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**ERIE READER**

January 21st, 2015 - February 4, 2015 / Vol. 5, No. 2 / ErieReader.com



# HYPÖCRİSY

**Injustices Surrounding Modern Food**

***Charlie Hebdo  
and the Freedom of Expression***

***East Avenue Task Force***

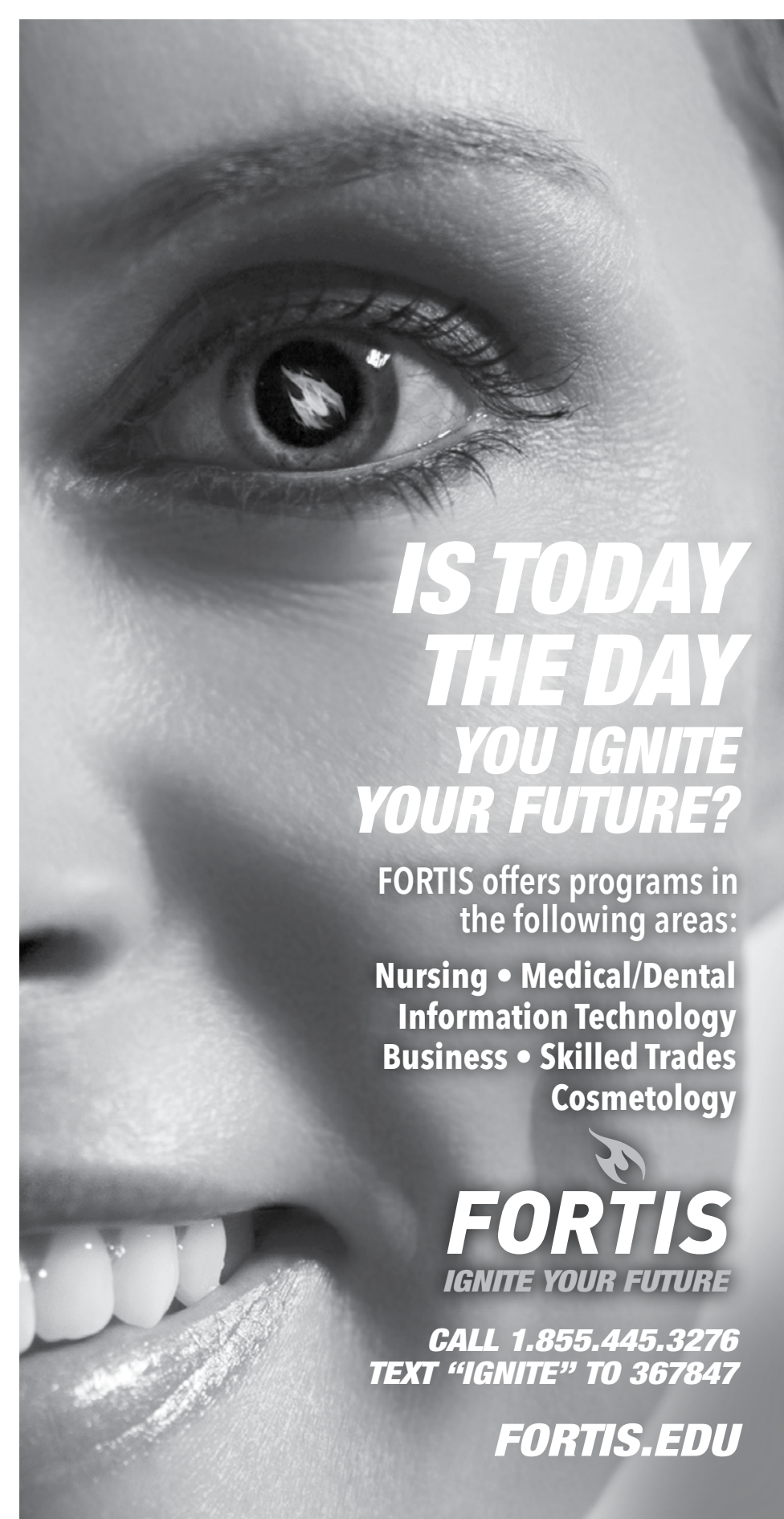
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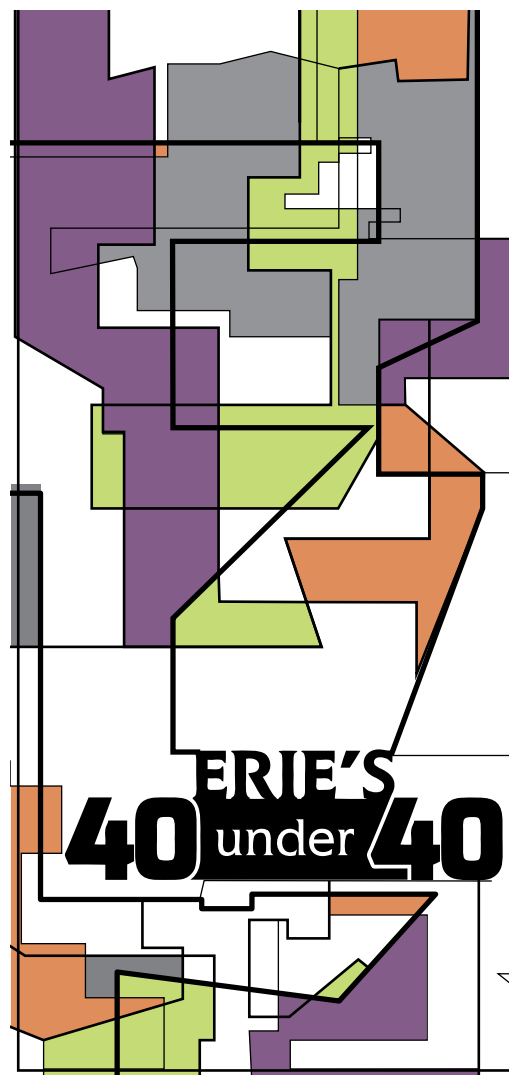
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A headline can say a lot with a little. Two words shape the feature you'll find on this issue's cover: Food Hypocrisy. What lies beyond is an exploration of our connection — or perhaps better put: our disconnection — with the food we consume.

Sure, many of us put some level of thought behind the choices we make when we purchase the various items we use to construct our breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, but is it enough? Is it enough to simply purchase "organic" and be done with the matter?

Katie Chriest, with her first contribution to the Reader, takes an in-depth look at our relationship with our food, which leads to a more important question: How do we treat the people who harvest our food?

Picking a tomato from of a grocery store display is easy. The questions posed here aren't, like: Just how far — and why — did that tomato have to travel in the middle of winter to make it into our shopping cart, and was the person who plucked the fruit from the vine treated fairly for his or her labor? But these considerations are worth of our time, because we lose sight of the small details that we perhaps write off as too simple for our attention. While we may think we're doing good — buying organic instead of non-organic — we must — if we wish to be a more thoughtful, progressive society that treats all individuals fairly and with dignity — think beyond that, lest we continue to act as if our standards for food consumption are higher or more noble that is truly the case.

Admittedly, though, this doesn't come with easy answers — especially when downtown Erie is a food desert, with the nearly 28,000 downtown residents lacking access to a grocery store within one mile. But reading Katie's feature is a good first step. Then questioning where the food we choose to purchase comes from rather than blindly force-feeding it to ourselves is the next.

Good headlines — aside from saying a lot with a little — generate conversation because they entice and provoke us to read onward. That is, if one happens to read the headline: "If you don't live in one of these cities, maybe you need to move," one would most likely read on, considering that most of us want the best opportunities for ourselves.

If you read that headline, published by Yahoo! Finance on Jan. 8, you'd find that two sentences followed: "San Francisco, Austin, Provo and Raleigh: these are just some of the best performing cities in the United States according the Milken Institute's annual list of dynamic metro areas. Each year, the economic think tank measures jobs, wages, salaries, and technological output to map out the cities it believes 'hold the key to

economic success."

What came after that was either encouraging or troubling, depending on where you live. In a bulleted list, Yahoo! revealed the top-five cities, the aforementioned four ranking at the top of "best performing cities." Immediately following were "the cities that declined the most." And if you've read the local headlines already, you know that Erie ranked No. 2 — on the second list.

While the findings of the nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank, whose mission is "to improve lives around the world by advancing innovative economic and policy solutions that create jobs, widen access to capital, and enhance health," should be both scrutinized and analyzed, they send a clear message that people considering to move to — or remain in — Erie, Pa., might want to think otherwise. That is, some people reading Yahoo! Finance who digested the words "If you don't live in one of these cities, maybe you need to move," now look at Erie — in a snapshot — one distinct

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**Good headlines — aside from saying a lot with a little — generate conversation because they entice and provoke us to read onward.**

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way: A declining city to be avoided in favor of ones holding the keys to economic success.

We can protest all we want — the study's flawed! but Erie didn't suffer nearly as bad as other cities during the recession! we're essentially the same as we were ten years ago and that's not that horrible, right?! — but the word is out there. Successful cities on the rise will point to studies like these as affirmation of their prosperity and progress and use them to market to those looking for places not just open to but embracing of innovation and entrepreneurship. Each time they do, people will be reminded that on the opposite end is Erie, Pa., with its reputation of decline, a city with the door to opportunity locked and no sight of the keys to economic success to be found.

Now, we can either react with denial or apathy, rejecting or ignoring these findings, or we can push forward by demanding better answers from those responsible for spurring economic growth in our region, because it's time the headlines change, and it's time we stop celebrating the management of mediocrity.

## Street Corner Soapbox

### The Complication of Freedom of Expression, Understanding Charlie Hebdo, and Addressing the Real Threat to Free Speech

By: Jay Stevens

**Y**ou pronounce it “SHAR-lee EB-doh.” The irreverent, bawdy Parisian satirical newspaper whose staff was gunned down by French-born Islamist terrorists for printing satirical cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

*Charlie Hebdo.*

The attack hit a nerve, in a way a number of other terror attacks recently didn't. Suicide bombings in Iraq, in Turkey. A sympathizer with ISIS holding hostages in a Sidney café. A bomb placed outside of the Colorado Springs NAACP office.

If you're a cynic, you say we paid attention to the *Charlie Hebdo* killings because it was a Muslim attack on European whites – not, say, like Boko Haram's massacre of 2,000 black Muslims in Baga, Nigeria. And maybe there's some truth to that.

But I like to think it's because we're idealistic.

I like to think we *felt*, because the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* was an attack on a civic ideal we hold sacred.

But *Charlie Hebdo* is an odd newspaper to rally around. It's provocative and often obscene. And when you look at the hook-nosed Jews, black politicians depicted as monkeys, and, yes, the Prophet Mohammed, it's hard to elevate feelings toward the paper.

Especially when American conservatives – with a taste for brazen racist grandstanding – demand we reprint *Charlie Hebdo* covers on our own newspapers and magazines. Forgetting – or not caring – that *Charlie Hebdo*'s covers insult and humiliate the Muslims who *didn't* shoot journalists, who *don't* resort to violence.

Liberals stuttered when pressed about *Charlie Hebdo*. Satire should be aimed upwards – targeting government, power, the rich, established institutions – not downwards. It ain't cool to aim barbs at the poor, minorities, outsiders, the powerless. And Pope Francis called *Charlie Hebdo* and others who make fun of others' faiths, “provocateurs,” and suggested there should be limits on free speech. And the Pope does have a point – we do tend to fetishize derisive wit – but the Pope's church has centuries of blood on its hands, and liberals unanimously agree *all* speech should be protected, even that which we don't like.

So this is when the French philosopher, poet, historian, and biting satirist Voltaire is trotted out: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

Only that quote really never came from Voltaire. His biographer, Evelyn Beatrice Hall, under the pen name “Stephen G. Tallentyne,” wrote it in her 1906 work, “Friends of Voltaire,” to describe Voltaire's views on free speech.

We do know it was Walt Kelly who said, “I may not understand what you say, but I'll defend to your death my right to deny it.”

*Charlie Hebdo*, too, is more complicated than what it appears. It's raw satire. *South Park* crossed with *Mad* magazine and put on a regimen of steroids. That cartoon of a black politician as monkey? That was in response to a quote from a far-right French nationalist about the politician, who called her a monkey, not a jab against the woman's race.

And Islamic terrorism is more complicated, too. It springs from an area that has been occupied and re-occupied by Western powers, that's torn by poverty, ruled by authoritarian regimes, and cursed with large reserves of oil. Islamic terrorists come from Syria, Palestine, Saudia Arabia, Egypt. The *Charlie Hebdo* killers sprung from France's Muslim community – a community separated from France by tradition, race, language, and often the target of the country's conservatives.

