – as the School District is still holding its stand on not selling to the Charter School – because it's not good business practice.

While Montessori maintains that it is not a threat to other schools, the district unfortunately doesn't see it this way.

"The perception is that a charter school will take money away from a school district."

According to Anthony Pirrello, CEO of Montessori, "Millcreek will get \$1.1 million for the building, remove their current expenses off the books, and gain \$10,000 per year of revenue. Repurposing the building will not provide the same economic benefits."

Currently, the charter serves about 445 students in kindergarten through sixth grade at two campuses, one on Sterrettania Road, the other on Raspberry Street in the former St. Andrew School. The student body includes students from nine different school districts, with only 76 of the Montessori students living in the Millcreek district.

The concern is the Pennsylvania Department of Education's funding formula.

To date, the district spends more than \$1 million annually

on charter school tuition costs; the group fears that would increase if it sold the building to what it considers a competitor.

Pirrello tells me, "We will sell our Sterrettania site once we combine the two. That's been a real mistake out there and falsehood that we need Ridgefield to expand. We don't. We can put 550 to 600 students total in our current building right now if we wanted to. We are looking at Ridgefield because it's \$3 to 4 million less than putting an addition on at Sterrettania."

The charter school plans to expand to accommodate another 600 students. That will happen regardless of whether the Ridgefield sale occurs.

"The perception is that a charter school will take money away from a school district," Pirrello says. "There's X amount of dollars being put in for education – the question is: Where's it being allocated? Parents should have a choice when considering their child's education. It's more attractive to family and businesses to have options – parochial, private, public, etc. That is how you keep a vibrant community – by offering real choices and creating academic competition."

Moreover, the purchase would add money back into the community. "If we buy Ridgefield, we will sell our Sterrettania site. That property is zoned for commercial use – and we will only sell to a taxable entity; this will create approximately \$10,000 per year in additional revenues for the Millcreek schools."

The way I see it, the school board is only acting in their own best interest and not in the best interest of the community and the families of Erie. Public schools should welcome competition, as it can only increase the value of education provided to the children of our community by offering viable alternatives.

In the end, I'm not sure the Millcreek Township School Board really did their homework on this one.

Love? Hate? Agree? Disagree? I want to hear from you. Email me at rStyn@ErieReader.com and follow me on Twitter @rStyn.

News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

Lead Story

Kansas lawyer Dennis Hawver was disbarred in November for his comically bad (24 separate deficiencies) defense of double-murder suspect Phillip Cheatham in 2005 (which led to a new trial for Cheatham). Hawver had admitted to the jury that his client was a "shooter of people" (a previous manslaughter conviction) who, as an "experience(d)" criminal would never have left that third victim alive with multiple gunshot wounds. A confident Hawver had virtually invited the jury to execute "whoever" the killer was. (At a September hearing to keep his license, he dressed as Thomas Jefferson, banging the lectern and shouting, as reverse psychology, "I am incompetent!" — leading the blog Lowering the Bar to muse that by then, the argument was wholly unnecessary.) Cheatham told the Topeka Capital-Journal that Hawver is "a good dude (but) just in over his head." [Topeka Capital-Journal, 11-14-2014] [Lowering the Bar, 9-18-2014]

Names in the News

Arrested in October for burglary of a Kohl's department store in Alhambra, California: Ms. Josephine Crook, 49. Passed away on Oct. 15 in Marietta, Georgia: Ms. Ida Gbye, 81. Arrested in October and charged with stabbing two men in Regina, Saskatchewan: Ms. Danielle Knife,

24. Charged in Mississauga, Ontario, in October with sexually assaulting three male patients: psychologist Dr. Vincent Hung Lo. Arrested in November in Gainesville, Florida, on sexual assault charges but then exonerated three days later when accuser Jeremy Foster was caught lying: Mr. Phuc Kieu, 58. [KNBC-TV (Los Angeles), 10-26-2014] [Marietta Daily Journal, 10-23-2014] [CTV News (Regina), 10-16-2014] [The Star (Toronto), 10-7-2014] [First Coast News (Jacksonville), 11-26-2014]

The Continuing Crisis

The Creative Class: To spark interest in the new leisure center opening in spring 2015 in Selby in North Yorkshire, England, the management company WLCT sponsored a contest to name the center, with the prize a year's free membership. On Nov. 5, General Manager Paul Hirst announced that Steve Wadsworth was the winner, proclaiming, "Well done to Steve on winning the competition." The winning entry: "Selby Leisure Centre." [Selby District Council press release, 11-5-2014]

A German woman who identifies herself only as "Anna Konda" described to Vice Media in October her Female Fight Club in Berlin, now three years old, for women to test themselves in all-out wrestling matches. While

some are fetish-motivated dominants, others display no particular sexuality — like Anna herself, who, she admits, simply likes to "crush" men's and women's skulls between her massive thighs. Anna says she is a product of East Germany's cliched development of tough, muscular female athletes. [Vice.com, 10-20-2014]

Questionable Judgments

Those Frightening Alabama Schools: (1) In October, a mother charged that officials at E.R. Dickson School in Mobile, Alabama, first detained her daughter, 5, for pointing a crayon at another student as if it were a gun, and then pressured the girl to sign a paper promising not to kill anyone or commit suicide. "What is suicide, Mommy?" the girl asked when her parents arrived. (2) In a 2010 incident at Sparkman Middle School near Huntsville, Alabama, an administrator coaxed a special-needs girl, 14, into a boys' bathroom to "bait" a 16-year-old boy who had previous sexual misconduct issues into committing a prosecutable offense — and then failed to protect the girl. (The girl's family sued and won a summary judgment, but the school board appealed, and in September 2014 the U.S. Justice Department formally endorsed the family's lawsuit.) [WPMI-TV (Mobile), 10-10-2014] [Al.com (Huntsville), 9-18-2014]

The West Briton newspaper reported in October that a darts team composed of blind men was ready for its inaugural match at an inn in Grampond, England, sponsored by the St. Austell Bay Rotary Club. The inn's landlord

acknowledged that the game-room door would be closed "just in case" a dart strays off course. (The blind darters would be aided by string attached to the bull's eye that they could feel for guidance.) [West Briton (Truro), 10-21-2014]

Police Report

Twice in September, police in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, reported that women had complained of a motorist who would stop female strangers on the street to tell them jokes about blond women. The jokes were not sexual, but still made the women "uncomfortable." A high school girl told her mother of a similar episode. Based on a license plate number, police visited the man at home, and he agreed to stop. [Patch.com (North Kingstown), 9-12-2014]

Unclear on the Concept

In some developing countries, a "sex strike" organized by women is often the only hopeful tactic for convincing husbands and lovers to take grievances seriously. However, in November, Mr. Nderitu Njoka, head of a Global Men Empowerment Network in Nairobi, Kenya, announced that his organization would commence a "sex boycott" for five days, denying men's "services" to their wives — to protest "tyrannical" female domination. According to Njoka, hundreds of Kenyan men are physically assaulted by females every year (including at least 100 whose wives vengefully castrate them). (Referring to a notorious U.S. incident, Njoka offered support to the singer Jay Z after he was punched by his sister-in-law

Solange Knowles.) [Washington Post, 11-14-2014]

First, Do Harm: In November, according to the deputy police commissioner in Calcutta, India, a group of student doctors at Nilratan Sarkar Medical College cornered, beat, maimed and eventually killed a man they suspected of rummaging through their belongings and stealing their mobile phones. The incident followed a series of phone and laptop thefts, and some of the enraged medical students slashed the man's genitals before leaving him to die. [Agence France-Presse via BBC News, 11-17-2014]

Perspective

Despite a 70-year-old U.S. Supreme Court decision to the contrary, six states still have laws exempting parents from homicide charges when they deny a child life-saving medical care because they trust no remedy except prayer. Even among those states, all of the deaths since 1994 under those circumstances have occurred in Idaho, where (according to a November report by Vocativ.com) no prosecutor seems willing to put a trust-in-God parent before a jury. Children in Idaho have died when simple medical treatments were available (e.g., insulin and fluids for Type I diabetes). Neighboring Oregon, by contrast, now vigorously prosecutes parents who let their children die, including a 13-year-old girl's parents convicted in November in Albany, Oregon. [Vocativ.com, 11-17-2014]

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JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY: B. TOY





GRAPHIC DESIGN INTERNSHIP

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- Must be knowledgeable in Adobe CS.
- Must be in a college-accredited graphic design program.
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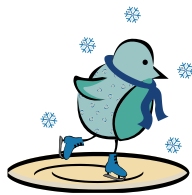
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Prison State

Local Organizations Aim to Help Erie's Incarcerated

By: Dan Schank

Back in June, the state of Pennsylvania received some good news. According to a report commissioned by the Justice Center of the Council of State Governments, the recidivism rate in our prison system has been decreasing.

According to the findings, the number of Pennsylvania state prisoners who would return to jail within three years of release had declined by 7.1 percent between 2007 and 2013. That certainly sounds good – and statewide efforts to improve parole inefficiencies and provide treatment for people with substance abuse problems may indeed be working.

But when you look more closely at that statistic, the systematic problems that remain are shocking. In 2007, 43.9 percent of released prisoners in Pennsylvania would be back behind bars within three years. By 2013, that rate was down to 40.8 percent statewide, and 40 percent in Erie County. That's still 4 out of every 10 prisoners, *after* you factor in the improvements.

