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

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In the industry of journalism, the debasing of information currency is both dangerous and unethical. According to its preamble, the Society of Professional Journalists believes "that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy," and that "ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair, and thorough."

To uphold this mission, SPJ identifies "four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media." These four principles — to seek truth and report it; to minimize harm; to act independently; and to be accountable and transparent — serves as the guide to drive good, fair, responsible reporting, with the further understanding that journalists should take seriously the responsibility that comes with the relationship their respective media platform provides them because they are in the business of ensuring our information currency hasn't been bankrupted.

On April 17, the *Erie Times-News* published Jim Martin's "Survey says Erie is an unhappy place." At best, the headline is an incomplete truth narrowed by the confines of print space available that should be completed in the body of the story; at worst, it's lazy click-bait, content designed to entice readers into reading a story without much substance or thought for the sake of racking up an eyeball count.

Unfortunately, that 336-word story failed to provide any clearer context or understanding of the survey.

The 65-page paper, titled "Unhappy Cities," issued in July 2014 by the National Bureau of Economic Research housed in Cambridge, Mass., does — as its title suggested it would do — identify the "unhappiest cities in the U.S.," providing top-10 lists for happiest and unhappiest cities and regions, but it also reveals that "young people are still willing to relocate to them for a good job opportunity or lower housing prices," further suggesting that "people may be deciding to trade happiness for other gains."

In short, people choose to live in a city *not* solely based on their self-described happiness.

Instead of analyzing the study — which can be purchased on the NBER's website, and is free to journalists upon request and proof of employment — Martin briefly concludes that "according to one of the study's authors, 'Our research indicates people care about more than happiness alone.'"

The abstract to the study reports that one interpretation of the data is that individuals "willingly endure less happiness in exchange for higher incomes or lower housing costs," meaning happiness isn't the only nail upon which we hang our hat in our hometown. For proof, one needn't look further than the most unhappy metropolitan area with greater than 1 million residents: New York City.

It's safe to assume that New Yorkers aren't fleeing simply because a study finds it to be the most unhappy large city in the United States in which to live. Likewise, Pittsburgh,

which took the first runner-up spot, is continually heralded as a city on the rise, one to which other cities should look for inspiration and motivation.

"In this view," write the paper's authors, Edward L. Glaeser, Joshua D. Gottlieb, and Oren Ziv, "humans are quite understandably willing to sacrifice both happiness and life satisfaction if the price is right," ultimately concluding that "the desires for happiness and life satisfaction do not uniquely drive human ambitions."

Humans, in other words, are complex, complicated beings that weigh more than a single factor when deciding where to live — which explains why mass exoduses of New York, Pittsburgh, and yes, even Erie, weren't witnessed after the publishing of this study.

So to briefly report nine months after the fact that Erie is unhappy according to a study — without a frame of reference or examination of the entire research — isn't thorough reporting and isn't an accurate portrayal of the authors' purpose and conclusion.

"Individuals make trade-offs among competing objectives, including but not limited to happiness," the authors add. "If we choose only that which maximized our happiness, then individuals would presumably move to happier places until the point where rising rents and congestion eliminated the joys of that locale."

The fact is: The majority of Americans aren't scouring the Top 10 Happiest Cities list and, deciding to relocate to those places based solely on its findings. And even if they did, the happiness factor would be diminished based on — amongst many things — a swelling population stressing those cities' infrastructure.

We're not alone in our concern regarding "Study says Erie among most unhappy regions." "The editorial staff at this newspaper seems to relish in writing negative, defeatist, and demoralizing 'news articles,' about our region all too frequently," write David and Carol Hutzel in an April 25 letter to the editor in the *ETN*. "We challenge anyone to seriously look into this 'study' to find a credible, valid, and thorough investigation."

On July 31, 2014, admitting he was "late to game" to discuss the paper published earlier that month, Managing Editor Ben Speggen wrote about this study, noting that those discussing it at that time were losing sight of the overall finding that happiness isn't the lone deciding factor in a city's vitality and progress.

Just as stories must be read beyond their headlines, so must studies. Although these 973 words may fall short of capturing the breadth of "Unhappy Cities," we hope for the sake of David and Carol — along with anyone else unnerved by the base presentation that Erie is an unhappy place without established and explained criteria — we've shed some light on Glaeser, Gottlieb, and Ziv's contribution to the NBER's working paper series. For anyone seeking a fuller discussion of the study or a chance to read it in its entirety, please contact our offices at Contact@ErieReader.com or 814.314.9364.

Evaluating Wolf's Budget

Will legislature follow the Governor's bold lead?

By: Senator Sean D. Wiley

As the Pennsylvania budget deadline of June 30 grows closer, there is much to discuss. Gov. Tom Wolf, in his inaugural budget address on March 3, proposed a bold plan, one that strives to drive this Commonwealth forward toward financial solvency.

Wolf laid out a three-pronged approach: Jobs That Pay, Schools That Teach, and a Government That Works. Simple enough. Reader columnist Jim Wertz, in



Gov. Tom Wolf delivered his budget address March 3.

his March 5 article, asked a very important question: *Will the legislature follow the bold lead?* Great question. I'd like to think that we will, as it is well past time in my opinion.