Terror, too, is a military-political response to an enemy that has a disproportionate amount of power. Like the Sons of Liberty, who terrorized Tories in colonial Massachusetts.

Yes, terror is hardly limited to Islam. Israeli settlers shoot, torture, and bomb Palestinians. Sikhs and Hindis have terrorists. Even Buddhist terrorists exist.

In the United States, non-Muslim extremists have been responsible for the bulk of terror acts since 9/11. The 2012 Sikh temple massacre, the 2009 murder of Dr. George Tiller, the 2008 shooting at a Universalist Church, the 2009 slaying of two Pittsburgh police officers, the 2014 Bundy Ranch stand-off – and the later shooting of two Las Vegas cops by Bundy gang members, who draped the Gadsen flag over the body of a slain cop, the same flag that symbolizes the Tea Party movement. All of these were committed by white supremacists, conservative Christians, and militia members.

And who can forget the Oklahoma City bombing?

But there is something about Islam that inspires violence, and specifically against speech. It was, after all, an Islamic fatwa that put Salman Rushdie in danger for writing the *Satanic Verses*. And it was Muslims who rioted after editorial cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper. And *Charlie Hebdo* itself was the target of a 2011 firebombing for its “Charia Hebdo” issue, which was “guest edited” by Mohammed.

After all, no call for the heads of Trey Parker or Matt Stone have been issued by the Mormon Church for *The Book of Mormon* – but then Mormons have two U.S. Senators,

came within 5 million votes of the presidency, and have some \$50 billion in assets, which is more than the GDP of Lebanon, Jordan, and Somalia.

Speculate away why Islam draws violent radicals. Perhaps because the faith offers disillusioned young people an anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist, anti-Western ideology packaged in a simplistic black-and-white explanation of the world, supposedly backed by *God*. Otherwise, they're invisible and unwanted. It's a call that draws even some Americans.

The lure of extremism is also its danger. It cannot abide criticism or opposition. It cannot abide creativity. And that's why extremism should be resisted wherever it appears.

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But the real danger of the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings is that they might obscure the real threat to free speech: Power.

Here in the United States, for example, the only person jailed for our government's illegal torture program is John Kiriakou, the man who leaked information about our torturers to the press. And our source about the NSA's spying program, Edward Snowden, is on the run. And ESPN's suspension of Bill Simmons for criticizing the NFL over how it handled Ray Rice, and of Keith Law for criticizing a co-host's Twitter-fed anti-evolution rant, should remind us that corporations, too, censor and obscure ideas and creativity. These things must be opposed.

Yes, *je suis Charlie*. But not just because I despise violent Islamic radicalism. And not because I despise violent extremism of all kinds. But because I see free expression as a real tool in building free and civil societies, and because it needs to be protected from anyone who strives to limit it for their own self-interest, whether they wear a keffiyeh or a three-piece suit.

Jay Stevens can be contacted at [Jay@ErieReader.com](mailto:Jay@ErieReader.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @Snevets\_Yaj.

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## Erie At Large

### East Avenue Task Force, More than an Election-Year Gimmick

By: Jim Wertz

East Avenue is Charming. By “Charming,” I mean that it has all of the appeal of the fictional town by that name in northern California, which is home to the namesake motorcycle club in the TV series, *Sons of Anarchy*.

A former restaurant and a former market sit burned out and blighted, and the myriad retail shops that have moved into the neighborhood have varying degrees of professionalism with regard to signage and facade. And by the way, there are two motorcycle clubs on the Ave., good neighbors though they may be.

East Avenue between Sixth and 12th streets is ostensibly cut off from the rest of the city, as is the neighborhood, which extends from the Bayfront Connector in the west to Gilson Avenue in the east.

As one local businessman put it, “We used to be a high-traffic area. Now we’re a destination spot” – meaning that you need a reason to be there.

You could drive completely around the “business district” – East Avenue between Sixth and 12th streets – without ever catching a glimpse of New York Lunch

or Clancy’s Pub, two Erie institutions that struggle to stay open in the locations they’ve always called home.

Construction of the Bayfront Connector and the closing of the McBride Viaduct turned the neighborhood into a desolate island. Sixth, 10th, and 12th streets offer the only east-west access through the neighborhood, and if you’re on one of those streets, there’s a good chance you’re not stopping on East Avenue.

But City Councilman Bob Merski hopes that will change. He’s put together a nascent group of business owners – and has invited the help of other public officials – to start a conversation about the future of East Avenue.

Merski is an alumnus of the Holy Family School and has taught at Wayne Elementary and East High School, both of which sit on opposing corners of Sixth Street and East Avenue, so he remembers when East Avenue bustled with neighborhood and cross-town traffic.

I invited Merski to walk and talk on East Ave. about the state of the neighborhood and his plans for what he calls the “East Avenue Task Force.”

“I’m not coming into this with the



solution,” says Merski. “But I drive down East Ave. every day and I wanted the business owners here – people with skin in the game – to get together so they can figure out what will be best for them. It’s not my intention to tell them how to make it better.”

In a city that loves to plan its next plan, it’s almost refreshing to hear someone admit that they don’t have a specific plan. But that doesn’t mean he doesn’t know what he wants to happen there or that he’s not in tune with the neighborhood.

We met on a blustery Erie afternoon in the parking lot of a long-closed bank near the corner of Eighth Street and East Avenue. We’d barely crossed Eighth before the first of many former students approached him to say, “hello,” and catch up. Some of these young men were his sixth-grade students

from years ago; others appeared to have a more recent history with the councilman. In any case, most seemed to know what he was doing there and wanted to talk East Ave.

“I used to love this place,” said a former student who pointed at the boarded-over remnants of Mi Fiesta restaurant and bakery, which was damaged by fire in 2010 and never reopened. “You could get food here for a couple dollars.”

By the time we sat down in the New York Lunch nearly three blocks away, he had shown me what I had hoped to see: That this initiative was more than an election-year gimmick.

There is a legitimate need for the East Avenue Task Force and organizations like it throughout the city. Neighborhoods are being forgotten in exchange for redevelopment along the State Street cor-

**City Councilman Bob Merski has assembled a group of business owners and has invited the help of other public officials to start a conversation about the future of East Avenue with the East Avenue Task Force.**

ridor in downtown Erie.

Nonprofit organizations, like the Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network in Little Italy and business-centered initiatives like the East Avenue Task Force, can take control of the fate of city neighborhoods.

The challenge facing neighborhoods in transition is that you often have a collection of stakeholders made up of those who insist that they’d like to “get back what they had” and those who are as unfamiliar with the customs and traditions of where they’ve arrived as are the native population with the customs and traditions of some foreign land. In such cases, much can be lost in translation.

Several East Ave. business owners have already met and will continue to do so. Let’s just hope that the previously celebrated planning void leaves the door wide open for an era of action and – unlike *Sons of Anarchy* – room for a sequel.

*Jim Wertz can be contacted at [jWertz@ErieReader.com](mailto:jWertz@ErieReader.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @Jim\_Wertz.*

## The Way I See It

### An Open Letter to Reader Readers

By: Rebecca Styn

Some of you may or may not know this, but during the humble beginnings of the *Erie Reader* back in 2011, I was also running for a contested seat on Erie’s County Council.

My opponent was (and still is) a strong candidate, and as a result, my campaign to serve the County as an elected official ended the night of the General Election. The experience was an eye-opener both in great and not so great ways, and exemplified some of the most vulnerable and humbling moments I have ever had.

Even had I known the end result ahead of time, I would still have run because I loved every moment

of being so directly plugged into the political current of Erie, and when I look at those who decide to run, at any level, I give them a great deal of credit whether I agree with their politics – especially those that run with the best interest of the greater good truly at heart.

During these four years, I’ve kept a vested interest in local government; through various degrees – from voting in the elections, to staying active on local community boards, to writing about local issues – I have found other necessary outlets to engage this passion because I love Erie. I’ve spent my entire life here – all 38 years of it.

From grade school to graduate degree, to all the jobs held in between and beyond, all have been accomplished locally.

But at times, the state of our community tries me – because I know we are capable of better. I’ve seen some significant changes in the last few years that signal better times lie ahead – I’ve seen younger people get elected into office, I’ve seen upsets in elections I never thought would happen, and perhaps more importantly, I see us trying. Yet I still see great, untapped potential, and I believe that that is something I can work for directly.

With that, I am planning to run

for a seat on Erie City Council. I’m writing this to let you all know that I will be taking a hiatus from my writing at *The Reader* as my campaign ramps up. To be fair and open and honest throughout these next several months, the editors and I all agreed it would be better to have me on the front lines than behind the pen, which would give me an unfair advantage with this platform in the coming months.

I plan to tackle issues similar to those I have written about over the years – and more – as there’s so much I see for all of us – for our present and for our future: A healthy and vibrant city characterized by a busy and bustling downtown; more offense and less defense in creating an environment that will build safer neighborhoods and stronger families; the creation of a climate that will

attract businesses and entrepreneurs so that those “jobs” we keep talking about can be actualized; a luminous arts community; and decisions made that don’t just protect the status quo but rather help us progress and prosper. We need to ensure we keep all the good we currently have and capitalize on that through untapped resources.

I don’t have all the answers, but I do have a passion for our city and for its future – and most importantly an open mind to learn from all of you – because whether you realize it or not, each one of you brings something to the table for the future of Erie.

*Want to know more? Please join me at my kickoff on Wednesday, January 28th from noon to 1 p.m. at the Erie Art Museum, (20 E. Fifth St.). Additionally, you can reach me at [Rebecca@StynForCityCouncil.com](mailto:Rebecca@StynForCityCouncil.com).*

## News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

### Spidey Sense Gets Real

Among the breakthroughs demonstrated by the computer chip company Intel's RealSense system is a cocktail dress from Dutch designer Anouk Wipprecht that not only senses the wearer's "mood," but also acts to repel (or encourage) strangers who might approach the wearer. Sensors (including small LED monitors) measure respiration and 11 other profiles, and if the wearer is "stressed," artistic spider-leg epaulets extend menacingly from the shoulder to suggest that "intruders" keep their distance (in which case the dress resembles something from the movie "Aliens") — or, if the wearer feels relaxed, the legs wave invitingly. The experimental "spider dress" was showcased at January's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. [Daily Mail (London), 1-7-2015]

### Government in Action

Because Congress and presidents often change their minds, NASA recently continued to build on a \$349 million rocket testing tower in Mississippi for a "moon" project that had been canceled back in 2010. The now-idle tower sits down the road from a second rocket testing tower being built for its "replacement" mission — an "asteroid" project. Critics, according to a December Washington Post examination, blame senators who believe it smarter to keep

contractors at work (even though useless) because, Congress and the president might change their minds yet again. Said a high-profile critic, "We have to decide ... whether we want a jobs program or a space program." NASA's inspector general in 2013 identified six similar "mothballed" projects that taxpayers continue to maintain. [Washington Post, 12-15-2014]

**U**n-Government: About 240 of the 351 police departments in Massachusetts claim their SWAT and other specialty operations are not "government" services, but rather not-for-profit corporate activities and are thus entitled to avoid certain government obligations. Even though their officers have the power to carry weapons, arrest people and break down doors during raids, these "law enforcement councils" refuse to comply with government open-records laws for civilian monitoring of SWAT activities. The latest refusal, by the 58 police agencies of the North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council, was filed in state Superior Court in December. [Daily News of Newburyport, 12-13-2014; Washington Post, 6-26-2014]

**D**IY Policing in Seattle: A Seattle Times columnist suffered a "smash-and-grab" break-in of his car in October, but was brushed off by the Seattle Police Department and told simply to go file an insur-

ance claim. However, he and his energetic 14-year-old daughter located the perpetrators themselves by GPS and called for police help, only to be chastised by the dispatcher, warning that they could get hurt. Only when a local crime-fighting TV show adopted the case, along with the suburban Sammamish, Washington, police department, was the gang of thieves finally pursued and apprehended (resulting in charges for "hundreds" of smash-and-grab thefts). (Bonus: One alleged perpetrator was quoted as saying the thefts were undertaken "because we knew the police wouldn't do anything.") [Seattle Times, 10-31-2014, 11-7-2014]

### Wait, What?

**M**s. Connie Lay passed away in Aurora, Indiana, in November, leaving a last will and testament that calls for her German shepherd, Bela, to be promptly buried with her — even though Bela is still alive and peppy. Ms. Lay preferred sending Bela to a certain shelter in Utah, but if that "is not possible" or involves "too much expense" (judgments to be decided by a close friend, not publicly named), Bela is to be euthanized. At press time, the friend still had not decided. [WCPO-TV (Cincinnati), 12-17-2014]

**M**other of All Surgeries: After 15 months of faulty diagnoses, Pam Pope, 65, finally got the (bad) news: a rare, slow-moving cancer of the appendix, "pseudomyxoma peritonei." The malignancy was so advanced that her only hope was the removal of all organs that she could possibly do without.