And when looking at the U.S. prison system as a whole, the statistics are equally, if not more, shocking.

The Problems

On Oct. 15, 2012, *Bloomberg News* ran a depressing “chart of the day,” compiled from data tallied by the Department of Justice and the International Centre for Prison Studies. Journalists Max Raskin and Ilan Kolet discovered that “more than 2.2 million people [were] behind bars, equal to a city the size of Houston” in our country. The feature included a bar graph mapping incarceration rates for countries in the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). On it, the vertical red line representing the U.S. towered far above the rest, indicating that we imprison approximately 730 citizens for every 100,000, while only four other countries – Czech Republic, Poland, Mexico, and New Zealand – broke the 200 mark (and not by much).

To put that into sharper perspective, *The Economist* reported in 2013 that the U.S. has roughly 5 percent of the world's population yet 25 percent of its prison population. Data released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics during the same year reveals that “an estimated 1 in 50 adult residents was supervised in the community on probation or parole at yearend 2012, compared to 1 in every 108 adults incarcerated in prison or jail.”

In April of 2012, *Time Magazine's* Fareed Zakaria – one of the last real centrists in our political system – argued that we've created “a vast prisoner underclass in this country at huge expense, increasingly unable to function in normal society, all in the name



The inside of a prison cell – home to one out of every 108 adult Americans.

ing focus on “order maintenance,” along with strong political incentives to be “tough on crime,” ultimately lead to draconian sentencing practices and an escalating distrust of law enforcement, especially in minority communities. As I read about the recent choking death of Eric Garner, a man whose life was taken by an overzealous cop for allegedly selling untaxed cigarettes in Staten Island, it seems clear to me that the “sweat the small stuff” approach to law enforcement repeatedly leads to egregious abuses – and is in need of considerable reform.

Since the 1980s, the changes in our criminal justice system have been substantial. A 2009 report from the Pew Center on the States found that “during the past quarter-century, the number of prison and jail inmates has grown by 274 percent,” once people on probation and parole are factored in. The report concluded that “America now has more than 7.3 million adults under some form of correctional control.” In Pennsylvania, that amounted to 1 in 28. There are racial disparities as well. In 2013, the Pew found that “black men were more than six times as likely as white men in 2010 to be incarcerated in federal and state prisons, and local jails.”

These numbers might be at least *partially* justifiable if they had eradicated drug abuse or serious criminal activity. But they haven't.

The Case for Reform

With these concerns in mind, I reached out to Andy Hoover, Legislative Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Pennsylvania. Hoover describes the ACLU's approach to drug policy as “driven by a belief that dealing with drug addiction is best handled as a public health issue, and not a law enforcement issue.”

For example, they recently advocated for (and helped pass) State Senate Bill 1164 (Act #139), which grants immunity to people who call for help during drug overdoses. Hoover explains that people who witness overdoses are often reluctant to dial 911 “because they're afraid of being arrested themselves.” The bill's passage allows us to prioritize the life of the addict rather than the laws that have been broken.

A more alarming example of the

of a war we have already lost.” The war he refers to is the War on Drugs. According to Zakaria, drug convictions currently account for more than half of the convicts in our federal prisons – about 1.66 million in 2009 alone.

Broken Windows

So how did we get to this point? The reasons aren't always as diabolical as you might guess.

Consider, for example, the “Broken Windows” theory of criminal justice. Social scientist James Q. Wilson and criminologist George Kelling introduced the concept in 1982, as the War on Drugs was in its early stages. The authors looked to a study by Stanford psychologist Philip Lombardo, in which abandoned automobiles were left in two neighborhoods – a crime-ridden street in the Bronx and an affluent part of Palo Alto, Calif. Within ten minutes of its “abandonment,” the car in the Bronx was vandalized, and everything of value was gone within a day. By contrast, no one approached the car in Palo Alto for more than a week. The

researchers concluded that “serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked.”

It's a logical idea – if you live in a neighborhood with plenty of broken windows, criminals are more likely to “break windows” themselves. Accordingly, Wilson and Kelling suggested that our law enforcement model should prioritize *order maintenance* in addition to crime prevention. Cops wouldn't just show up to prevent or punish conflict – their ongoing presence in the community would alleviate fear and intimidate criminals. Suddenly “victimless crimes,” like public drunkenness and vagrancy, were policed much more actively. And many drug addicts wound up in prison.

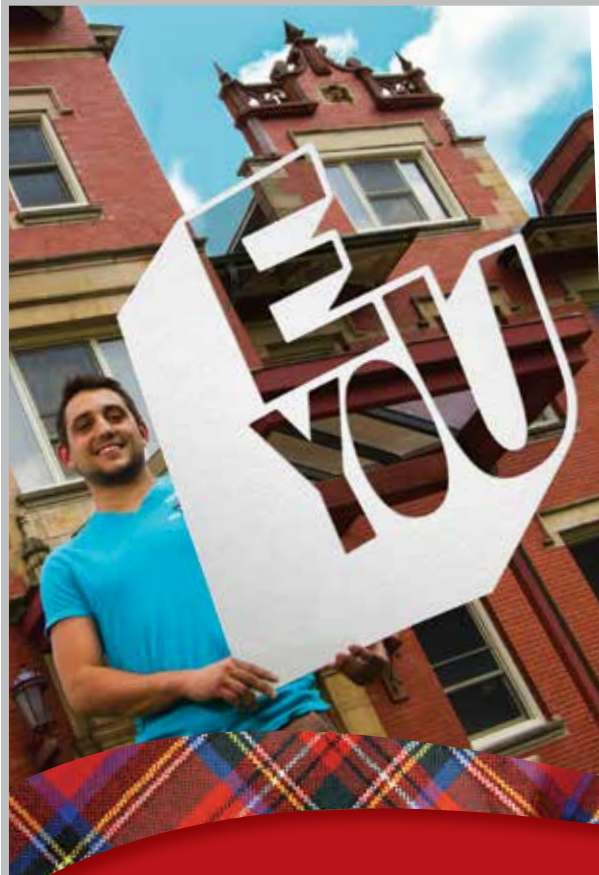
As Mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani put the “broken windows” theory into practice. In an editorial for the *New York Post* in 2012, Giuliani recalls how he used Kelling and Wilson's ideas to “keep neighborhoods clean and free of signs of disorder.” The crime rates in New York City – and across the country, for that matter – declined substantially during his tenure. But the grow-



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More than half of the convicts in our federal prisons – about 1.66 million in 2009 alone – are locked up on drug-related charges.



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gram, they organize clothing drives to provide for recently released prisoners as well. Their Women's Advocate, Roseanne Lyndal-Hynes, also provides outreach services to recently released prisoners through the Emmaus Ministries program, which addresses the needs of the poor in our community.

Sister Anne McCarthy has first-hand experience with our prison system. During a protest staged to oppose the Iraq War, she was arrested for civil disobedience and imprisoned for five days. As she got to know the prisoners more intimately, she became "amazed at their resilience, at what they're facing in their lives, and how few resources they have." As a nurse, she was particularly struck by their lack of health care and access to adequate nutrition. She also heard first-hand accounts of the shackling practices that the ACLU is working to eliminate.

But there's still no silver bullet in sight to alleviate the problems these prisoners face, or the path that leads them to incarceration. McCarthy summarizes the problems quite eloquently: "The prison system is not a rehab system. It's not set-up to be that. It's a punishment system. It's a warehousing system."

According to the *New York Times*, there were about 40,000 people in jails and prisons for drug crimes in 1980. By 2008, that number was nearly 500,000. If that increase makes sense from a reform standpoint, our drug problems must have been 12.5 times more severe at the dawn of the Reagan Administration. I was only four years old at the time, but I suspect that they weren't.

Fortunately, an encouraging coalition of people are coming together to make meaningful reform possible. Locally, Stairways Behavioral Health provides treatment services at the Erie County Prison, and through their outpatient clinic for those in the criminal justice system. The ACLU has a Northwestern PA Chapter, and Erie County was included in an investigation the organization began in 2013 regarding the militarization of police forces. Andy Hoover is excited about the movement's diversity: "Whether or not you're in it for the humanitarian approach, which is 'we need to get people off drugs,' or if you simply believe that spending this much money on drug enforcement is ridiculous, either way, those things bring people to the table."

While topics like police abuse and changes in drug policy may make us uncomfortable, it's inspiring to know that people in our community are working toward a more humane system of rehabilitation rather than one that prioritizes punishment, often at the expensive of common sense.

Dan Schank can be contacted at dSchank@ErieReader.com.

be applicable once adjusted. According to Bergstrom, they'll consider the following question: "Can the courts cut out the part of [the provision] that's unconstitutional and still have it survive?"

We're currently waiting for their answer.

But even if you are a strict law-and-order type, consider the impact that long sentences can have on families. Excessive penalties don't only affect the perpetrators, but also the people who care for and rely on them. In a very emotional editorial for *The Nation* in 2012, Judge Mark W. Bennett recalls the impact his mandatory minimum rulings have had on small-scale meth distributors in Northern Iowa: "I have seen how they leave hundreds of thousands of young children parentless and thousands of aging, infirm, and dying parents childless... In fact, I have been at this so long, I am now sentencing the grown children of people I long ago sent to prison."

What's Being Done Locally

It takes a long time to transform systemic problems of this nature, but people are working to improve prison conditions in our local community. One example is Benetvision, an organization run by the Benedictine Sisters of Erie to "encourage the development of contemporary spirituality from a monastic, feminist and global perspective," according to their website. Benetvision is the brainchild of Sister Joan Chittister, an Erie native who recently received the Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award at the Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit VI, an award given to an Erie Citizen "who has significantly contributed to bettering the world."

On a lively conference call in November, three of the Sisters involved with Benetvision (Mary Lou Kownacki, Mary Ellen Plumb, and Anne McCarthy) spoke to me about the Sister Joan Chittister Fund for Prisoners, which provides more than \$60,000 worth of reading materials to inmates in need of spiritual guidance. Their primary texts are Sister Joan's monthly newsletter, *The Mo-*

nastic Way, as well as some of her personal journals. Sister Mary Lou Kownacki explains the project this way: "We now work with about 90 chaplains across the country – and we do work with them personally. So we do know that the material is getting to the women and men, and it's not just locked up in a prison closet somewhere."

Recently, two members of their online monastic movement, titled *Monasteries of the Heart*, wanted to take Chittister's book of the same title into prisons. In response, Benetvision organized a leadership workshop for prison volunteers, and a study guide is in the works to help them address the specific needs of the incarcerated. About twenty chaplains and lay people attended the gathering, and they have since established several outreach programs focused around the book and their movement – some of which are international in scope. According to Sister Mary Ellen Plumb, these efforts "have a particular appeal... because [prisoners] are starving for any spirituality, and starving for a sense of community based on something deeper than fear that brings them together."

These workshops seem especially important when you consider the number of people with mental health problems in our prison system. According to a report released in April by the nonprofit Treatment Advocacy Center, there are an estimated "356,268 inmates with severe mental illness in prisons and jails" in the U.S., a number ten times greater than the total population in state hospitals. According to a recent *Erie-Times News* article, roughly 30 percent of the prisoners in the Erie County Prison suffer from "a serious mental illness." Faith-based initiatives are no substitute for professional psychiatric treatment, but providing inmates with more opportunities for reflection and self-expression (of a spiritual or a secular nature) still seems like an excellent idea.

The Benedictine Sisters of Erie also organize weekly ministries for women at the Erie County Prison at 18th and Ash streets. Through their Sisters of the Mount pro-

ACLU's prison reform advocacy involves the Healthy Birth for Incarcerated Women Act, which they helped pass in 2010. Believe it or not, enough female prisoners were being shackled during labor – as well as during the final two trimesters and postpartum period – to require legislation. It's shocking enough that these practices occur in the 21st century, let alone in the U.S. To make matters worse, Hoover claims that "the enforcement is not strong," and that the ACLU must continue to advocate on behalf of women who are still being restrained during pregnancy illegally.

Since these concerns rarely receive adequate public attention, I asked Hoover to specify an issue about which the public is particularly uninformed. After a pause, he mentioned mandatory minimum sentences and the lack of awareness about what triggers them. Like the "broken windows" theory, mandatory minimum sentencing often seem logical in theory, but can be catastrophic in practice.

Hoover cites the example of school-zone sentencing. Obviously, most of us (myself included) don't want drug dealers near our schools. But the issue becomes more complicated when you consider that, until quite recently, a mandatory minimum could be triggered in Pennsylvania whenever a dealer was within 1,000 feet of a school. According to Hoover, "that includes basically any time of the day or year, regardless of whether or not children are even in the zone." According to a 2007 report conducted by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing, approximately 19 percent of the state of Pennsylvania – and 18.8 percent of Erie County – falls within these parameters. In larger cities, the percentage is much higher – 22.8 in Allegheny County and 29.5 in Philadelphia.

According to Hoover, this meant that "you could be busted with a gram of heroin at midnight on Christmas Day if you're standing in a school-zone and get the mandatory." Though I'm certainly not happy about yuletide drug dealers near my local high school, I'm not convinced that a nonviolent crime of this nature necessitates two years of jail time.

Apparently I'm not alone.

Earlier this month, the Pennsylvania Superior Court ruled that the provision regarding drug-free school zones (18 Pa.C.S. § 6317) is unconstitutional. Regarding the ruling, Mark H. Bergstrom, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing, claims that the status of the law is still ambiguous. Bergstrom believes that most lawmakers agree that the provision requires reform, since the decision to implement a mandatory minimum is made during sentencing, rather than at trial. At the sentencing stage, Bergstrom asserts that the burden to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the dealer was within 1,000 feet becomes much lower.

In response to the ruling, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court must now determine whether the mandatory minimum trigger can still

Erie's Groovy College Radio Scene

Time to turn on, tune in, and get a degree

By: Alex Bieler

Before people could watch viral videos and star-studded shows on glowing rectangles sitting on a table or in a hand, there was the theater of the mind. Radio may not have the high definition images of TV, but the medium still maintains a healthy audience between set frequency stations, satellite radio, and podcasts for those seeking news or entertainment at any hour.

Some radio stations cater to familiar formats, like country, top 40 hits, or sports. However, as the radio frequencies and listening audiences get smaller, you can start to find a few exceptions to the usual formatted fare, a certain group in which youth reigns supreme: College radio.

Erie has a few options to choose from on the educational institu-

“It’s learning, it’s what you’re here to do. If everything sounds perfect all of the time, it doesn’t really sound dynamic or intimate.”

tion front, and each has a different stylistic flavor than the stations comprised of airwave professionals.

“College radio provides an alternative in any community,” says Chet LaPrice, operations manager of 90.5 WERG at Gannon University. “You’ve got the mainstream and then you’ve got the left end of the dial with these eclectic stations that do things a little differently.”

While WERG churns out alternative music for the region, the other three colleges have filled different niches. Edinboro University’s 88.9 WFSE will touch upon some of the same music as WERG but operates on a more freeform structure,

with DJs putting a personal spin on playlists instead of following a set station schedule that has predetermined songs and other elements for students to play. Mercyhurst University adopted an oldies format for 88.5/1530 WMCE, using a mix of students and professional DJs to provide the area with hits from the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s, where the former pros can play the music they loved from the past. Penn State Erie, The Behrend College has station has 107.1/1450 WPSE, Erie’s station for business news, but most of the students tune in off of the radio dial to BVZ, an online radio station where the DJs provide edgy programs during their live streams.

The four stations each have their own interesting quirks that differentiate them. When it comes to designating one as the best, Gannon has an edge. But that’s not just a knock over the other local institutions, as WERG recently won the Abraham & Borst Best College Station in the Nation when members of the staff attended the 74th Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Conference in New York City this past March, beating out about 1,000 other stations from across the nation.

WERG earned top-five finishes for Best Newscast, Best Use of Social Media, and Best Use of Underwriting, in addition to winning Most Creative Promotional Event, an IBS Golden Microphone for Excellence in Station Programming and Operation, Best College under 10,000 students, and the top overall prize. Even more, it’s not just upperclassmen who are helping out, as students can contribute from the beginning of their collegiate careers.

“Chet has it structured to where [students] are scheduling music and scheduling software [to help run the station],” Joe Lang, the cheerful operations manager at Connoisseur Media in Erie, says of the changes WERG has experienced since he attended Gannon in the ‘80s and early ‘90s. “When I was there, we played records, so we had a sticker on the record that had the days of the week, and you’d put an ‘x’ where you played the songs. Now they’re using software and computers.”

Former Gannon graduates aren’t



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

the only ones who have noticed the accolades Chet and his students have earned. In fact, Ron Raymond, assistant professor and adviser for Edinboro’s WFSE, thinks that Gannon’s current fortunes can be used as motivation for his station’s future.

“We’re very happy for Gannon and WERG, and Chet has done an outstanding job there, and it’s been a real example for our students, too,” Ron says. “I pointed out the recognition that WERG received and set that as an example and to encourage [students] to raise the bar at Edinboro.”

Ron, a radio vet of more than 30 years, cites ongoing changes in terms of formats and managers as challenges in college radio. But despite those trials, there are plenty of attractive qualities for newcomers. Many college radio DJs are either students who are either looking for career experience or people entering the alternative radio game for fun because of the stations’ musical freedom, an aspect that appeals to people looking for a noticeable departure from the mainstream. “There’s a certain attraction to the freeform where all of these different personalities are on at all different times and you can make a connection with an individual personality and a particular show that may be on just once a week,” Ron says earnestly.

Regardless of a person’s motivations for going on the radio, it takes a certain comfort level to be able to face the microphone no matter what the situation. Radio isn’t for everyone, but BVZ DJ

Auda KonTroll knows from personal experience how much of an opportunity the college stations provide.

“There are definitely fewer listeners [for online radio], but it’s a good starting-off point for college students who are trying to decide if they actually want to get into it,” says the alternatively-coiffed host of Rebel Girl Radio, which feature female-fronted acts while discussing women’s issues. “The other people on BVZ are really passionate about their shows because they feel like they’re bringing music that people aren’t accustomed to hearing on their own, and it provides a fresh palette.”

College radio stations offer up a chance for people to hear something that they normally wouldn’t on commercial radio. According to a national survey Ron completed in the past couple of years, most college stations operate in the alternative spectrum, providing a listening opportunity for underserved genres. WERG even features Super Soul Saturday and specialty shows on the weekend, letting a group of locals play urban, Latin, and even polka music at different hours.