In a six-surgeon, 13-hour operation in May 2014 at Hampshire Clinic in Basingstoke, England, Pope parted with her appendix, large bowel, gall bladder, spleen, womb, ovaries, fallopian tubes, cervix and most of her small bowel. She has endured massive chemotherapy, is on a nightly drip for hydration, and still remains frail, according to a December report in London's Daily Mail. [Daily Mail, 12-15-2014]

**W**hen someone swiped the iPhone of Adam Wisneski, 31, on Jan. 2, he rode his bicycle to Chicago's Shakespeare District police station to file a stolen-property report. He parked the bike inside the door, filled out the form, prepared to leave — and noticed the bike was missing. He told an amused officer he needed another form. (Officers on duty said perhaps a homeless man who was in the station took it and are "making an effort," said Wisneski, to find it.) [WBBM-TV (Chicago), 1-5-2015]

### What Researchers Do

**T**he natural enemy of the "hawkmoth" (for 65 million years) is the bat, but thanks to a recent study by biologists at Boise State University and the University of Florida, we know the reason why so many hawkmoths are able to avoid their predator: They signal each other by rubbing their genitals on their abdomens, which somehow mimics bats' own high-frequency sounds, thus jamming the bats' aural ability to detect the hawkmoths' locations. Professors Jesse Barber and Akito Kawahara, working in Malaysia, tethered a hawkmoth to a wire and then tracked a

bat, using slow-motion cameras and high-definition microphones, painstakingly examining the results for a 2014 journal article. [Daily Mail (London), 12-11-2014]

**B**ringing the Total Number of Cow Sounds to Three: A team from Britain's University of Nottingham and Queen Mary University of London found (according to a December BBC News report) that cows make two "distinctly different" call sounds to their calves, depending on whether the calves are nearby (low-frequency mooing, with mouth closed) or separated (higher frequency). The team said it spent 10 months digitally recording cow noises, then a year analyzing them by computer. [BBC News, 12-16-2014]

### Least Competent Criminals

**N**ot Nearly Ready for Prime Time: (1) A potential robber was turned away from a store on East Harry Street in Wichita, Kansas, on Dec. 11 after he demanded cash, explaining to the clerk that he "had six children and needed the money." The clerk told the man he had too many kids. The man, apparently chastened, fled the store empty-handed. (2) A masked man approached a clerk at Sam's Mart in New Haven, Connecticut, on Nov. 29 and passed a note demanding money while pointing his finger at the clerk (perhaps an inept attempt to feign having a gun in his pocket). According to police, the clerk grabbed the finger and threatened to break it, sending the man fleeing into the night. [Wichita Eagle, 12-12-2014] [New Haven Independent, 12-1-2014]

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BREAD FOR THE WORLD

# Food Hypocrisy

## Injustices Surrounding Modern Food

By: Katie Chriest

I'm on the phone with my mom, who's in the produce section of the Edinboro Giant Eagle, hoping to find a tomato that tastes like a tomato. But since it's mid-winter and tomatoes have traveled farther than most of us would for our vacations, her chances are slim.

"Should I buy the organic," she asks me, "or these vine-ripened? Or what about the heirlooms? Would they taste better?"

Ordinarily, I'd just say "Buy organic" and be done with it. But I've been reading the recent *LA Times* investigative report about barbaric conditions for Mexican tomato farmworkers. The report reads like *CliffsNotes to The Grapes of Wrath*. Forced laborers living in camps with no running water, bathing and washing clothes in irrigation ditches, and sleeping on crates in shacks. And the proverbial company store,

where necessities are overpriced to keep low wages from being saved up for escape.

As John Steinbeck wrote, "There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success."

And so Mom's question takes on a heaviness. Somehow, the simple decision of what to eat — a basic necessity of all life forms — became enormously complicated, mired in contradiction and hypocrisy. And never is that more evident than during the holidays.

Jane Schuchert Walsh, a professor of Social and Organizational Studies at Gannon University who has researched this issue extensively, explains, "During the holidays, people are making a lot of food donations, but not many people are thinking about their connection to the larger food sys-

tem. Charitable food donations solve short-term problems, but they don't provide long-term, sustainable solutions. We have to ask, do charitable donations simply subsidize the existing system that makes these donations necessary? Instead, how can consumers demand just practices from large agribusinesses and corporations so that everyone in the food system is treated fairly and with dignity?"

And demand we must, as the *LA Times* clarifies: "American companies have not made oversight a priority because they haven't been pressured to do so. There is little public awareness of harsh conditions at labor camps."

Powerful marketing, public relations and lobbying teams are employed by Big Ag to ensure we consumers never connect the dots between our dollars and the wealth of injustices surrounding

modern food. So instead of helping the world become what we envision, we're helping corporations commit atrocities. We are bandaging a wound that we're also picking at. And while it's a worthy goal to feed others hungrier and less fortunate than we are, we ought to focus on the root of the problem: The way we're feeding ourselves.

Which brings me back to Mom's tomatoes.

Generally, organic anything has been produced more ethically. And at least the farmworkers haven't been exposed to dangerous doses of pesticides, which often make them sick after they've already moved on from their temporary jobs, leaving them no recourse for compensation. But the *LA Times* report about abuses in Mexico is fresh in my mind. So I give Mom the best advice I can think of.

"For now, buy your tomatoes at Walmart."

"Walmart?!" she asks incredulously. The poor woman has endured years of my blustery anti-Walmart crusading (sorry, Mom).

But in January 2014, Walmart made headlines when they joined the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Program. This

**A recent *LA Times* investigative report about the barbaric conditions of Mexican tomato farmworkers reads like *CliffsNotes to The Grapes of Wrath*.**

means that the tomatoes — and for now, *only* tomatoes — sold at Walmart are certified as having been harvested by people whose working conditions meet ethical standards. Fast food restaurants like Subway and Chipotle and foodservice corporations like Aramark have also signed on, and the list (available at [www.fairfoodprogram.org/partners](http://www.fairfoodprogram.org/partners)) is growing.

Walsh emphasizes that, "If you don't see the Fair Food Label, it is likely that you are connected, by being a consumer, to abuses in the fields, child labor, sexual assault, and in the most severe cases, slavery. But, by shopping at grocery stores that have signed Fair Food Agreements, such as Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, and Walmart, you can be sure that your tomatoes are harvested under fair, just, and ethical conditions."

This is wonderful news, if for no other reason than it demonstrates the fact that movements *work*. Thanks to consumer pres-

sure, thousands of farmworkers are being treated with the sort of humanity we all deserve.

Meanwhile, thanks to collective pressure from employees, Walmart recently pledged to raise its starting wage above the federal minimum. Time will tell whether this is a meaningful policy shift or yet another brilliant public relations scheme. Regardless, these changes exemplify the mountain-shifting potential of social movements.

Thus Walmart — working its trademark public opinion magic — gets to be perceived as altruistic. Of course, this is the corporation also famous for driving neighborhood grocers out of business, and contributing to the rise of food deserts like the one discussed in a recent *Reader* article. The Erie County Department of Health states that seven of Erie County's ten designated food deserts — where “at least 33 percent of residents live one mile or more from the nearest grocery store or supermarket” — are right in the city of Erie. It's no secret that the corporate model of undercutting local grocers' prices is masterfully exemplified by Walmart. And it's also no secret that many of us have supported this model by shopping there, even as it's driven our fellow citizens out of business.

Still, Walmart's example of prioritizing farmworker justice should catalyze progress. But as *The Nation* highlighted in late November, “Walmart, which is known to be a major lobbying force on food stamp issues in Washington, appears to be suppressing wages and letting Uncle Sam pick up the slack. And it profits further as a purveyor of subsidized food: Of every dollar of food stamps spent in this country, roughly 18 cents is spent at Walmart.” Also in November, *Catholic Online* concluded, “While the world's largest retailer takes pride in battling hunger, many of its employees go hungry.”

Walmart, of course, is not the only corporate driver in our hypocritical food system. Nevertheless, the company is a perennial example of why we consumers must be diligent, if we wish to contribute overall to the greater good.

Meanwhile, retail employees' circumstances pale in comparison to the horrific conditions faced by farmworkers both abroad and on U.S. soil. And this is not an issue relegated to distant California or Florida farmlands. A 2004 report by The Center for Rural Pennsylvania states, “Each year, approximately 45,000 to 50,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers are employed in Pennsylvania to assist in harvesting the Commonwealth's fruit, vegetable, and mushroom crops. It is ironic that the efforts of migrant and seasonal farmworkers allow the U.S. population access to high quality and affordable foods while they may suffer from food insecurity, malnutrition, poor health status, poverty, and low job security, and may live and work in unsafe and unsanitary conditions.” The authors note, however, that “The lack of accu-



**A mural of Cesar Chavez, Co-Founder of the United Farm Workers (left), and fresh produce at Erie's Whole Foods Co-op (right).**

rate data on the number of farmworkers is a nationally recognized problem,” and “The exact number of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Pennsylvania is unknown because these data are not systematically collected.” On some sites, in fact, I found numbers closer to 100,000. A report by Dickinson University looked specifically at the enormous Pennsylvania apple harvest, which “attracts tens of thousands of Latino migrant laborers.”

The recent trend towards eating locally-grown food has myriad positive implications. But with Erie County as a center of agriculture, we must wonder if some of these injustices are occurring right in our own backyards. And though most of our winter produce in Erie comes from far away, we are still participating locally in distant atrocities each time we shop.

Cesar Chavez, Co-Founder of the United Farm Workers, clarified the issue: “Every time we sit at a table to enjoy the fruits and grain and vegetables from our good earth, remember that they come from the work of men and women and children who have been exploited for generations.”

In decades of dissociating from our food sources, we've endorsed cost-cutting measures without questioning how we can get produce from other continents for pennies. We've encouraged the sourcing of food from Big Ag companies with labor practices we voted out in 19th century. “Well, in *this* economy ...” we rationalize, without finishing the thought; the thought that would have to end “... I need to save money any way I can, even if it means turning a blind eye to the horrors I'm financing.”

It's an ugly truth, to be certain. But unless we demand change, we send a crystal clear message to Big Ag: “Go ahead and treat

your employees in a way that completely opposes my personal code of ethics. Here is my money. I support you.”

And so, while we donate to end hunger, we also perpetuate it.

The National Farm Worker Ministry states definitively: “This is the great paradox of our food system: The very people who work to feed the U.S. struggle to feed their own families.”

Farmworkers are often paid per bucket of produce they gather, and multiple sources report typical per-bucket earnings at 40-50 cents. So let's take for example the sweet potatoes that were recently on many holiday tables. According to the North Carolina Farmworker Institute, this means that “a farmworker must pick and haul two tons of sweet potatoes to earn \$50.”

Meanwhile, we can buy organically-grown local sweet potatoes, from late summer into the holiday season, right here in Erie. One source is the Whole Foods Co-op. Devoted for more than 30 years to just employment practices and ethically grown food, the Co-op stocks only produce grown according to organic standards, serves as a drop-off for several year-round shares of Community Supported Agriculture, or CSAs, and sources locally whenever possible. Co-op employees have toured several regional farms to see the ways in which food is produced, and farmers who sell their goods there verify in writing that they comply with organic standards, which typically translate into better conditions for workers.

Care Kerlin, Co-op general manager, says, “When you know where your food comes from, and you know the hands that have touched your food, that's real connection. It's sacred, and it has ancient roots. The closer you can get to where your food

comes from, the better off we all are.”

The bottom line is this: It shouldn't be so hard to buy our food without wondering who had to go hungry to get it to us. And if we all demanded fair food labeling at corporate food outlets, it wouldn't be. We could scan the produce section for foods labeled fair, and fill our carts without also filling the pockets of companies perpetuating the very conditions we wouldn't tolerate ourselves; conditions we often try to ameliorate during the holidays.

So Walsh offers this empowering point: “Fair Food Agreements resulted from consumer pressure. Consumers demanded that their grocery stores, fast-food corporations and food service providers use their corporate power to require just wages and working conditions from the tomato growers. If the growers don't abide by the agreement, the corporation will take its contract to another grower who does. So if you shop at a corporate grocer which hasn't signed a Fair Food Agreement, you can take a letter to the manager asking the store to do so (an example letter is available at: [ciw-online.org/Resources/tools/manager%20letters/SSLTR.pdf](http://ciw-online.org/Resources/tools/manager%20letters/SSLTR.pdf)). Corporations will yield, eventually, to what their consumers want.”