Of course, if these genres attracted a wider audience, commercial stations would try and profit on them. College stations survive on funds from their school, donations, grants, and any profits gained from underwriting spots, short segments that are allowed to inform listeners about a company without promoting them. It’s a tricky juggling act for non-commercial radio. According

University students run the show at local college radio stations, where amateur DJs are forced to think quickly and learn as they go.

to Ron, a growing number of colleges across the nation have been pulling the plug on terrestrial stations and opting for an online option, like BVZ.

There’s always risk in operating as a non-commercial station, but ultimately college radio serves as a learning opportunity, a place for students to gain experience for their future careers, and a chance to discover their voice.

As expected, there are downsides to having a group of amateurs on air. Awkward talk breaks. Mispronunciations. The overwhelming silence of dreaded dead air. Still, there’s something special about having a group of people who decide to do things a little differently.

“We’re all human, we all make mistakes, and sometimes those can be funny,” Chet says, a twinkle forming in his eye as his cadence quickens. “‘De-peachy Mode...’ no, it’s ‘De-pesh Mode,’ but it’s learning, it’s what you’re here to do. If everything sounds perfect all of the time, it doesn’t really sound dynamic or intimate.”

Every semester brings new challenges and opportunities, and that’s part of the fun of college radio. And you never know – perhaps that DJ you’re listening to on a college station might be the next radio superstar. “As Captain Picard in *Star Trek* used to say, ‘The sky’s the limit,’” Chet says, a smile forming when he considers the future.

College radio may not have the same flash as TV programs, but theater of the mind is here to stay, providing Erie with an alternative the region can be proud to tune in to.

Alex Bieler can be contacted at aBieler@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Catch20Q.



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Erie Chamber Orchestra Presents Classical Christmas

The winter season has inspired many pieces of music over the centuries, from Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride" to "Winter" from Anton Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." This December, the Erie Chamber Orchestra will showcase both new and old holiday music with its upcoming show Classical Christmas.

"This is an opportunity for an audience to come in and listen to more than 400-years' worth of music," Erie Chamber Orchestra Music Director and Conductor Matthew Kraemer says. "There are style differences, but they all have a unifying theme - very beautiful music inspired by the time of year or the holiday season."

In addition to the seasonal favorites, like the aforementioned "Sleigh Ride" and "Winter," the Erie Chamber Orchestra will also mix in a couple of surprises into *Classical Christmas*'s musical mix, including Astor Piazzola's tango

reworking of Vivaldi's famous wintry concerto. Violinist Maureen Conlon and soprano Shannon Kessler Dooley will also lend their talents to the already gifted musicians of the Chamber Orchestra, a crew ready to entertain during a busy holiday.

"This is the time of year where things can get very hectic if we allow it to," Kraemer says. "A concert is always a time to take an hour or two to yourself or to your family and just sit there and let the sounds of the season wash over you."

The winter months have inspired many great works, and you can witness some of the best Dec. 12 at the Cathedral Prep Auditorium thanks to *Classical Christmas*. - Alex Bieler

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Voodoo Brewery, 215 Arch St., Meadville 337.3676.

Chet Vincent & The Big Bend w/ Graveyard Orchestra + Matt "Broke" Boland

Dec. 13 - 9 p.m.
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. 456.6439.

Instead of Sleeping, Joose, Gnosis, The Standby, Frame & Mantle

Dec. 13 - 5 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. II St. basementtrans@gmail.com

Nick I Am A Don

Dec. 13 - 8 p.m.
The Beer Mug, 1108 Liberty St. 454.4753.

Roger Montgomery

Dec. 13 - 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 US HWY 6 & 19, Venango. 398.2885

Erie Philharmonic Presents Handel's Messiah

Dec. 16 - 7:30 p.m.
St. Peter Cathedral, 230 W. 10 St. 453.6677.

Rankin & Schell

Dec. 18 - 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 US HWY 6 & 19, Venango 398.2885

Dragon Wagon

Dec. 19 - 9 p.m.
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. 456.6439.

Erie Ale House Acoustics

Dec. 19 - 9 p.m. to midnight
Erie Ale House, 1033 State St. 454.4500.

Geek Army

Dec. 19 - 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com

The Highlife

Dec. 19 - 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 US HWY 6 & 19, Venango. 398.2885

Jake Brown

Dec. 19 - 5:30 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. II St. basementtrans@gmail.com

Moneyshot 2.0 (McCoy's Edition)

Dec. 19 - 7 to 10 p.m.
McCoy's Barrelhouse and Grille, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com

The Breeze Band

Dec. 20 - 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com

Sherlock's Presents: Wreck the Halls

Dec. 20 - 8 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. 453.7760.

Strangers and Liars

Dec. 20 - 9 p.m.
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. 456.6439.

Tom Stine

Dec. 20 - 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 US HWY 6 & 19, Venango 398.2885

UnRapping the Holidays feat. Strategist and Desmond Collier

Dec. 20 - 6 to 11 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. II St. basementtrans@gmail.com

DANCE

Swing Dancing at Rocco's Tavern

Ongoing, Thursdays - 9 p.m.
Rocco's Tavern, 4040 W. 12 St. 833.5487

Line Dancing with Selleena and Corey B

Dec. 10, 17 - 8 to 9 p.m.
McCoy's Barrelhouse and Grille, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com

Nutcracker 2014

Dec. 19 - 10 a.m., Dec. 20 - 7 p.m., Dec. 21 - 2:30 p.m.
Lake Erie Ballet, 701 Holland St. 871.4356

FOOD & DRINK

Erie TimeBank Potluck

Dec. 15 - 6-8 p.m.
Church of Christ, 2317 West Grandview Blvd. 636.0205.

FILM

Great White Shark

Ongoing - Noon, 4 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trepci.org.

Mysteries of the Unseen World

Ongoing - 2, 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trepci.org.

Wonders of the Arctic

Ongoing - 11 a.m., 1, 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trepci.org.

Family Night at the Movies

Dec 4 - 5:30 p.m.
Corry Chamber of Commerce, 221 N. Center St. 665.9925.

Edinboro Film Series Presents 'Jurassic Park'

Dec 4 - 8:30 p.m.
Pogue Student Center, Edinboro University, 405 Scotland Road. 732.1048.

VISUAL ARTS

GC Myers Alchemy Exhibit

Ongoing - All day

Kada Gallery, 2632 W. Eighth St. 835.5232.

Liminal Spaces: Paintings by Kenneth Hall

Ongoing - All day
Bruce Gallery, Doucette Hall, 215 Meadville St., Edinboro. 732.2513.

Rebecca Signoriello: Paintings of People

Ongoing - All day
Bruce Gallery, Doucette Hall, 215 Meadville St., Edinboro. 732.2513.

Architecture of Erie: A Photographic Survey

Ongoing - All day
Cummings Art Gallery, Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. 824.3000.

Combat Paper: Words Made Flesh

Ongoing - All day
Doane Hall of Art, Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St., Meadville 332.4365.

The Anytime Arcade - Joe Popp and Karen Dodson

Ongoing - All day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St. 453.3758.

NPAA Schuster Gallery Exhibition

Ongoing - All day
Schuster Gallery, Gannon

Dragon Wagon Rolls Into The Rook

Like most any band worth listening to, the Michigan-bred 'Mericana badasses known as Dragon Wagon come most alive, well, live.

And, they say, there's one thing upon which everyone who's seen them - from throngs of Midwest festival-goers to lonesome regulars at remote backwoods bars - can agree: "Once you hop on the Wagon, you'll never forget the ride."

The band will return to Erie this month, hitchin' up a while at the King's Rook Club and inviting us to hop on in around 9 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19.

That the show's free (that's right folks, no cover) makes it more than worth the time. But for what the multi-talented folks in Dragon Wagon put out into the crowd - a jazzed-up, fevered-fun (re)vision of Americana, bluegrass, roots rock, and lots of stuff in between - it'd be a bargain even at a price.

For real, though, everybody: If you have the time to take a little ride on the Dragon Wagon, take it, and make it that night.

Wherever they roam, this outfit - named a 'Band to Watch' by Relix Magazine - "infuses their music with the soul of the audience to ensure that every crowd at every venue gets perfectly catered, dragonfire-roasted entertainment," states Dragon Wagon's bio.

It ought to be damn good fun to see what they bring this time and place around. — Ryan Smith

Saturday, Dec. 19, 9 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub



11th ANNUAL BLOOM Collaborative

HOLIDAY ART SHOW & SALE

FRIDAY

DECEMBER 12

5:00-8:00 PM



BLOOM Collaborative creates opportunities for local artisans to earn income by bringing their products and their stories to the community.

Give a Gift That Gives Back

One of a kind gifts and original works of art including:
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December 10, 2014

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DECEMBER 14, 2014
7:00 PM

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Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle Bring the Blues to Scotty's

Abbott and Costello, peas and carrots, martinis and blues. Some pairings just work out beautifully. If that third duo seems a bit odd, head down to Scotty's Martini Lounge Saturday, Dec. 20 to see just how well the two go together.

It's a simple mix really, as one part great music and one part tasty beverages is a recipe that's hard to top, especially when you have choice ingredients. Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle have been a go-to band for hearty blues-rock tunes since 2002, with Yarosz and his Hammond B3 organ and harmonica leading the way on hearty songs like "Organ Donor" and "\$200 Car." Then you have some of the delicious adult concoctions at Scotty's that you can enjoy along with some soulful rock 'n' roll.

Sure, martinis and blues may not be the most well-known duo, but after Dec. 20, it may be a favorite among locals. To get a taste of that potent twosome, make your way to Scotty's for stellar combination. – Alex Bieler

9 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20 // 301 German St. // 459.3800



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



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Pittsburgh's Instead of Sleeping Headlines at Basement Transmissions

Dec. 13, 2014 (12/13/14) will be the last sequential number date of the 21st century. According to the *New York Post*, many couples have decided to celebrate the rare occasion by saving the date for their weddings. And unless you're a mathematician or have an affinity towards patterns, there isn't much else to be excited for that day.

But for music lovers in Erie, Basement Transmissions is giving us something to be thrilled about.

One of the region's most popular indie rock bands, Pittsburgh's Instead of Sleeping, are making their way back to Erie. Having frequently played the old BT on State Street and headlining the first-ever show at the new location, they are no strangers to the charms of Erie. Their precise musicianship and stage presence keep fans coming to their shows in greater numbers with each return.

Instead of Sleeping's latest album *Young Lungs* steers away from the straight-forward indie rock prevalent on their previous album, with songs like "The Ones" giving off a more electronica vibe while still staying true to their distinct and dynamic style.

Rounding out the bill are four local acts – Joose, GNOSiS, The Standby, and Frame and Mantle – ranging in sound from rock to punk to experimental jam band.

You won't have another chance to see a sequential date on the calendar until Jan. 2, 2103, so what better way to celebrate than to watch some great regional bands and support the local music scene. – Tommy Shannon

Doors at 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13 // Basement Transmissions // 145 W. 11th St. // Tickets \$8

Experience the Holiday Joy of Christmas Memories: A Christmas Carol

You may know the classic Charles Dickens tale about Ebenezer Scrooge – the bitter and angry miser who undergoes a complete transformation through a series of profound experiences when he is visited by the ghost of his former business partner, as well as the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come.

This year, the Station Dinner Theatre will celebrate its 25th Anniversary Holiday Musical event with *Christmas Memories: A Christmas Carol*. This delightful adaptation is similar to the original, but with a humorous twist. Event-goers will experience a charming mix of traditional Christmas music alongside comical tunes from *The Muppet Christmas Carol*. The work is narrated by carolers, who take on the characters to bring the ever-popular holiday story to life.

And of course, guests will also experience the long standing tradition of being served dinner by the actors themselves. The performance stars David Durst as Ebenezer, alongside Karen Nasca, Dave Edmunds, Lisa Slezak, Paul and Rae Jean Urbanowicz, and Carrie Smith. The show will end with their traditional Christmas closer, "Let There Be Peace on Earth."

Celebrate the season with this heart-warming rendition reminding us of the true meaning of Christmas. And one thing is for sure, this delightful adaptation won't leave you saying, "Bah, Humbug!" – Rebecca Styn

Tickets: \$40, \$36 for students and seniors, \$28 for children 6 to 11 // Station Dinner Theatre // 4940 Peach St. // 864.2022



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

University, 700 Peach St. facebook.com/NPAAonline.

THEATER

Erie Art Museum Focus: Fiber Exhibit
Ongoing – All day

Erie Art Museum, Bacon Gallery, 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477.

Erie Art Museum Karen Erst Exhibit

Ongoing – All day
Erie Art Museum, Holstein Gallery, 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477.

Erie Art Museum Wilbur Adams Exhibit

Ongoing – All day
Erie Art Museum, Main Gallery, 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477.

Holiday Fine Art
Dec. 14 – 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

PACA Gallery, 1505 State St. pacal505.com

Laugh/Riot Presents Alice in Wonderland

Dec. 11, 12 – 7:30p.m.

Edinboro University, 219 Meadville Street, Edinboro. laughrioterie.com

Striking 12

Dec. 11-13 – 8 p.m.

Schuster Theatre, Gannon University, 109 University Square. 871.7000.

Elf the Musical

Dec. 12-14, 17-20 – 7:30 p.m.

Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 Street. erieplayhouse.org

Carmen by Bizet

Dec. 13 – 12:55 p.m.

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. 824.3000.

Dramashop presents Staged Reading Series

'Clybourne Park'

Dec 16 – 8 p.m.

Renaissance Centre, 2nd Floor, 1001 State St. info@dramashop.org

COMMUNITY

Lunch With Santa

Dec. 13 – 12 to 2 p.m.

Erie Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach Street 814.864.2022

Christmas Memories: A Christmas Carol

Dec. 11 – 4 p.m. Dec. 12 & 19 – 7

p.m. Dec. 13 & 20 – 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 14 & 21 – 2:30 p.m.

Erie Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach Street 814.864.2022

Asbury Woods Winter Wonderland

Dec. 12-14 – 6 p.m.

Asbury Woods, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org

'Tis the Season to give a toy... and get a tattoo

Local tattoo artist Corey Thompson's no stranger to giving. For the past several Christmases, he's participated in toys for tats-style benefits at other shops he's worked at before opening Wayward Tattoo Studio.

These events are simple but profound: Bring in a toy to donate that'll brighten a child's holiday, and in turn, get a tattoo from a local artist, thereby encouraging folks looking not to show off their new reindeer antler hat or their rad, ugly sweater at this year's office party to ring in the holiday spirit by sporting some slick new ink while doing good in the process.

So it made sense that when he - along with local tattoo artist Johnny Matters - opened their own studio together last year, that they'd keep up the tradition.

"It was important to us to continue this benefit because it's a way we can show our appreciation for Erie," Corey explains. "We are blessed with great clientele and careers based off of what this town has given us. It's one way we can give back."

Corey, Johnny, and the three other artists tattooing out of Wayward Tattoo will team up with some special guests from Karma Tattoo to benefit The Arc of Erie, a local nonprofit advocacy agency started sixty-two years ago that provides support for individuals with intellectual and/or development disabilities and their families.

"Johnny and I decided to team up with Karma out of respect for what Josh [Makowski, who owns and operates Karma, and with whom Corey and Johnny cut their teeth] has given us, to work with our friends, and to help get more people tattooed!" Corey says.

For Wayward artist "Eerie" Eric Fargiugio, participating in events like this carries an extra special meaning.

"I have a soft spot for kids with special needs," he says. "I had some of my coolest Christmases in Erie's own Shriners Hospital."

Fargiugio, who won both *Erie Reader's* 2014 Best Of Erie Best Tattoo Artist and Best Illustrator awards, was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis just a year-and-a-half into his life. He says he fondly recalls all of the cool toys he got from kind-hearted people those holidays he spent in a hospital and still thinks about an Evel Knievel action figure he was given through charity.

"We hope the Erie community will see and appreciate the support from The Arc and our friends at Wayward," says Arc board member Joanie Froehlich, whose five-year-old daughter Bella has Down syndrome. "When our family needed helped, we turned to The Arc. I saw firsthand what their mission was and I have been with them ever since."

So forget the Christmas sweater or light-bulb adorned hat; instead, Erie residents again have the chance to show off some



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Johnny Matters (left) and Corey Thompson opened Wayward Tattoo Studios last year. This year, they're hosting the Arc Angel Toy Drive.

fresh art at the holiday parties this year by brightening a child's Christmas.

Partaking in this process is simple: Bring an unwrapped toy valued at least at \$20 to Wayward. The toys will be distributed to children participating in the "Include Me From The Start" program within the Erie School District, as well as children who receive services through Erie Homes for Children and Adults, The Barber National Institute, Lake Erie Area Down Syndrome Society, and The Arc of Erie County, according to Joanie.

Tattoo options will come from predetermined flash pieces the artists have contributed, from which there'll be plenty to choose. From holiday-inspired art to Corey's personal favorite (a mini-portrait of Bubbles from *Trailer Park Boys*), there's guaranteed to be something for damn-near everyone (read: remember that this event is aimed at helping children have a merrier Christmas, not at getting you that tailored sleeve you've always wanted, so be polite and don't make special requests).

Keep in mind, too, that all of the artists are donating their time, supplies, and energy, so this tattooed editor strongly encourages you to tip your artist. Also remember that it's limited to one tattoo per person so that everyone can get some art, it's not limited, however, to just one toy, which means you're welcomed to bring as many gifts to donate as you'd like.

"Seven hours is a long day for a tattoo artist - our day will be longer, I'm sure," Corey says. "Tattooing all day can take it out of you - your back hurts, your hands hurt, but after a while, you forget about all that and just become a tattoo artist. You lose focus on anything but what your hands are doing. When I see that long line in the morning, walking up to the shop, it's like the ride to the top of the coaster - you don't really know how the ride's gonna go, but you're excited to fall."

- Ben Spegger

Noon to 7 p.m., Dec. 13 // 2301 W. 12th St // 456.0103

Lake Erie Ballet presents *The Nutcracker*

Depending on whom you ask, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* can be many things. It's iconic. It's seasonal. It's tradition. And according to Lea Bodine, the Art & Education Director for the Lake Erie Ballet, it's one of the most essential ballets in existence.

"It's a beauty to behold," Bodine says over the phone. "There are a number of ballets that Tchaikovsky created in his lifetime that are some of the most important ever created, and *The Nutcracker* is even bigger."