Obviously, there is some truth to that aforementioned “in this economy ...” mindset. Millions of Americans live in poverty, thousands right here in Erie County. It would be pompous and naive to suggest that members of our community who have extremely limited access to food, let alone the resources to purchase it selectively, should then add consumer guilt to their considerable burdens.

But thousands of people locally and nationwide *do* have the luxury of choice. Thousands give generously of their resources throughout the year. If we leverage some of that benevolent energy, we can collectively pressure our corporate food providers to stop the injustices we refuse to support. We can dig out the weed of hunger at its taproot, and eliminate it for good.

Katie Chriest can be contacted at [kChriest@ErieReader.com](mailto:kChriest@ErieReader.com).

## Considering the City

### Viaduct Moxie

By Civitas member Lisa Austin and guest co-author, architect Adam Trott

In a year or two, once funding and planning is in place, the City plans to follow the recommendation of the LR Kimball (LRK) team and demolish the McBride Viaduct. However, there is still a glimmer of hope if a legal entity is formed to repurpose the bridge.

Built in 1937 to get cars, trucks, and people over the railroad tracks, the Viaduct connects East Avenue from East 12th Street to East 19th Street. Neglected for decades (current water drainage is in disrepair), the hulking structure was closed to vehicles in 2010. Though the Viaduct is no longer capable of supporting cars and trucks, it remains a vital artery, and if we are good stewards this year, the gift from our Depression-era forebears may be enjoyed by our grandchildren's grandchildren.

With crime, poverty, and taxes all on the rise in Erie, spending money to save the Viaduct may appear to be a misuse of limited available resources. However, the Viaduct is a good investment, because it holds promise for revitalization and will maintain East Avenue's connection to the surrounding ar-



MICHAEL BEIGHTOL

**The current plan for the McBride Viaduct is demolition. But some citizens think destruction is not the best answer.**

populations. While fostering a positive "sense of place" in a neglected part of the city, a Viaduct art-park will attract industrial and cultural tourists and train-spotters.

New urban gardens at the Viaduct (built and maintained with involvement of community, business, and school groups) along with linkage to other paths connecting a series of attractive public spaces (Wintergreen Gorge, East Landing, Dobbins Landing, Liberty Park and Frontier Park), could establish an Eastside destination for pedestrians, runners, and bicyclists. Such an "Emerald Necklace" concept could foster a more cohesive city.

**Though the Viaduct is no longer capable of supporting cars and trucks, it remains a vital artery, and if we are good stewards this year, the gift from our Depression-era forebears may be enjoyed by our grandchildren's grandchildren.**

reas. The value of this area and the need for revitalization is finally starting to gain traction with the recent acknowledgment by local politicians Bob Merski, Andre Horton, and Pat Harkins.

#### Highway & Railroad Block Circulation

The Bayfront Highway forms a gigantic horseshoe of asphalt around the city. The highway has severed neighborhoods, leaving dead-end streets. In addition, the CSX railroad – with myriad trains passing each day – divides Erie's downtown core. Progressive cities, including other Great Lakes cities like Buffalo and Milwaukee, are removing obstacles to attractive pedestrian and bicycle circulation. While LRK's and the City view the planned path along Buffalo Road and the Bayfront as an adequate replacement for the Viaduct, it is not. The Viaduct provides an on-axis link for East Avenue over the railroad, correcting the otherwise dead-ends at the tracks, and it makes a di-

rect connection to the East Avenue business corridor with a 29-foot-wide path. In contrast, the Bayfront does not connect, or acknowledge, East Avenue. If the Viaduct is demolished, the pedestrian and bike route will be shifted to a 9-foot path next to a busy highway.

#### Expert Plan

The city hired LRK, a firm with ten offices in five states but headquartered in Ebensburg, Pa., which provides design and planning support for architecture and civil and environmental engineering projects, to conduct a study of the Viaduct to make recommendations. Last year's study advocated tearing down the Viaduct, additionally proposing that construction of a four-way interchange (and pedestrian pathway) at Buffalo Road and the Bayfront is an adequate replacement.

While the LRK plan is a reasonable solution for cars and trucks and helps East-West pedestrian connectivity, it unfortunately suggests a critical anti-pedestrian/bike component. Demolishing the spacious Viaduct, with its compelling views of the city and the tracks, and diverting pedestrians to a 9-foot-wide path alongside the Bayfront Connector is a step backwards by today's urban design standards, which give preference to the comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists over drivers.

#### Flawed Study

City planning projects should typically en-

gage urban designers to ensure proper team expertise. Urban designers know how sidewalks, bike paths, public transit, and creative circulation options promote vital, efficient cities. Though the Viaduct is located in a city, the LRK team conducting the Viaduct study included only engineers. Thus, LRK focused more on traffic and not nearly enough on urban design. The study failed not from a lack of good effort, but from employing an incomplete team. The plan does not adequately consider how quality pathways build communities, promote health, and foster economic development.

#### Perception & Potential

Some who look at the Viaduct see nothing but a liability. They are unaware of how investment in significant public spaces, such as the Portland Harbor Drive and the Milwaukee Park East Freeway, can contribute positively to a community's public image, safety, jobs, and tax-revenue-providing businesses.

In addition to providing safe passage over the tracks for pedestrians, a repurposed Viaduct could create better construction jobs. Vital public spaces, like the one proposed for the Viaduct, have been proven to spur private investment, thus creating more jobs and raising the tax base.

After stabilization of the bridge, public history and art projects can be commissioned (with the help of the Erie Art Museum, Preservation Erie, and others) to celebrate Erie's manufacturing legacy and immigrant

#### Costs

It is speculated to cost \$3 to 4 million to stabilize the Viaduct; however, the \$2.3 million PennDOT has scheduled for demolition can be used for stabilization. Another \$1 to 5 million must be raised by a new public-private partnership to enhance and maintain the Viaduct.

#### Next Steps

To save the Viaduct, there must be community support. A legal entity, such as a public-private partnership, must be formed to work with the city and other stakeholders to plan renovations, manage funds, and supervise a long-term maintenance program. Potential partners who have indicated willingness to become involved in this effort including: Bike Erie, Erie's Public Schools, the Erie Art Museum, the Lake Erie Region Conservancy and Preservation Erie.

#### Call To Action

If you believe the Viaduct is worth saving, don't be quiet about it. Let City leadership hear from you. Bring some friends to the one-hour *Viaduct Update* on Sunday, Jan. 25 at 1 p.m. at Poets' Hall, 1136 East Lake Road.

Civitas members can be reached at their website [www.civitaserie.com](http://www.civitaserie.com), via Facebook at *CivitasErie*, by emailing [Lisa@civitaserie.com](mailto:Lisa@civitaserie.com), or by scheduling a Friday morning meeting at the Civitas office in the Masonic Building, 32 W. Eighth St. Adam Trott can be reached by phoning his office (814) 456-8667.

## Tony Hale Brings His Next Big Thing to Erie

The Star Talks About, *Veep*, *Arrested Development*, and His Work with Emma's Footprints

By: Alex Bieler

For several years of my life, Tony Hale was Buster Bluth. Hale played the extremely neurotic member of the eccentric Bluth clan in the critically-acclaimed – and beloved – TV series *Arrested Development*, a role that could easily serve as the singular highlight in many a thespian's career. Still, Hale has had several highlight performances since *Arrested*'s early cancellation, including winning a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series for his portrayal of Gary Walsh, the incredibly loyal personal aide of Julia Louis-Dreyfus' Vice President Selina Meyer on *Veep*.

Hale's work on big and small screen isn't his only creative outlet, mind you. The lanky actor is also an author, having co-written the children's book *Archibald's Next Big Thing*, an impressively-illustrated and heartwarming tale of a chicken who is too focused on the future to truly appreciate the present. It's a message that's near and dear to Hale, and one that will help bring him to The Gem City this February.

The actor will be in Erie for a pair of events that will support Emma's Footprints, an organization that helps people who have experienced the death of an infant or lost a child during pregnancy. Locals can first see Hale at Storytime with Tony, an intimate Q&A with the actor about his life and *Archibald's Next Big Thing* from 10 a.m. to noon at the Blasco Memorial Library. Later that night, the Ambassador Center will host Emma's Next Big Thing: A Valentine's Day Masquerade, a fancy party featuring food, desserts, entertainment, and a live auction, all while Hale plays the part of dinner guest, bartender, and dancer.

I had a chance to chat with Hale after he had wrapped filming on the fourth season of *Veep* and we discussed his connection with Emma's Footprints, finding contentment in his work, and life after Buster.

**Alex Bieler:** How did you get involved with Emma's Footprints?

**Tony Hale:** My buddy Tracy [Dailey] started this organization, and I met her through some other friends of mine and I just love what she's doing. Because of her own experience, she started [Emma's Footprints] and really provides all of these amazing services for families who have experienced pregnancy and infant loss. You don't hear about those services much, and I think it's wonderful that she really used her own situation to spark this. She knew that I had come out with a children's book and we thought "Hey, let's try to come up with something that we can do together" and that's how this Valentine's Day soiree happened.

**AB:** I've actually got the book [*Archibald's Next Big Thing*] over to my left here. I read it about a week ago and I'm really impressed



THE BUJ BROTHERS

**Renowned comedian Tony Hale will come to Erie Saturday, Feb. 14.**

have to wake yourself up 100 times a day to where you are." It's something where I have to wake myself up all the time because I can find myself in other places, find myself living in a "what if?," and find myself daydreaming, anywhere else than where I am. I talk about it a lot and I write books about it and I encourage [contentment] because it's something I have to remind myself about.

**AB:** How has life been as an Emmy winner?

**TH:** [Laughs] Oh, it's just a king's life. When that happened, it was by far one of the most

with it, especially the overall size of it. It looks great and there were a couple moments where I literally laughed out loud.

**TH:** Good, thanks! It was a super-fun process – something I had never done before, so I learned a lot of lessons, but it was a good time.

**AB:** Was writing a children's book something that had interested you for a while?

**TH:** The message of the book talks about something that had interested me for a while because it came from my own experience. I've been in this business for a really long time and I've got some great gigs, but I've still found myself looking for the next gig. Many times we get so focused on our next adventure that we'll miss the adventure that we're on, and that's something that I really had to wake up to and love to talk about. I met this friend of mine, Victor Huckabee, at an art show in L.A., and he had created this character Archibald and just started talking and we thought "Hey, let's combine these two things and come up with something" and that's how the children's book idea happened.

**AB:** I watched a comedic actor table discussion on *The Hollywood Reporter* where you had talked about contentment at your current gig. Given that you're currently on *Veep*, are you still struggling with that or has your own book helped?

**TH:** Because of my experience in the past, it woke me up, but I think it's a discipline and it's something I struggle with all the time. My friend has a great quote of "You

surreal moments in my life. Thankfully, I had such a great night; because of the lesson I have been learning and trying to bring awareness to and practice, I was very present. Because of that, I remembered everything, and it was an awesome, awesome night. Your life doesn't change dramatically, and I'm just thankful that I have a job [Laughs]. That was a great night.

**AB:** I watched the clip where you won and I saw that you had a note prepared. I've always been intrigued by this, but what does it feel like to write a little note just in case your name gets called?

**TH:** I know! It feels slightly narcissistic and arrogant because you're doing something that might not happen, but you also don't want to be that guy who gets up there and not have anything. When that stuff happens, it's because of the support of a lot of people, so you don't want to be in that situation and not bring awareness to that, so you always have to be awkwardly prepared for it.

**AB:** Your wife won a Daytime Emmy, didn't she?

**TH:** She did; she won for makeup. She's a super-talented makeup artist, and she did the special effects episode for *All My Children*, I believe, and it was a Halloween episode, so she got an Emmy.

**AB:** So it's a family thing. I hope [your daughter] Loy doesn't have too much pressure on her.

**TH:** [Laughs] Oh, she better get one!

**AB:** *Arrested Development* was such a cult

favorite. Did you ever feel worried that you would be known just as Buster Bluth or has your success with *Veep* helped with that?

**TH:** Oh yeah. I also understood the fact that Buster is pretty much a cartoon character. He's so extreme and neurotic and has so much going on in that body. I knew that leaving the show, it wasn't like someone was going to be casting a lawyer in a movie and be like, "You know, that guy who played Buster Bluth, he would be perfect." I knew it took time to put yourself out there and show what you could do, and Gary, the character I play on *Veep*, is not as neurotic, but he definitely has some neuroses. That's what auditioning is for. I really enjoy auditioning because I enjoy the opportunity to showcase different things and you don't really have the job yet, so you can experiment.

**AB:** Is there a certain type of role you enjoy more than others?

**TH:** Any role that pays I really, really enjoy.

**AB:** That's a good answer.

**TH:** I don't know... it is fun because Buster and Gary have a lot of similarities. I did a couple of episodes of *Law & Order* where I played these interesting characters and it was heavy, but then I did *Happythankyoumoreplease*. I enjoy being able to branch out and do very different stuff, so anything that breaks the mold is fun.

**AB:** I noticed that you were on *Law & Order* and you were also on *The Sopranos*. You had some heavy stuff before *Arrested Development*.

**TH:** Yeah, on the *The Sopranos* I played a male nurse who gave chemotherapy to Uncle Junior and I was so scared that day. I was really young and I had done bit parts on that and *Sex and the City*, and those were really, really big shows in New York when I was living there and those were the shows to get and I was so nervous, oh my God. I was surrounded by these incredibly iconic characters on *The Sopranos*, and I was like "Okay, Tony, don't screw up; just keep it together and don't poop your pants on TV."

**AB:** [Laughs] I've read that you'll break and laugh on set, so were you frightened of that, although that show wouldn't be quite as funny.

**TH:** Yeah, it's really unfortunate. It's incredibly unprofessional because I can't keep it together. Like Julia [Louis-Dreyfus] for instance; I'm in such close proximity to her on set all of the time and she's just the smallest thing, and it's just impossible. It's impossible to keep it together. Look at the cast of *Arrested* and look at the cast of *Veep*; these are seriously funny people and they expect you to keep it together, and for me, it's just not humanly possible. I'll turn my back or look in my bag and try to hide it, but sometimes I'll just let loose and ruin the take. I really should go back to acting school.

**AB:** I must admit that I am a huge fan of *Arrested Development*, and I'm guessing that people come up to you and quote Buster, so I'm really intrigued to see what you hear the most.

**TH:** I hear "Hey, brother" a lot.

I knew that leaving the show, it wasn't like someone was going to be casting a lawyer in a movie and be like, "You know, that guy who played Buster Bluth, he would be perfect."

**AB:** That doesn't surprise me.

**TH:** I will say, I really enjoy when people remember stuff that Buster did or happened in the show because I don't always remember. We finished the show - at least the first part of it - in 2006 and you move on. You find other jobs and get into other characters, but then it developed this life after it

was finished and I forgot about a lot of stuff and people would come up and say "Do you remember when you went to that Mother-boy convention and you were dressed like Little Boy Blue?" or whatever he was and I'm like "Oh my God, that's right!" I forget storylines and lines, so it's fun when people remind me.

**AB:** When my editor originally asked me if I was familiar with your work, the first thing I typed back to him was "It walked on my pillow!"

**TH:** [Laughs] I specifically remember that line because I believe it was in the trailer of the first season.

**AB:** Well, we're excited to have you in Erie.

**TH:** Thanks man, I'm excited to come.

**AB:** Anything specific you're hoping for? Maybe nicer weather?

**TH:** I'm actually excited about getting back in the cold. I've never been to Erie, so I'm excited about that. We'll have a good party, so it's going to be a good day.

Want to meet Tony Hale and support Emma's Footprints? Head to [emmasfootprints.com](http://emmasfootprints.com) to purchase your tickets to *Storytime with Tony and Emma's Next Big Thing: A Valentine's Day Masquerade* before they sell out!

Alex Bieler can be contacted at [aBieler@ErieReader.com](mailto:aBieler@ErieReader.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @Catch20Q.



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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Seascape: Choices, Interpersonal Communication, and Comedy on the Beach. With Giant Lizards.**

A human couple, sitting on the beach, stare into the long abyss of retirement and argue. Not so unusual, but things turn strange quickly in Edward Albee's *Seascape* when two fantastical human-sized lizards appear to them; a couple facing a crisis of their own, having found that they are no longer comfortable in the water (must be water monitors of some sort). Their ensuing interactions are awkward and confused, poignant – and yet, funny.

Foibles are revealed, motives questioned, and, eventually, a sort-of happy ending occurs. According to its website, Laugh/Riot Performing Arts Company is presenting the show as a biting comedy, although it earned Albee his second Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1975. With many of Albee's plays, there is often a fine line between the two. Throw in the absurd, symbolism, and fantasy, and the result is some very good theater.

“*Seascape* reminds us that we all must face our own mortality sooner or later,” says director Shaun Taylor. “This play uses a fantastic intersection of a human couple with their reptilian counterparts to point out the choices that we make in determining our own destinies.”

The play features Ben Robson and Jessie Connick as the humans; and Jordanna Wallace and J.D. Mizikowski as the lizards. Mizikowski is excited to perform in this production, saying, “It’s fantastic that we are able to do one of America’s greatest living playwrights. From Albee’s *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* to *Zoo Story* there are few who do high comedy as well.”

Laugh/Riot is in residence at the Diebold Performing Arts Center at Edinboro University this season, which gives it a solid platform for the production of this quality material. The troupe features a mix of community members and students. Look for a New Works Festival in February and *Through the Looking Glass* in April.

There aren’t many playwrights who can move you with comedy, not to mention giant lizards. Edward Albee is one of them. – Mary Birdsong

**Jan. 29, 30, and 31 and Feb. 5, 6, and 7 at 7:30 p.m.; Feb. 1 at 2:30 p.m. // 219 Meadville St., Edinboro // \$10 General Admission; \$5 EUP Faculty, staff, senior adults, and non-EUP students; \$3 EUP students. // Tickets at the door or at [www.laughrioterie.com](http://www.laughrioterie.com).**

**MUSIC**

**2Blue w/ Dave VanAmburg**  
Jan. 22 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*Victor’s Restaurant, The Bel Aire Clarion, 2800 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.*

**Colony Club House Band**  
Jan. 22 – 7 to 9:30 p.m.

*Colony Club Pub & Grille, 2670 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.*

**Bitchwax**

Jan. 23 – 4 p.m.

*Sherlock’s, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.*

**Brian Henke in Concert**

Jan. 23 – 8 p.m.

*Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.*

**ekoostik hookah**

Jan. 23 – 7 to 10 p.m.

*Docksider’s, 1015 State St. facebook.com/Docksiderbar.*

**Chris Higbee**

Jan. 23 – 9 p.m.

*Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.*

**Geeks Unplugged**

Jan. 23 – 5 to 7 p.m.

*Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.*

**JD Jazz and Blues Friday Night Jazz**

Jan. 23 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.*

**Jeff Fetterman Band**

Jan. 23 – 3 p.m.

*Last Shot Bar and Grill, 3064 W. 12 St. facebook.com/pages/Last-Shot-Bar-Grill.*

**Jesse Weston**

Jan. 23 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Dr. uglytunatavern.com.*

**Six Year Stretch and Claire Stuczynski**

Jan. 23 – 9 p.m.

*King’s Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.*

**BT’s Acoustic Showcase**

Jan. 24 – 5:30 to 10 p.m.

*Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11 St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.*

**Chris Higbee**

Jan. 24 – 9 p.m.

*Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.*

**Dinnerstein Plays Beethoven**

Jan. 24 – 7 p.m.

*Warner Theatre, 811 State St. eriephil.org.*

**Rodger Montgomery Saturday Night Blues**

Jan. 24 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.*

**Ron Yarman, LaMorieville, Blue Soul**

Jan. 24 – 9 p.m.

*King’s Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.*

**Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle**

Jan. 24 – 4 p.m.

*The Oasis Pub, 3122 W. Lake Rd. oasispub.net.*

**Musician’s Hat Scramble**

Jan. 25 – 1 to 6 p.m.

*Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 Highway 6 & 19, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com/bierhalla\_entertainment.*

**Comeback Kid w/ Expire, Motives, xRepresentx, Mallory Run, and Crazyes**

Jan. 26 – 1 p.m.

*Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11 St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.*

**The Australian Bee Gees Show**

Jan. 27 – 7:30 p.m.

*Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.*

**2Blue w/ Dave VanAmburg**

Jan. 29 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*Victor’s Restaurant, The Bel Aire Clarion, 2800 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.*

**Brandon Santini**

Jan. 29 – 1 p.m.

*Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 Highway 6 & 19, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com/bierhalla\_entertainment.*

**Colony Club House Band**

Jan. 29 – 7 to 9:30 p.m.

*Colony Club Pub & Grille, 2670 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.*

**First Glow**

Jan. 29 – 9 p.m.

*Sherlock’s, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace*

**Frank Singer Duo w/ Stan Bialomjzy Friday Night Jazz**

Jan. 30 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.*



LISA MARIE MAZZUCCO

**Acclaimed Pianist Simone Dinnerstein Joins Erie Philharmonic for First-time Ever Performance of ‘Piano Concerto No.2’**

Beethoven composed an abundance of pieces during his lifetime, many of which the Erie Philharmonic has performed over its long history. On Jan. 24, the orchestra is about to add another one to the list.

For the first time ever, the Philharmonic will be playing Beethoven’s

“Piano Concerto No. 2”, and will be joined by acclaimed pianist Simone Dinnerstein in an evening that also includes pieces by George Walker and Bruckner.

Beethoven’s concerto opens with strings, but the violins and flutes lead the way into a dance – at times dizzying and frenetic – upon the ivory. The playfulness of the first movement is hearkened back to in the last, while the second, middle movement is peaceful in stark contrast. All throughout, the piano is in the spotlight.

And front and center in that spotlight will be superstar Dinnerstein. Since her 2005 debut at Carnegie Hall, she’s toured internationally, released four solo albums and has been lauded by critics from NPR, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* (And if something is good enough for Oprah, it’s good enough for you).

While the music starts at 8 p.m., get there early to join WQLN classical music host Brian Hannah in a pre-concert chat starting at 7 p.m. Once the musicians take the stage, the program includes George Walker’s “Lyric for Strings,” followed by Dinnerstein and Beethoven. The second half of the evening is Bruckner’s Symphony No. 4, “Romantic,” a piece that the Philharmonic calls “transformative,” and one that “will captivate and inspire.”

Sounds like the perfect alternative to another cold night indoors with your Netflix, doesn’t it? – Sara Toth

**8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 24 // 811 State St. // [eriephil.org](http://eriephil.org)**

**Geeks Unplugged**

Jan. 30 – 5 to 7 p.m.

*Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.*

**Nick I AM A DON**

Jan. 30 – 4 p.m.

*The Beer Mug, 1108 Liberty St. 454.4753.*

**Glen Rankin**

Jan. 30 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Dr. uglytunatavern.com.*

**Rodger L. Montgomery**

Jan. 30 – 3 p.m.

*The Lager Cafe, 2056 W. 8 St. 456.4498.*

**Ruby Port Band**

Jan. 30 – 9 p.m.

*Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.*

**Tyler Smilo “Dust in a Grave” CD Release Party**

Jan. 30 – 9 p.m.

*King’s Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.*

**The Four Grads Saturday Night Jazz, Pop, and More**

Jan. 31 – 6 to 9 p.m.

*The Anchor In, 3122 W. Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.*

**Four Castles/Fell Asleep Cassette Release Show w/ Barlow**

Jan. 31 – 5:30 p.m.

*Devon’s Basement, 2627 Jackson Avenue. facebook.com/pages/Barlow/146963238652581.*

**Legend**

Jan. 31 – 9 p.m.

*Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.*

**Special Guest, Pale Green Stars**

Jan. 31 – 9 p.m.

*King’s Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.*

**DANCE**

**Line Dancing at McCoy’s Barrelhouse**

Jan. 21, 28 & Feb. 4 – 8 p.m.

*McCoy’s Barrelhouse, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com.*

**FOOD & DRINK**

**Happy Hour Tasting with Lavery Brewing Company**

Jan. 30 – 5 p.m.

*Bootleggers Bar & Grille, 4935 E. Lake Rd. 899.9800.*

**Customer Appreciation Days: Electric Materials Employees**

Jan. 21 to Jan. 23 – All Day

*Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Rd., North East piwine.com.*

**January Barjo Barns at Courtyard Wineries - A**



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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## After Disbanding, Mallory Run Returns to the Erie Stage, Joining Canadian Hardcore Rockers Comeback Kid

By: Will Taylor

Playing music in a band while balancing the ever-increasing responsibilities that accompany growing up can be a tricky task, and for a lot of people, it doesn't always work out. That was the situation last spring when local pop-punk band Mallory Run disbanded. Sometimes, however, passion for and dedication to what a person loves most can be powerful enough to overcome those setbacks and obstacles. Mallory Run has that passion and dedication, reuniting with a slight lineup change, and is hard at work in preparation for their first gig back coming up at Basement Transmissions on Monday, Jan. 26. The lineup includes Canadian hardcore band Comeback Kid who are currently signed to Victory Records, along with Bridge 9 Records' Expire. Also playing will be Cleveland's Motives, Fredonia's Crazies, and local straight edge veterans, xRepresentx. Now comprised of Patrick Harkins and Taylor Bean on guitars, Anthony Anglikowski on bass, Tommy Lipo on drums, and Danny McClune on vocals, Mallory Run's ready to hit the scene in a big way.