The Lake Erie Ballet will continue its holiday tradition this year with four productions of *The Nutcracker* at the Warner Theatre this December, including a pair of special events.

Those looking to see Tchaikovsky's classic score performed by an orchestra can do so Saturday, Dec. 20 and Sunday, Dec. 21, taking in the beloved ballet choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov.

The Lake Erie Ballet will also offer a pair of special performances Friday, Dec. 19. An abbreviated children's show, along with a discussion of ballet, will be held at 10 a.m., perfect for a younger audience ready to learn about *The Nutcracker*. After that, the Lake Erie Ballet will host an autism-friendly show at 12:30 p.m., teaming up with Mercyhurst Institute of Applied Behavioral Studies to provide an inclusive experience. Registration is required for each of the Friday performances.

Tchaikovsky's tradition continues at the Warner Theatre this December, giving you four chances to put your own label on the beloved ballet. - Alex Bieler



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

10 a.m. (children's performance) and 12:30 p.m. (autism-friendly performance) Friday, Dec. 19, 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21 // 811 State St. // erieevents.com

Christmas Chestnuts get Roasted

Warning: You may not want to bring the youngins.

On Dasher, on Dancer, on Charlie Brown and the Grinch. Wait, what?

Every Christmas Story Ever Told (and then some!) starts out innocently enough with a community theater gearing up to produce *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens... for the umpteenth time. Three actors, dead set on trying something different, steal the show (literally) and decide to roll a bunch of holiday favorites into one big, fast-paced extravaganza that parodies just about all the beloved holiday classics, from Victorian tales to more modern day television favorites. They throw in some send-ups of holiday traditions around the globe and add music to boot.

What results is, according to the official event description, "a madcap romp through the holiday season." "This play is ridiculously funny and zany, says Mark Tanenbaum, PACA's director. "Like the *Keystone Kops* meets *The Three Stooges* at Christmas."

Three well-known local funny men, Ken Falkenhagen, Aaron Pacy, and Jeff Rodland take on these hijinx, and, of course, hilarity ensues with a lot of pratfalls, skewering of holiday icons, and much merriment. Santa gets a little tipsy, fruitcake is discussed in terms that may not be suitable for children, and, let's just say that you may have never met this Frosty the Snowman.

Written by Michael Carleton, James FitzGerald, and John K. Alvarez, *Every Christmas Story* has been performed across the country to rave reviews (and at much higher ticket prices). From what other reviewers have mentioned, it makes fun of the holidays and our traditions, but shows us how valuable those traditions are at the same time. Tanenbaum adds, "It's spoof, but it means no disrespect."

Whether you like your holidays full of reverence and gravity or you sometimes see the ridiculousness in it all, you'll find something to like here. Who doesn't like a few roasted chestnuts?

Hurry. Only two shows left. - Mary Birdsong

Doors: 7:30 p.m., curtain: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Dec. 12 and 13// PACA, 1505 State St. // \$10, \$5 Students w/ID // BYOB w/ID // PACA1505.com/tickets



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



A Christmas Festival Service of Lessons & Carols

Sunday, Dec. 21 at 5 pm

Candlelight service of scripture readings and music sung by the Cathedral Choirs

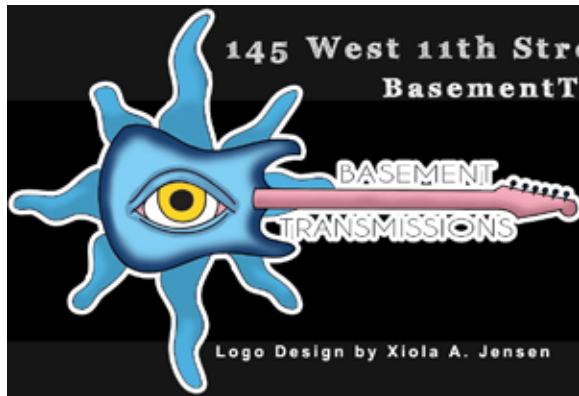


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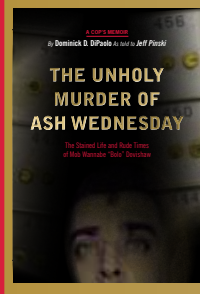


Murder, He Wrote!



Erie's true-crime summer hit is now the hottest holiday gift!

By DOMINICK D. DiPAOLO as told to JEFF PINSKI



Don't miss the legendary Erie detective's behind-the-scenes memoir of murder and betrayal, dirty cops, crooked lawyers, arsonists, career criminals, mobsters and wannabes - all interconnected in a seven-year romp through the region's dark underbelly. Here are the inside stories that never made the front pages or evening news!

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This perfect holiday gift, now in its 3rd printing, is sold at Werner Books (Liberty plaza), Erie & national chain book stores and at www.mmweriepa.com

Authors' signing Dec. 11th, 5-7 p.m., at Werner Books

WINTERFEST

Tom Ridge Environmental Center Winterfest December 2014

Sunday December 14th
10:30 - 3:00 PM
Kids Day

- Ages 5 through 12
- Craft Activities
- Origami Class
- Box of Light Animation
- Face Painting
- A Visit with Santa
- FREE EVENTS PANORAMA

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CALENDAR

814 Grinders is back with: Hip-hop Pt. 2

Drake isn't the only rapper who started at the bottom, honing his craft to become one of the biggest names in the genre. Fortunately for us, Erie has quite a few talented MCs, and we're lucky that they're here.

Music fans were in for a treat this past November when a long list of those loquacious lyricists showed off their musical chops at 814 Grinders: Hip-hop Pt. 1. The event was so good, in fact, that it will be getting a sequel Friday, Dec. 12 at The Beer Mug.


814 Grinders: Hip-hop Pt. 2 features yet another impressive list of artists, showcasing some of the best Erie has to offer in terms of mic controllers. Hip-hop Pt. 2's lineup features recent Best of Erie winner for Best MC Jonny Evans and includes performances from fellow verse masters Devious, Courtesy Da Vinchi, K Sanz, JPohl, Heresy, and a special set from F.A.M.O.E. - Hoffa Boys, Inc. If that isn't enough local hip-hop star power for you, Blue Pike Award winner and Erie Reader 40 Under 40-alum C. Brown will handle hosting duties on the night.

Local music fans showed their support back in November, so Erie gets treated to another dose of hip-hop magic this December. Show the performers some love when 814 Grinders: Hip-hop Pt. 2 hits The Beer Mug and enjoy what should be a high-quality sequel. - Alex Bieler

10 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12 // 1108 Liberty St. // 454.4753



K. CARLETT



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Peninsula Polar Fest: Freshly Frozen Fun

At Discover Presque Isle each July, Erieites celebrate the summer bounty of sun, sand, and waves that PI has to offer. Now that it's December, it's time for something a little... colder.

The Presque Isle Partnership is hosting Polar Fest on Sunday, Dec. 14, a winter version of Discover Presque Isle, if you will, featuring indoor and outdoor activities related to the winter season.

According to Nicole Bawol, operations manager of the PIP, "We work year round to create programs and events for our community members to enjoy... we want to make sure we are providing more than just summer activities as there is so much to enjoy about Presque Isle even during the colder months."

But don't worry; fires will be burning brightly in the Rotary Pavilion and all three cabins in the Waterworks area for warming and indoor fun, too.

For free outdoor fun, though, you can watch ice sculpture carvings, go on geo-cache expeditions, visit dog-sledding demonstrations, gaze upon the tree-lighting, sing carols, and take a two-mile night hike to call coyotes and owls with park naturalists. You can - for a fee - also enjoy a horse-drawn wagon ride and try out cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

When it's time to get toasty, you can enjoy indoor activities, like see a performance of *The Night Before Christmas* by the Erie Playhouse YouTheatre (Rotary Pavilion, 11 a.m.), touch feathers and fur at the naturalist area where mounted birds of prey and animals of PI with be on exhibit, craft an animal track ornament or coffee filter snowflake, and meet Santa with his North Pole pals. Refreshments, face painting, and a holiday basket raffle are also available for a fee.

For the first time, the Partnership has commissioned Presque Isle State Park Christmas ornaments, which will be available at Polar Fest for a \$5 donation. All proceeds from the sale of the ornaments go directly to improving the park. Bawol says that they plan on having a new design every year so people can build a collection.

"We thought adding an outdoor holiday festival on the Park would be a wonderful way for people to get out and enjoy the beauty of Presque Isle during the winter and get into the holiday spirit," says Bawol.