**Will Taylor:** How long has Mallory Run been together? How did you guys meet?

**Danny McClune:** Mallory Run was formed in the fall of 2012 when I met Pat in English class at Edinboro. We posted something on a Facebook page seeing if anyone would be interested, and Anthony was quick to respond.

**WT:** What happened that you guys decided to call it quits? What made you decide to try again?

**DM:** Earlier this year we had a different drummer, who ultimately left the band to get married. None of us have really heard from him since. Everyone else pursued other projects during that time. About two months ago, Anthony, Pat, and I talked and told each other how we missed playing in Mallory Run, and we were pretty much back at it that night.

**WT:** Those are some big name bands on the

upcoming BT show; are you guys excited? Nervous?

**DM:** The show on the 26th is going to be huge. I would be lying if I said I wasn't nervous. I have a lot of friends that haven't been to shows since The Hangout closed that are coming out to this one - plus some people who have been there the whole way. Hopefully, we can get our stuff together in time to make it a good one.

**WT:** What do you think of the new Basement Transmissions? Any pros and cons? Do you like it better than the old place? Do you think the change in location has had any impacts on the local community of show-goers as a whole?

**DM:** Personally, I have only been in the basement of the new Basement Transmissions - that's where our practice spot is. I have yet to attend or even see the venue part of it. There's been a lot of back and forth lately about it, and it sucks for me, because I'm friends with people on both sides of the disagreements, and I would rather not take a side.

Bobby Jensen, [owner and proprietor of BT] has a bigger bill to pay on a bigger space, so you're going to have to have bigger shows. I hate how people in the Erie music scene generally aren't friends with people too far outside of their "genre." I wish Erie show-goers could coexist, whether it's metalcore, pop-punk, shoegaze, or whatever. People in one genre feel exactly the same passion as you do for another, so why is either any better?

**WT:** You used to go to shows back in the day in Edinboro when The Hangout was pretty much the only all-ages venue around. I think the last time Comeback Kid played around here, it was at The Hangout with Title Fight and Set Your Goals. How have things changed since The Hangout days? Do you think BT has the potential to be as big of a deal as Forward Hall and The Hangout were back then?

**DM:** The Erie/Edinboro scene is weird for me because when I was going to shows in Edinboro everyone was way older than me. And then at [the old] Basement Transmissions, when I was going there, most of the people were my age or younger. It was awesome to see the switch from one generation to the next and to make a ton of new friends. Having yet to attend a show at the new place, I can't really tell you how I feel about it as far as potential goes, but I will say that the old BT had some of the best shows I had ever been to. The Squid Vicious farewell show was probably one of the best nights in the Erie music scene, for a lot of people.

**WT:** You said your drummer left to get married. That must have been somewhat of a setback for you guys, and getting back together afterwards really shows that you have ambition and dedication to the band and also says a lot about your ability to overcome those kinds of setbacks. How much do personal choices like that, along with other general life decisions like going to college impact your ability to play in a band and keep things on track? What motivates you guys the most?

**DM:** It's tough, honestly. We are all spread out over, like, 50 miles, so it's really difficult to get together even once a week. For me, I'm motivated by the bands I listen to. I see them out touring and signing to labels and stuff, and it's all I want to do.

We're at a weird age [between 18 and 23]

where we question everything about life. At the same time that we are to trying to fit music in, we also have to grow up and find ways to sustain ourselves and stuff. I feel like all five of us would do music around the clock if we could, but there's just so much else we have to do to keep our lives going.

**WT:** What do you guys have planned for 2015 besides the Comeback Kid show? Any releases we can expect?

**DM:** I will just say that by this time next year, we hope to release a six-to-ten-song EP of some sort. We also want to tour and play in at least three to four different cities. We weren't planning on playing any shows for a while since we haven't had much time to write, but we made an exception for the one in January because the lineup is so good.

**6 p.m. // 145 W. 11th St. // ballpointproductions.bigcartel.com/product/comeback-kid**

You can listen to and download Mallory Run's single, "You Told Me You Didn't Have a Mountain Bike" on Bandcamp for free. Catch their set at Basement Transmissions on Monday, Jan. 26.

Will Taylor can be contacted at [wTaylor@ErieReader.com](mailto:wTaylor@ErieReader.com).



**New Year, a New Wine!**  
Jan. 22 - 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
**Courtyard Wineries, 10021 W. Main Rd., North East, courtyardwineries.com.**

**Customer Appreciation Days: Financial Institution Employees**  
Jan. 26 to Jan. 20 - All Day  
**Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Rd., North East piwine.com.**

**FILM**

**Great White Shark**  
Ongoing - noon, 4 p.m.  
**Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.**

**Mysteries of the Unseen World**  
Ongoing - 2, 5 p.m.  
**Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.**

**Wonders of the Arctic**  
Ongoing - 11 a.m., 1, 3 p.m.  
**Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.**

**Ernie Kovacs Best Of**  
Jan. 22 - 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**Fantastic Planet**  
Jan. 23 - 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**Bill Hicks and George Carlin Live Comedy Night**  
Jan. 24 - 8 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**St. Vincent**  
Jan. 25 - 2 p.m.  
**Taylor Little Theater, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.**

**Suddenly**  
Jan. 29 - 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**Captive**  
Jan. 30 - 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**The Dark Crystal**  
Jan. 31 - 4, 7 p.m.  
**Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.**

**Force Majeure**

Feb. 1 - 2 p.m.  
**Taylor Little Theater, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.**

**VISUAL ARTS**

**The Christmas Show, Schuster Theatre**  
Ongoing - All Day  
**Gannon University, 700 Peach St. gannon.edu.**

**Duane Cregger, Among Shared Archetypes**  
Ongoing - All Day  
**Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5 St. glassgrowersgallery.com.**

**Higherglyphics: Annex Stairwell Project, Annex Stairwell**  
Ongoing - All Day  
**Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.**

**Into the Common Ground by G.C. Meyers**  
Ongoing - All Day  
**The Kada Gallery, The Shops at the Colony, 2632 W. 8 St. kadagallery.com.**

**Mary J. and Fran Rosiak: APPLIED IMAGES**  
Ongoing - All Day  
**Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St. glassgrowersgallery.com.**



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Art After Hours at Scotty's Cigar & Martini Bar Features Eerie Eric Fargiorgio's "Out Of My Mind"**

Amanda Ferguson has been a major force in Erie's art scene lately, promoting up-and-coming artists at events not associated with the usual gallery scene. One of our city's fastest rising artists right now is "Eerie" Eric Fargiorgio, and the event Amanda has put together for him is the inaugural night of "Art After Hours" at Scotty's Cigar & Martini Lounge. The plan for "Art After Hours" is to feature different artists at venues that will showcase their talents to people who might not otherwise see their work.

Eric takes his inspiration from the eclectic pop culture icons of his childhood – superheroes, Kiss, Lucha Libre wrestlers, and Betty Page, among others. His cartoon-esque paintings have earned him enough of a following that he was voted by you, our tasteful readers,

the winner of *Erie Reader* Best Of Erie 2014 best tattoo artist and best illustrator (beating out yours truly for the latter honor). It's guaranteed that the walls of Scotty's will have some of Eric's famous Bigfoot and Mothman paintings for sale as well.

It is one night only and will have tons of pieces that have never been seen before including autobiographical comics from his younger days. Eric says that this show will be "a little bit of my mind poured out all over the walls." – Bryan Toy

**9 p.m to 1 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 // 301 German St. // Facebook.com/EerieEricF**



COURTESY OF MAGNOLIA PICTURES

**MIAC presents St. Vincent and Force Majeure – Two Stirring Looks at the Fragile, Flawed Male Psyche**

The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture will present a pair of Golden Globe-nominated films on back-to-back Sundays this winter. The Bill Murray-led *St. Vincent* and the Swedish drama *Force Majeure* will play at the Taylor Little Theater at Mercyhurst University, but both movies share a few more similarities than

showing location and being highlighted by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

At first glance, the pairing of a film about a misanthropic alcoholic babysitting his new neighbor's son with a foreign psychodrama featuring a young family's emotional stay following a scare caused by a controlled avalanche at a luxury French Alps resort might not seem normal, but in a sense, *St. Vincent* and *Force Majeure* are both disaster movies that focus on flawed male psyches.

Bill Murray stars as the broken title character in Theodore Melfi's *St. Vincent*, where his mess of a life is put under a microscope when he takes of care 12-year-old Oliver. As for *Force Majeure*, the near disaster comes early when an avalanche scare sends Tomas (played by Johannes Kuhnke) fleeing without his wife and children, an abandonment that creates a rift in his family during Ruben Östlund's darkly comic drama.

Vincent and Tomas may have different disasters to deal with, but the emotional journeys of both men will be on display at the Taylor Little Theatre thanks to MIAC, giving you two Sundays of cinema to see a pair of flawed father figures in critically-acclaimed movies. – Alex Bieler

**2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25 (St. Vincent) and 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1 (Force Majeure) // 501 E. 38th St. // miac.mercyhurst.edu**

**Uniting Art Forms**

Ongoing – All Day  
The Heeschen Gallery, 910 Market St., Meadville artsmeadville.org.

**Performing Blackness, Performing Whiteness**

Ongoing beginning Jan. 20 – All Day  
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St., Meadville, allegheny.edu.

**Kids as Curators 2015, Hagen Family Gallery**

Ongoing beginning Jan. 23 – All Day  
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

**Ian Brill: Storm, McCain Family Gallery**

Ongoing beginning Jan. 30 – All Day  
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

**Conway-Whiting Exhibition Reception**

Jan. 23 – 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.  
Urraro Gallery, 135 W. 14 St. facebook.com/pages/urrarogallery.

**Mark Weber In Residence, Bacon Gallery**

Jan. 27 to Jan. 30 – All Day  
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

**Opening Reception: Ian Brill and Mark Weber**

Jan. 30 – 5 to 8 p.m.  
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

**THEATER**

**Sleeping Beauty**

Jan. 23 to 25 – 7 p.m.  
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

**Weekend of Improv**

Jan. 23 to 24 – 8 p.m.  
Meadville Community Theater, Oddfellow's Building, 400 N Main St, Meadville. 333.1773.

**Australian Bee Gees Show**

Jan. 27 – 7:30 p.m.  
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. nacentertainment.com/cities/erie.

**Les Contes D'Hoffman**

Jan. 31 – 12:55 p.m.  
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

**Actors**

Feb. 2 – 8 p.m.  
Ganon University, Schuster Theater, 109 University Square ganon.edu/Visitors-and-Community/Area-Attractions/Schuster-Theatre.

**A Little Nonsense**

Feb. 3 – 8 p.m.

Schuster Theatre Green Room, 620 Sassafras St. ganon.edu/Visitors-and-Community/Area-Attractions/Schuster-Theatre.

**COMMUNITY**

**Erie BayHawks vs. Maine**

Jan. 21 – 7 p.m.  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

**March for Life Bus Trip**

Jan. 21 – 11 p.m.  
St. George Church, 5145 Peach St. facebook.com/MarchForLifeBusTrip.

**Erie BayHawks vs. Westchester**

Jan. 23 – 7 p.m.  
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

**Friday Night Writes Featuring Mike Bush**

Jan. 23 – 8 p.m.  
Poets' Hall, 1136 E. Lake Rd. facebook.com/poetshall.

**Snoetry, a Winter Wordfest**

Jan. 24 – 1 to 11 p.m.  
The Avalon Hotel, 16 W. 10 St. facebook.com/snoetry2015.

**Erie Kennel Club Dog Show**

Jan. 24 and 25 – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier.



DAVID STRENIQ

**Matt Texter and Seann Clark Join Tyler Smilo for the Release of his Highly Anticipated Follow-up Album Dust in a Grave CD Release Party**

Tyler Smilo has lived in Erie for less than two years, but you wouldn't guess it based on how well he has integrated himself into the local scene. After hitting open mic nights hard following his move to Erie, Smilo has quickly become one of the most intriguing artists in the area through his work in Daybreak Radio and Pot-whole, as well as his solo debut *Blood into Sound*, which was one of the *Erie Reader's* top-three releases of 2014.