So if you need a nip of Jack Frost on your nose to find some holiday spirit, Polar Fest has your snowflake waiting. - Mary Birdsong



To learn more about the Presque Isle Cacher's geocaching activities and to register, visit geocaching.com/calendar/ and scroll down to Dec 14 on the calendar. To read more about Polar Fest and the Presque Isle Partnership, visit discoverpi.com

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14 // Rotary Pavilion and Waterworks area, Presque Isle State Park // Free admission; fee for some activities // 838.5144



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Klaus Peter Ochs and Edna Siegel

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Various Artists

It's Christmas on Mack Avenue
Mack Avenue



★★★

Mack Avenue is one of the newer jazz labels, but it is already highly regarded because of its strong artist roster, many of whom are on display on one of the few jazz Christmas CDs released this year. Strutting their stuff on a mostly familiar repertoire of sacred and secular songs are trumpeter Sean Jones, pianist Aaron Diehl, saxophonist Tia Fuller, vibraphonist Warren Wolf, bassist Christian McBride, vocalists Cyrille Aimee, Cecile McLorin Salvant, and Sachal Vasandani, and the band, Hot Club of Detroit. Diehl steals the show on several occasions – on a lovely version of "Christmas Time Is Here" from TV's classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*; a joyously swinging "Sleigh Ride;" and a sensitive reading of the too seldom heard "Christmas Star," composed by famed movie scorer John Williams. Wolfe is wonderful, with bass accompaniment, on the breathtaking "Carol of the Bells," and among the singers, much honored Salvant and the lovely voiced, scat-singing, up-and-coming Aimee Sparkle, while Vasandani's voice and delivery disappoint. – Bob Protzman

Ottawa

Random Lights
Independent



★★★★

Despite the band's name, you don't have to travel north of the border to find Ottawa's stomping grounds. The garage-pop quintet hails just a couple of hours west in Cleveland, where the members spent time in bands like The Royaltons and Tracy Morgan Freeman before forming Ottawa. Now the Northeast Ohio crew is looking to expand their reach with the release of their debut EP *Random Lights*, an eight-track dose of fun. Ottawa showcases an ability to crank out bouncy pop-rock tunes with the infectious title track as well as "Tempo," displaying shades of Portugal. The Man in their sound. It's not all sonic sweetness, however, as the quintet display some grit on "The Good Kind," a track that shows off nifty guitar work. Ottawa certainly shows that it can create catchy tunes, and it all makes for a pretty solid debut on *Random Lights*. – Alex Bieler

Owen

Other People's Songs
Polyvinyl



★★★★

Owen's Mike Kinsella is no stranger to covers. The longtime Chicago indie stalwart has pumped out a number of tracks that he has lovingly reshaped to fit his solo act's intimate style, so it was not much of a surprise when he announced the release of the aptly-titled *Other People's Songs*. The eight-track album features a selection of punk and alt-rock tracks from bands like Smoking Popes, Depeche Mode, and Against Me!, with Kinsella turning them into lush acoustic numbers. His version of Blake Babies "Girl in a Box" is particularly interesting, taking an already sweet-sounding song about the disturbing kidnapping of Colleen Stan and making it sound unnervingly loving. It's Kinsella's ability to add a whole new dimension to songs like "Under the Blanket" and "Borne on the FM Waves of the Heart" that separates his covers from the note-for-note fare, and *Other People's Songs* certainly doesn't disappoint. – Alex Bieler

Emmanuelle Haïm

Handel - Messiah
Erato



★★★★

Though technically not Christmas music, Handel's *Messiah* has been a staple of the Holiday season since shortly after it debuted in Dublin in 1742. In any given December, one can find a great number of choirs performing parts – or all – of this masterwork celebrating Jesus as redeemer. If you have spent much time with the cracked vibrato of church lady soprano divas or spotty musicianship of once-a-year French horn players, you will appreciate the clear and perfect voice of soloist Lucy Crowe in "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion" and the balanced tonal richness of the orchestra of Le Concert d'Astrée throughout. Director Emmanuelle Haïm uses the same 20-member chorus as Handel intended. In "His yoke is easy, His burthen is light" they bounce along at a happy clip. This is a perfect soundtrack for decorating your tree but at well over two hours, you might want to take it in small bites. – Bryan Toy



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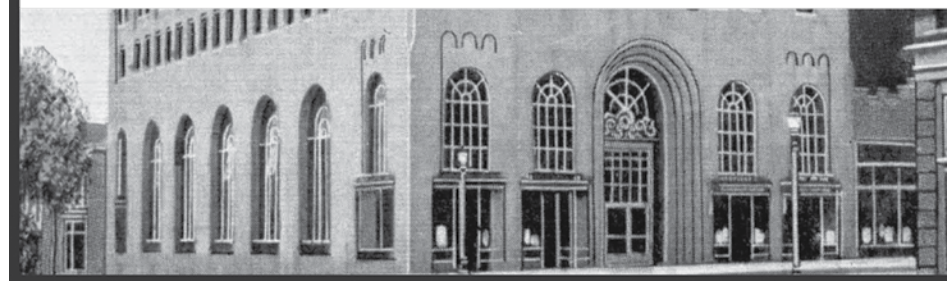
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Street Fashionista

Looking Your Winter Best

By: Lili Morton

Bitter cold weather has arrived, and a bit too abruptly at that. How are you going to stay stylish through the frigid Erie winter? Dressing for sub-freezing temperatures and looking good at the same time is a challenge. Sure, you can throw on a bunch of layers – large down coat, blanket scarf, and warm gloves – but more often than not, you’ll look like something out of the tundra and not fashionable.

I’m here to let you know that there are ways to stay on trend within the confines of comfort and practicality. Read on to learn what pieces you should add to your wardrobe to achieve this sense of balance.

Layering is nothing new, but winter layering requires more thought and skill to avoid

Dressing for sub-freezing temperatures and looking good at the same time is a challenge.

adding too much bulk to your frame. Thick, chunky layers are unattractive, uncomfortable, and will have you looking larger (which no woman ever wants). Instead, cover up with thin layers. For example, a striped turtleneck under a denim button-down under a cardigan is a great casual day look. Another option would be a long-sleeve thermal or button-down plaid top under a lightweight



sweater, topped off with a blazer.

Invest in a few pairs of thermal tights and leggings. This will save you if you’re wearing a dress or skirt to the office. They also work under straight- or wide-leg pants without adding too much bulk.

A Statement Coat is one of the easiest ways to pull off a stylish look while pushing through the winter winds. When I say “statement” coat, I’m going for a bold color, some sort of trim (think: leather or faux fur), or an asymmetrical cut. The robe coat is a perfect example. The cut – akin to a wrap coat – is reminiscent of a bathrobe and all attending coziness. Asos and Vince Camuto carry some of my favorites and they are affordable (between \$150-\$250). If you feel like splurging, Trina Turk makes a gorgeous, merlot-colored version of the robe coat.

Colored fur – a quintessential outerwear

look – is also trending this season. Wear a cropped-style fur coat that hits just below your hips so as not to be too overwhelming. These coats often come with a hefty price tag, but they are worth it. Topshop and BB Dakota have some great options for under \$200. WAYF also makes a pretty, pale blue, open-front jacket for only \$125. Unreal Fur, Rebecca Minkoff, and Diane von Furstenberg carry more splurge-worthy options.

Texture. A simple, white sweatshirt or structured top has new meaning when there is texture involved. Choosing a top that is quilted, velvet, felted, or has leather or fur accents is one of the easiest ways to stay on trend and comfortable during the winter. For the holidays, I love a metallic, cable knit sweater. It has the right amount of shine that offers a glam appearance without being excessive. Bouclé is another fabric with a thick, somewhat rough texture. A bouclé

tard-colored leather glove.

Footwear is essential. If your feet are frozen, game over. Investing in a pair of boots that will take you from home to office to grocery store or wherever you may be going is a must. The Sorel brand is a great option. These boots are stylish, sturdy, and weather-proof. My favorites are the Tofino or Joan of Arctic styles, which are taller, lace up, and come in different colors and trims.

Thankfully you don’t need to look too far to find any of these great winter looks. H&M in the Millcreek Mall has lots of options, and, as for a great statement coat, try Macy’s or TJ Maxx; online, take a look at Piperlime and Keaton Row.

Lili Morton can be contacted at LMorton@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Instagram @Morton_Street and find her online at KeatonRow.com/LaLili.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

jacket or shell creates a classic, timeless look.

Mixing textured pieces is another way to punch up your winter style. Try pairing a leather pencil skirt with a plaid, flannel button down, and booties.

Accessories should never be underrated when it comes to winter style. A stunning hat or stylish gloves have the capability of pulling an outfit together. What’s more, they will keep you warm. A slouchy beanie, wide-brimmed wool hat, or faux-fur trapper will add more personality and flare to any outfit.

As for your mitts, short gloves make for a nice casual look while going with a longer, elbow-length glove makes more of a statement. Instead of the traditional black, have some fun.

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Geeked Out: To The Red Planet!

NASA Gives Spaces Nerds Everywhere Chills as Cool Space Exploration is Once Again on The Horizon

By: John Lindvay

We're going to Mars, baby! NASA gave space nerds chills this past week when it announced plans to get manned missions to Mars by 2030. In its announcement, NASA went over exciting technologies required for this task, some of which are already in existence today.

It has been almost four years since the Space Shuttle Discovery's last mission came to a close – a bittersweet moment for many of us, as we witnessed the shuttle land for the last time.

While the Discovery was a symbol for many of us by helping to build the International Space Station (ISS), it had flaws that prevented it from being used for any mission outside low Earth orbit. For example, the Moon is outside low Earth orbit. With Discovery's wings and tail fin technology, it simply couldn't be a candidate for traveling deeper in space. Also, the heat shields used for the shuttle's reentry were designed for returning to Earth at the slower speeds of low orbit.

Thus, retiring the spacecraft was necessary in order to free up funds to develop the next great space craft.

Enter the Orion MPCV (Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle). The design of the Orion is specifically for deep space exploration and operations. Where Discovery could only be out in space for two weeks, the Orion can be there for 900 days. This is the spacecraft that will take astronauts to Mars – and back. It also has a brand-new heat shield that makes the old Apollo heat shield look like a baking tray.