The songwriter hasn't slowed down in 2015, as he's set to drop his new album *Dust in a Grave* (check out our review on page 23) at a CD Release party hosted by The King's Rook Club along with openers Matt Texter and Seann Clark. Like *Blood into Sound*, *Dust in a Grave* shows off Smilo's ability to connect with listeners through straightforward songs about addiction and healing.

"I stuck with just being as honest as possible and not being afraid to say certain things because they are too personal," Smilo says about his penchant for writing intimate, heartfelt tracks.

*Dust in a Grave* isn't an album that relies on flashy studio effects or fancy techniques. Instead, it shows off just what one man and his guitar can do to stir a person's soul, as Smilo's earnestly bleats out lines while the reverberations of each strum hum in your ears. Smilo's music isn't always a happy affair, but it certainly sounds real.

"There's nothing when I write that says 'I want people to like this' or 'I want this to be a pop song,'" Smilo says. "I just write what I write and I'm so glad that people enjoy it."

Judging by the songwriter's success since his arrival in Erie in the middle of 2013, local music fans certainly approve of him. Join Smilo at The Rook when he puts his new batch of genuine tracks on display for all to enjoy. – Alex Bieler

**9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 30 // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub**

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**Eye of the Storm: Understanding Lake-Effect Snow**

Jan. 27 – 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org).**

**Life as an Elected Official**

Jan. 28 – 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org).**

**Disney on Ice presents Treasure Trove**

Jan. 28 through Feb. 1 – Various times

**Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. [erieevents.com](http://erieevents.com).**

**Living Along Pennsylvania's Lake Erie Shoreline**

Jan. 29 – 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org).**

**The Art of the Tale: An International Anthology**

Jan. 29 – 4 to 6 p.m.

**The Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org).**

**Erie Auto Show**

Jan. 29 through Feb. 1 – Various times

**Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier. [erieevents.com](http://erieevents.com).**

**Harlem Globetrotters 2015 World Tour**

Feb. 3 – 7 p.m.

**Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. [erieevents.com](http://erieevents.com).**

**Privacy and National Security In the Digital Age**

Feb. 3 – 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**The Jefferson Educational**

**Society, 3207 State St. [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org).**

**FUNDRAISERS**

**CVC 5th Annual Cornhole Tournament**

Jan. 25 – 2 and 4 p.m.

**Erie Maennerchor Club, 1611 State St. 455.9414.**

**Ladies Night Out with a Purpose**

Jan. 30 – 4:30 to 7:30  
North East Elementary School, 50 East Division St. 449.0545.

**Gala for the Upper Room to Benefit Erie's Homeless**

Jan. 31 – 6:30 p.m.

Entertainment by Delta Blues, prime-rib and seafood buffet, \$35 donation

**Elk Creek Inn, 6886 Sterrettania Road**



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Snoetry celebrates our wintry region's love of the spoken word**

Each winter, our never-ending snowstorms create beauty and hassle in equal measure. Too often, it's tempting to stay home (and stay warm) when interesting events are in the works. But what if we could celebrate the chilly season and the city's rich artistic culture simultaneously?

On Jan. 24, Snoetry will attempt to do just that.

Snoetry is a day-long gathering of the region's best poets and spoken-word artists. More than two-dozen writers from the Erie area will perform alongside noteworthy authors from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo, Chicago, Louisville, Ky., and New York City.

Presently, more than 50 performers are set to take the stage, so expect a comprehensive overview of the local writing scene. The festivities begin at 1 p.m. at the Avalon Hotel and Ballroom, with 10-minute performances continuing until 11 p.m. But don't worry – they'll take a short break each hour to let you catch your breath.

To get a clearer sense of what to expect at Snoetry, I turned to 2014-15 Erie County Poet Laureate Cee Williams, one of the event's emcees. Williams is a key figure in the local literary community, who was recently named the 2014-2015 Erie County Poet Laureate. He also runs Poets' Hall, a nonprofit space that has played a central role in our writing scene since 2010. In fact, there aren't many grassroots establishments like his in the country. According to Williams, Poets' Hall is the only "venue outside of NYC and Chicago [focusing] entirely on Poetry that isn't in operation on a college campus."

Williams claims that "it would be nearly impossible to not hear an artist whose work you will appreciate" at Snoetry. If your interests lean toward the intellectual, he suggests checking out Erie's inaugural Poet Laureate, Berwyn Moore, or Greg Brown, the director of the Writing Center at Mercyhurst University. Williams is also excited to hear from Sean Thomas Dougherty, a writer "whose work straddles the line between the academic and the 'street.'" A number of spoken-word performers from Buffalo will be heading west for the event, including Lazyrus and Brandon Williamson – both of whom he describes as "electrifying."

When asked about what makes Erie's poetry scene unique, Williams notes that "an incredible amount of talented people," from a surprisingly diverse array of perspectives, come together to share their work: "Doctors, professors, health care workers, students – nearly every walk of life is represented in Erie's Poetry Community." Williams believes that Snoetry will capitalize on that diversity: "With an amazing array of talents and voices, Snoetry has something for everybody." – Dan Schank

**1 to 11 p.m.. Saturday, Jan. 24 // Avalon Hotel and Ballroom, 16 W. 10th Street // [Facebook.com/snoetry2015](http://Facebook.com/snoetry2015)**



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Special Guest and Pale Green Stars Bring Brawny Brand of Rock 'n' Roll to The Rook**

The King's Rook will play host to a pair of special musical guests to close out the first month of 2015, a show featuring some brawny rock 'n' roll from a band just south of Erie and one nearly four hours northeast of The Gem City.

The first of which is Special Guest, a groovy foursome from Edinboro that made a mark in the local guitar-rock scene in 2014 with muscular riffs and slight doses of psychedelia. Joining the Northwest Pennsylvania-based outfit is Pale Green Stars, a bluesy trio from Syracuse, N.Y. that Erieites may not be as familiar with unless they caught one of the band's previous shows at PACA or The Rook. Even if you have, Pale Green Stars are a band that has evolved since its last trip to the area.

"We wanted to be Carl Perkins-ish, like an older style of rock 'n' roll," says drummer Jeff Tripoli about the band's last album *The Honky Tonk Years*. "Now that we've been together for a certain period of time, we've started writing songs together that are coming out more alternative rock with that same backbone of alt-country and blues, which is a testament to the chemistry between the three of us and our musical background."

Fans of rough-and-tumble rock 'n' roll should love the pairing of Special Guest and Pale Green Stars, a terrific twosome that can dish out meaty licks and plenty of blue-collar bravado, a combination that should close out a cold January with a fiery bang. – Alex Bieler

**9 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 // 1921 Peach St. // [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](http://facebook.com/kingsrookclub)**



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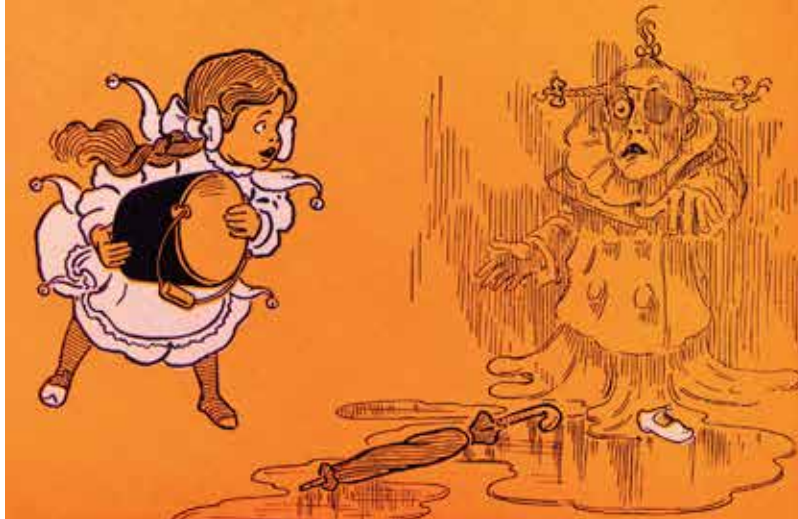


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Children's Division, Ages 7 - 8 ( 1:15 - 2:45 pm)  
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**Beginner Crochet Class**—Tuesday, Jan. 8th and 15th 6:30-8:30 | \$35 plus materials  
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**Tyler Smilo***Dust in a Grave*  
Independent

★★★★★

Less than a year after the release of his solo debut *Blood into Sound* – an album that was named one of The Top 3 Albums of 2014 by the *Erie Reader* – singer-songwriter Tyler Smilo is set to drop his second album. *Dust in a Grave*, like its predecessor, features simple orchestration and plenty of heart, as Smilo enchants listeners using simply his voice and an acoustic guitar, save for Trevor Huster's work on keys on album closer "Nothing Left." Smilo kicks off the album with the incredibly personal "Blood in the Water," an intimate track detailing an exodus from Pittsburgh – and the heartfelt stories don't stop there. Like *Blood into Sound*, *Dust in a Grave* shows off an artist that deals in honesty, earnestly spitting out lines that feel so real that standout tracks like "Heirs to the Throne," "These Will be the Days," and the title track can't help but stir your soul. – Alex Bieler

**Sleater-Kinney***No Cities to Love*  
Sub Pop

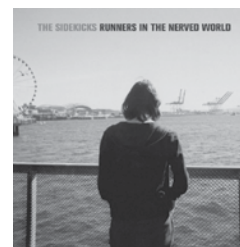
★★★★★

On *No Cities to Love*, Sleater-Kinney sure doesn't sound like a band that put out its last album in 2005 and went on hiatus in 2006 so that the power trio of Carrie Brownstein, Corin Tucker, and Janet Weiss could work on other projects. The newest release by the influential riot grrrl rockers contains few, if any, signs of sonic rust following the band's near-decade of inactivity, providing a 10-song, 33-minute-long rush of adrenaline. Shortly into opening track "Price Tag," it's evident that Tucker can still wail like she did on past albums and that Brownstein hasn't lost her ability to pump out bruising guitar riffs, both welcome sounds in 2015. Add the fact that Weiss, who has drummed for bands like The Shins and Stephen Malkmus and the Jicks, hasn't slowed down at all, and you have a recipe for sonic kickassery. Most of all, *No Cities to Love* is an album that's as fun to listen to as it seems like it was to make. – Alex Bieler

**The Sidekicks***Runners in the Nerved World*  
Epitaph

★★★★★

The Sidekicks is not a band that is afraid to change. The Columbus-by-way-of-Cleveland crew started off channeling a snotty punk vibe before developing a more melodic and mature sound on *Weight of Air* and *Awkward Breeds*. The evolution continues on *Runners in the Nerved World*, the band's first album with Epitaph. Whether it was part of a natural evolution or a change inspired by working with The Shins and Built to Spill producer Phil Ek, The Sidekicks developed a shimmering side to the band's high-energy oeuvre. *Runners in the Nerved World* is the product of a band leaning closer to Band of Horses than Against Me!, but the shift in sound works, leading to sweeping pop-rockers like "Jesus Christ Supermall" and the extremely fun "Summer Brings You Closer to Satan." The band hasn't completely abandoned its punk roots, but the continued growth of The Sidekicks is fully on display on *Runners in the Nerved World*, and that's a good thing. – Alex Bieler

**D'Angelo and The Vanguard***Black Messiah*  
RCA

★★★★★

If the reaction to this long-awaited album is any indication, this could be a new beginning for the music industry. After years of pre-packaged monotone electric pop calling itself R&B, a musician who hasn't sold his soul is again making soul – and the crowd is going wild. D'Angelo took a 14-year hiatus to learn guitar and collaborate with the best artists in the business because he wanted his legacy to be about his music, not his sexiness. Not that *Black Messiah* isn't sexy: "Really Love" may be the best make-out song ever recorded. Songs like "Betray My Heart" and "Back to the Future" just drip with a Prince-like layered groove. D'Angelo's lyric "I just want to go back baby," may come true, because this forward-looking piece of musical mastery may bring pop back to the days when sincere musicianship and true soul mattered more than money and fame. – Bryan Toy

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## Geeked Out

### Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft Takes Card Games Off the Table and Onto the Digital Screen

By: John Lindvay

I'm sure at some point you've heard the rumblings of some sort of card game that has become the new fixation of the youth. You may have even seen small circles of cross-legged humans surrounding a mess of cards that were not the playing cards of our grandparents.

You may have even heard names uttered, like Magic, Pokemon, Yu-Gi-Oh! Perhaps you even knew someone who had boxes and boxes of these cards, dumping absurd amounts of money in chase of that super rare piece of foiled paper that is now worth \$300 on eBay. Hell, you may be thinking that I might even be describing you!

Truthfully, I've been through that phase of my life. I dabbled in Magic: The Gathering – just last year digging out the box of cards from my parents' attic to give to one of my few friends who still plays. But like many others, I lost space and desire to hunt down and catalogue these things. I still enjoy the game, but the other part of the habit simply became off-putting.

But many of these collectable card games, or "CCGs", are now transcending the physi-

cal realm and have rematerialized on computers and tablet devices, and the one that has seems to capture the lion's share of my friends attention is a game called *Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft*.

*Hearthstone* is a CCG made by game company Blizzard Entertainment. Side note: You might recognize that name because they are also responsible for the world's largest massively multiplayer online game (MMO) and almighty time consumer *World of Warcraft*. *Hearthstone* takes the same intellectual property and lore of the *Warcraft* series and turns it into a snappy card game that is now available on basically all platforms (Android, iOS, MAC/PC). The game was rumored to have been created after a studio head at Blizzard noticed that many of his employees were playing a different digital card game and wasting countless hours of work time. So in perfect fashion, he rounded them up and began to make their own digital card game.

*Hearthstone* is what I would describe as a great CCG for all players, casual to more serious "mana-tapping" fiends. There is



(Right) A screenshot of a warrior-versus-warlock match in *Hearthstone*, a card game-turned digital game that's the last craze.

ing players to gather resources, each turn increases your pool by one, thus creating a gentle ramp-up in action as the game goes on, ensuring a faster match to the snooze feasts that classic CCGs

could all too often turn into. A cool aspect is that the decks all have unique play styles and cards that, when played in certain orders, create interesting combos that, when pulled off correctly, will leave you feeling like a wizard.

Another sweet thing is the manner of communication allowed through the game interface. Anyone who plays competitive online games will tell you stories of the toxic wasteland of chatter and cringe-inducing language that is thrown around on the Internet. In *Hearthstone* players are limited to a small selection of eight pre-canned 'emotes' to use such as "Well played!,"

much to enjoy here as it offers games that are quick for beginners. Your typical match will last around 5 to 10 minutes, and I find it is the perfect companion to vegging out on the sofa and watching your favorite TV show.

If you are unfamiliar with how these games operate, let me break it down: Each player has a deck of 30 cards, each player has 30 hit points, and players use their resources to play cards that either create monsters that fight for you or cast spells to damage your opponent. *Hearthstone* streamlines much of the mechanical jargon that is plentiful in these games. Instead of forc-



# 2015 WINTER SCHEDULE

All programs are held at times scheduled at the Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State Street.

### Breakdown of Program Costs (unless otherwise noted):

Course/Discussion Group:  
**LIMITED REGISTRATION**  
\$50/person; \$75 with a guest

Lectures:  
\$10/person; \$15 with a guest

Distinguished Visiting Speaker Lectures:  
\$15/person; \$25 with a guest

Payments must be made at registration.

Act 48 hours for the Erie Catholic Diocese, Erie Day School, Erie School District, Corry, Fort LeBoeuf, Girard, Harborcreek, and Wattsburg teachers apply to ALL programs at no additional cost.

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SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

DAY / DATE / TIME	TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	PROGRAM TYPE
Tues / Jan 27 / 7-8:30	Eye of the Storm: Understanding Lake-Effect Snow	Kerry Moyer, Ph.D.	Free Lecture
Wed / Jan 28 / 7-8:30	Life as an Elected Official	Jane Earll, J.D. Joyce Savocchio, MA.	Lecture
Thurs / Jan 29 / 7-8:30	Living Along Pennsylvania's Lake Erie Shoreline	Donald Benczkowski, B.S.	Free Lecture
Tues / Feb 3 / 7-8:30	Privacy and National Security in the Digital Age	Michael J. Songer, J.D.	Distinguished Visiting Speaker Lecture
Wed / Feb 4 / 7-8:30	Saving Monticello	Barry Grossman, J.D.	Lecture
Thurs / Feb 5 / 7-8:30	The Future of U.S. Immigration	Baher Ghosheh, Ph.D. TBD, TBD	Free Brock Panel Discussion
Mon / Feb 9 / 7-8:30	Winning World War II - Mobilizing Industry	Mark Squeglia, B.A.	Lecture
Tues / Feb 10 / 7-8:30	The Grizzly Bears of Yellowstone National Park	Steven Ropski, Ph.D.	Free Lecture
Thurs / Feb 12 / 7-8:30	Scott, Zelda, the Jazz Age, and <i>The Great Gatsby</i>	Regis Sabol, Ph.D.	Lecture
Mon / Feb 16 / 7-8:30	The French Revolution and the Rise of Napoleon	William P. Garvey, Ph.D.	Free Lecture
Wed / Feb 18 / 7-8:30	The Napoleonic Era - Grand Success or Failure?	William P. Garvey, Ph.D.	Lecture
Fri / Feb 20 / 7-8:30	Gershwin, Ellington, and the Search for an American Sound	Anna Celenza, Ph.D.	Distinguished Visiting Speaker Lecture
Mon / Feb 23 / 7-8:30	Winning Battles, Losing Wars: The New American Way of War?	Lt. Gen James Dubik (Ret.)	Lecture
Tues / Feb 24 / 7-8:30	Strengthening our Community through Historic Preservation	David Brennan, AIA, NCARB	Free Lecture
Wed / Feb 25 / 7-8:30	Spring Migration Magic at Presque Isle	Susan A. Smith	Free Lecture
Mon / Mar 2 / 7-8:30	Sport and Society: A Look at Elite Athletics in China and the United States	Elizabeth Darling, D.P.T.	Lecture
Tues / Mar 3 / 7-8:30	Remarkable American Women: Betty Friedan	Corrine Egan, B.A.	Lecture
Tues / Jan 20, 27, Feb 3, 10, 17, and 24 / 4-5:30	Great Books: Great Conversations (Part Two)	Corrine Egan, B.A.	Course/Discussion Group
Thurs / Jan 29, Feb 5, 12, 19 / 4-6	The Art of the Tale: An International Anthology	Marjorie Podolsky, M.Ed.	Course/Discussion Group





of decks that I enjoy playing.

Hearthstone also offers a good method for players to get the cards they want by allowing players to destroy cards for a separate currency that can be used to craft any card in the game. The only downside to this style of CCG is there is no trading, so even though I often have conversations with my friends on good cards and deck combinations, I have to grind to get those cards myself.

All that being said, I do find it has become somewhat of a habit for me now to wake up in the morning and play a few rounds as I drink my coffee. I win some, lose some, but more importantly, I enjoy the mental exercise of playing against the mind of another human being.

*If you've played Hearthstone, what do you think of the game? Let John Lindvay know at [jlindvay@ErieReader.com](mailto:jlindvay@ErieReader.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @FightStrife.*

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“Thank you,” and “Oops.”

Even if that is too much to deal with, a simple click will squelch even that amount of communication. This small feature has been given much praise for facilitating an excellent competitive online experience that allows you to test your wits without hearing the foul language of a bitter rival.

If collecting things is your jam, then this game has you covered, because as you play, you will earn in-game currency used to purchase booster packs. You can also plop down real Earth dollars, too, if you just want to quickly obtain powerful cards, but the free-to-play scheme is actually paced rather well. I haven't sunk much money into the game, and I have already built a handful

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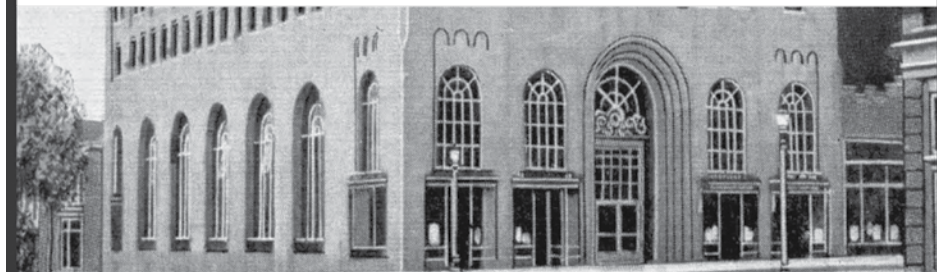
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## ER Sports

## Size Does Matter

By: James R. LeCorchick

I HAVE BEEN watching the Burger King Classic (previously know as the McDonald's Classic) for 32 years now, and every year the same question pops into my mind when I view the top high school talent in the country, and that question is, "Where are the big men locally?"

I consider any high school performer in the area taller than 6-6 as a big man, and they are few and far between. As a matter of fact, a 6-6 hoopster around Erie is a rarity.

This is something many fans used to joke about, but it seems to be more than a coincidence that our area just doesn't have many "bigs," as college coaches like to refer to inside players. Further, area hoop followers would always joke, "There must be something in the water that keeps our kids from growing." But then everyone would chuckle and move on.

Now it doesn't seem as humorous as it once did.

To add more fuel to the fire, **Andy Sisinni**, a former star basketballer at Cathedral Prep and Duquesne University and a coach at Strong Vincent and CP, told me several times in half-jest many years ago, "I think the lack of sunshine in Erie is a hindrance when it comes to our young people adding size." I'm starting to think he may be on to something.

Year after year, teams show up for the BK Classic roster dominated by talented performers standing 6-7 or better. And this year's tournament is a perfect example of the difference between "our" kids and players from the major programs.

Let me show you some of the facts, and then you can judge for yourself if this is paranoia or actual fact.

Starting with Cleveland St. Edward's, the BK winner, the Eagles showcased a starting lineup that stood 6-9, 6-7, 6-6, 6-3, and 5-9. The 6-9 performer, **Derek Funderburk**, is just a junior and is being recruited by every Division I team in the country. The Eagles star doesn't just stand at 6-9; he has the

wingspan of a seven-footer. SE also had a 6-7 sophomore on the bench.

Teammate **Kipper Nichols**, the 6-7 stand-out, is also going Division I.

Runner-up, Philadelphia Constitution High School, opened with a starting five of 6-7, 6-6, and a trio of 6-1 performers. In reserve, the Generals could bring in a 6-8 player, a 6-5 hooper, and three 6-4 players, one of these being a freshman.

Keep in mind, the Philly school plays in Class A and may not be tested in any playoff contest on the way to a state title. The Generals are a power at any level.

Meanwhile, New Jersey's Pope John XXIII arrived in Erie as the 14th-ranked team in the country and left our town with the third place trophy, the Lions losing the opener before bouncing back to maul Cathedral Prep in the consolation contest.

Are you ready for this?

That squad opened with a starting five of 6-9, 6-9, 6-6, 6-3, and 6-3. On the bench was a pair of sophomores, the duo standing 6-10 and 6-8.

Gannon hosts two tournaments every season, and I have yet to see a collegiate squad show up with a starting line-up that large for either one.

**Moustapha Diagne**, one of the 6-9ers, has already committed to play for the Orange at Syracuse, is a beast inside, and can shoot the three-pointer also. He is definitely one of the top players in the country.

And now for your Cathedral Prep Ramblers, the Erie team countering with a starting five that stood 6-2, 6-1, 6-1, 6-0, and 5-9.

Actually, the Orange and Black had a tremendous effort the opening night, as the Ramblers bowed to powerful Constitution, 61-56 before running out of gas the second night to lose to Pope John by 25. It should be noted, however, Coach **Mark Majewski's** program does have a 6-8 sophomore on the JV team with some potential.

**BK CLASSIC CLIPS** - I have covered a



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

### Cleveland St. Edward's celebrates after winning the Burger King Classic.

bers in post-season play, especially in Class A.

The championship game between SE and Constitution will go down as one of the best title tilts in the history of the Classic, the Cleveland squad defeating the Philly five, 70-63 in overtime. Williams hit a long three-pointer at the buzzer to tie the contest and send it in to an extra session.

I was stunned by the outside shooting ability of the 6-9 Diagne, the Syracuse recruit deadly from long range. He has a great stroke.

Prep point guard **Jaryn Simpson** is the son of former Gannon standout **Bronze Simpson**.

**SUPER BOWL** - With my selection stock soaring after picking Ohio State to defeat Alabama and Oregon, I know you are salivating waiting for my SB pick. Well, the wait is over. SEATTLE SEAHAWKS 24, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS 21.

*Editor's note: I probably should inform you that I don't think I have ever picked a Super Bowl correctly, as far as the betting line is concerned. Just thought you should know this.*

James R. LeCorchick can be contacted at [JRLSportsReport@gmail.com](mailto:JRLSportsReport@gmail.com), and you can follow him on Twitter @JRLSports.

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