While it might be easy to overlook the great strides in space exploration, let me help you get caught up on all the amazing operations happening in our solar system.

From "Journey to Mars," which was the biggest announcement at the press conference where NASA laid out the rest of the project including the Curiosity Rover landing back in 2012, to the latest weather satellite Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) that successfully entered Mars orbit in November, big things are on the horizon. One of the larger takeaways from the press conferences was how the



NASA

newly unveiled Commercial Crew program is helping pave the way for NASA to focus solely on deep-space exploration.

Commercial Crew is NASA's new program where companies, like Lockheed and SpaceX, bid on transporting astronauts to and from Earth and the ISS. With the private sector participating in commercial spaceflight, NASA has been able to shift funds to develop new technologies, such as Solar Electric Propulsion, improved communication arrays, and better launch-failure systems to save lives in the case of a catastrophic emergency.

The other key aspect to the Orion is the Space Launch System, or SLS, rockets. Back when I wrote about Kerbal Space Program, I mentioned these big daddies. These rockets have the capability to move up to 154,000 to 280,000 pounds of payload. The SLS is roughly the same height (385 feet) as the Saturn V rockets that we used during the Apollo missions. SLS, however, is highly adaptable to suit the various missions over the next 30 years.

It's an exciting time for space exploration again. Recently, we had the massive and amazing Rosetta Comet Landing, where the European Space Agency (ESA) finally landed a probe on the surface of a passing comet. This feat had been 12 years in the making and required several Earth gravity-assisted boosts to get the satellite to rendezvous with the comet. At one point, the satellite carrying the Rosetta probe passed Jupiter's orbit. THAT IS CRAZY!

Orion ties into this, as well, since NASA has planned a future mission where an Orion crew will fly out and do tests to a future captured comet that will be put in orbit around our Moon. Yeah,

The Orion MPCV (Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle). This is the spacecraft that will take astronauts to Mars – and back.

that's right, we humans are going to capture a comet and change its trajectory to put it in orbit around our Moon so we can study it. Totally badass.

There's once again reason – and jubilation – in looking up to the stars, as we are beginning to reach out further than ever before. One of the great discoveries from the Rosetta mission was the prevalence of carbon on comets, which is beginning to confirm our theories that comets are the universe's instigator of life on planets. We know that Mars at one point was a habitable planet, with lakes and rivers. Mars has ice and all the natural elements needed to make rocket fuel. This removes the previously held belief that we will need to bring raw materials with us in order to synthesize rocket fuel for the trip back home.

The most exciting part is that this is all being accomplished with a severely underfunded NASA – which only gets a measly \$17 billion of our federal budget. To put it in even better terms to understand how little money this is, NASA makes up only half a percent of our total federal budget. Imagine how much sooner we would be to Mars if that number was just double, taking up only 1 percent of our total budget.

For now, just go watch *Total Recall* and say it with me: "Here is the plan: Get your ass to Mars!"

John Lindvay can be contacted at jLindvay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @FightStrife.

Tech Bits

French Official Campaigns to Make 'Right to be Forgotten' Global

By: Mark Scott

Europe is pressing for its "right to be forgotten" ruling to go global.

The privacy decision, which allows individuals to ask that links leading to information about themselves be removed from search engine results, has been gaining traction worldwide ever since European officials released guidelines last week that demanded Google and others apply the ruling across their entire search empires.

And on Wednesday, Isabelle Falque-Pierrotin, who heads the French data protection authority and has campaigned heavily for expanding the ruling, defended European efforts to force search engines to apply the ruling to search results outside of Europe.

Currently, Google, which controls about 80 percent of Eu-

Under the current rules, individuals must first submit requests to Google about links that they want removed from online search results. So far, the search giant has received almost 180,000 requests.

rope's search market, removes links only from its local domains, like Google.fr in France and Google.de in Germany, while other domains, like Google.com, are not affected. That allows individuals — both in European and farther afield — to sidestep Europe's privacy rules as long as they use a non-European search domain.

But Ms. Falque-Pierrotin, who also heads a European body composed of the region's 28 national privacy regulators, said Google must remove links globally and not just from its European domains, adding that such a step was essential to protect every European's right to privacy.

"For Google, the answer

is worldwide," said Ms. Falque-Pierrotin, when questioned about the scope of the European ruling. "If people have the right to be delisted from search results, then that should happen worldwide."

The expansion of the ruling beyond Europe's borders has raised questions over whether the region's regulators would be able to enforce the decision in other jurisdictions like the United States, which do not have the same privacy rules.

Yet Ms. Falque-Pierrotin defended Europe's efforts, saying that as long as a European resident had requested that online links be removed, then any search engine must comply with that decision across the globe.

"The location of the search user, not the search engine, is the most important," said Ms. Falque-Pierrotin, who added that her agency had received roughly 100 complaints from French residents about how their "right to be forgotten" requests had been handled by Google.

"Now that we have the guidelines, we'll start to investigate each case," she said, in reference to policies that Europe's privacy chief announced last week.

Under the current rules, individuals must first submit requests to Google about links that they want removed from online search results. So far, the search giant has received almost 180,000 requests and has removed about 41 percent of these links, according to the company's transparency report. If individuals are not satisfied with Google's response, they can ask a country's data regulator to intervene.

Ever since Europe's highest court made the privacy ruling in May, Google has fought to limit the impact of the decision to its European operations, where an individual's right to privacy is often on par with freedom of expression. The opposite is true in the United

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ER Sports

Longing for expanded televised high school football coverage, evaluating OSU's right to a playoff bid, and cheering the ACC's Player of the Year: Erie's own James Conner

By James R. LeCorchick

FOOTBALL SEASON is by far my favorite time of the year, and every year I'm shocked by how fast the time flies. This season has been no different, as now the high school regular season has been over for weeks, the colleges are preparing for bowls (more on that in a second), and the NFL is down to three remaining games.

I have to admit, except for the local teams, I love viewing the games from Ohio when it comes to high school football. Our neighboring state does it correctly the entire season and the coverage of the state playoffs is outstanding – much better than the minimum coverage in Pa.

Ohio has seven classifications and I feel like I'm familiar with every school by the time their playoffs commence, while Pa., on the other hand, has four divisions and I know very little about many of the schools throughout the state because of the lack of coverage during the regular season.

A quick note on the Ohio state finals: Recently, seven games – one Thursday, three Friday, and three more Saturday – showcased some of the best players, teams, and action I've ever witnessed on the high school gridiron. There were several amazing individual and team performances. It was a great weekend for fans.

The only drawback was location. The games were played at Ohio State University and the stadium looked empty despite many large crowds. Until this season, the

James Conner is one of the best stories in college football this year and could be a first round pick if he enters the NFL drafty after his junior season with the Panthers.

games were played at Canton and Massillon, and these were perfect high school venues as the atmosphere added to the excitement.

However, nothing is perfect, and I'm sure it was a treat for the high school gridders to play at the home of the Buckeyes.

And speaking of the Buckeyes, in just about every sport, there is usually a team I flat out hate, despise, and spend a great deal of my time rooting against, often because the teams I like stink, so I am forced into this course of action. In college football, it is the Ohio State University.

Over the years, I have accumulated a great



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amount of dislike for Buckeye fans, as I have found them to be extremely arrogant and their teams to be extremely lucky. The latest episode shows the OSU football team ending up in the College Football Playoff.

Just over two months ago, the Buckeyes lost to a very mediocre Virginia Tech team, and many fans, who share my mindset, were crowing, "At least we don't have to worry about Ohio State getting into the College Football Playoff." I warned them not to get too happy, as things historically have a way of breaking their way.

And they did.

In a bit of a surprise move, the selection committee moved Ohio State from the fifth spot to the all-important fourth spot on the final selection day (this year's new system features four teams vying for the championship in a playoff-style system). In the process, the committee knocked TCU from the third slot all the way down to the sixth position, behind Ohio State and Baylor.

What did the Horned Frogs do to be treated this way? All they did on the final day of the season was beat Iowa State 55-3; apparently they needed to beat them 155-3 to impress this committee of morons.

Meanwhile, to the credit of the Buckeyes, they did smash 13th-ranked Wisconsin 59-0 – with a third string quarterback. While this was impressive, many people thought it was, "too little, too late." However, never underestimate the Buckeyes when it comes to getting the much-needed break.

I will admit that I was impressed with what OSU did, but still thought TCU did what it

PITT RUNNING back and former McDowell standout was named the Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year. Here he is pictured shredding the Boston College defense.

had to do to claim a spot in the final four. Stupid me!

I'm not quite sure what a horned frog is, but I wouldn't mess with one right now, as they have to be really ticked off after this royal hose job.

As we get ready for the bowl season, all I have to say is, "Roll Tide!"

And speaking of college football, how about McDowell graduate **James Conner** being named the Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year, ahead of last year's Heisman trophy Winner **Jameis Winston**? Every once in a while class does win out.

The University of Pittsburgh running back is one of the best stories in college football this year and could be a first round pick if he enters the NFL drafty after his junior season with the Panthers. He's just a sophomore.

The ex-Trojan is the fourth-leading rusher in the country with 1,675 yards on 277 carries (6.0 yards per carry). He also ranks second nationally in rushing touchdowns (24), fifth in scoring (12.0 ppg), and sixth in rushing yards per game (139.6 per contest). He led the ACC in each of these four categories.

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