There are some big changes proposed in the governor's spending plan, most notably, a shift away from a reliance on property tax

to fund our schools. Up until this administration, there was not the political will to tackle property tax reform, but we now find ourselves at the proverbial table talking about an alternative way to fund our schools.

According to the numbers from the Administration, the proposal will result in \$3.8 billion worth of property tax relief where an average family will see a net tax cut of approximately 13 percent. A family of four that owns a home making less than \$36,000 each year will see a 70 percent reduction in their tax liability and the City of Erie School District will see a 124 percent reduction in school property tax.

All of this appears to be moving in the right direction, but the proposed shift doesn't come without criticism. The old ad-

age *the devil is in the details* may ring true for some and does for the many that have contacted my office to voice their opinion about the increase in personal income tax as well as the proposed changes to the sales and use tax. Many assume the General Assembly plans to balance the budget on the backs of smokers, but others don't buy the rhetoric that this is the most comprehensive tax increase in the history of the Commonwealth.

What is encouraging to me is that this budget proposal is not full of one-time transfers and budget tricks that will result in this Commonwealth being in the same or worse position as we aim to craft a budget for the next fiscal year.

Although there is much yet to be determined, many have ex-

pressed to my office that this budget proposal is rooted in common sense. We've got to look at this outside of a four-year window, and we've got to have the political will to fully vet tough issues. The General Assembly, both the Senate and the House, are now charged with hammering out the details of what will become the final Commonwealth budget.

To quote one of the simplest, yet the most profound statements in history, "If you want something you've never had, you must be willing to do something you've never done." I feel it is time to focus on the latter.

Senator Sean D. Wiley can be contacted at SenatorWiley@PaSenate.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @[SenatorWiley](https://twitter.com/SenatorWiley).

Erie At-Large

Douglas Mark Hughes delivered 535 letters to congress, and they're worth noting.

By: Jim Wertz

When Douglas Mark Hughes landed his gyrocopter on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., the 61-year old postal worker from Florida, intent on delivering to Congress 535 two-page letters written by voters, had two objectives. The first, to carry out an act of civil disobedience that would spark a national dialogue about campaign finance reform among voters rather than special interest groups and politicians who benefit from the current system. Second, he called for members of Congress to take a stand for campaign finance reform in the 2016 election cycle. "As a member of Congress, you have three options," Hughes wrote in one of the letters he carried, "1. You may pretend corruption does not exist. 2. You may pretend to oppose corruption while you sabotage reform. 3. You may actively participate in real reform."

As an astute contrarian, Hughes recognized the national media would not carry his torch. "The mainstream media (not the local media) is making a financial killing with mega-elections. It's up to us," Hughes wrote on his blog, thedemocracyclub.org. Indeed, if you followed the coverage of the most famous manned flight since the Wright Brothers left Kitty Hawk, N.C., you know that the conversation about the flight was quickly framed as an assault on Capitol security rather than an evaluation of motives behind Doug Hughes's special delivery. Hughes hoped that the local media would take up the cause of educating voters on campaign finance reform because he

was certain that the national media would not, and the majority of Americans still favor their local media over national media outlets for daily news and information.

As political coverage of 2016 scales to an early breaking point, campaign finance reform remains off the radar despite the ongoing prognostication that Hillary Clinton will likely spend \$2.5 billion in what many see as a final attempt to recycle her 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. address labels. But as problematic as it is to allow such gratuitous spending in pursuit of the Oval Office, the concern of Hughes lay with the wholesale purchase of votes in the legislative branch and the effect of such activity on the constituents that federal representatives supposedly serve.

During the course of the 2014-midterm elections, more than \$2 million was spent in the race for Pennsylvania's third congressional district. Democratic challenger Dan LaVallee spent \$408,903, a respectable sum for a political neophyte, while the incumbent, Republican Mike Kelly, spent \$1,648,321 to retain his seat. More than \$1 million of Kelly's war chest came from political action committee (PAC) money, according to campaign committee filings with the Federal Election Commission. LaVallee received \$65,250 in PAC money.

Dan LaVallee received contributions from 37 PACs, all of which were located in his congressional district or represented labor unions operating within the district. Nine PACs gave the maximum \$5,000, while the other 28 PACs gave between \$50 and \$3000. That said, had LaVallee unseated Kelly it is likely that his war chest would also be filled with PAC money from outside the district. Whether we like it or not, that is, at present, how the game is played.

Of the 32 PACs that made the maximum contribution of \$5,000 to the Kelly campaign, only two – the II-VI, Inc PAC, which

made 95 percent of its contributions to Republican candidates in 2014, and the PNC Financial Services PAC, which made 72 percent of its contributions to Republican candidates – are located within PA-3, the district that Kelly represents. The other 30 PACs are located across the United States from the Capital beltway to California, and include names like the Raytheon Company, Chesapeake Energy, and Koch Industries.

By accepting their money, Kelly did nothing wrong – and that's the problem. PA-3 is

PA-3 is being unduly influenced by constituents who have very little abiding interest in the region. They look either to exploit the natural resources of the region or they want to influence Kelly's vote on the House floor.

being unduly influenced by constituents who have very little abiding interest in the region. They look either to exploit the natural resources of the region or they want to influence Kelly's vote on the House floor. Here's the bad news: None of that is going to change unless voters demand it by voting against PAC money candidates in federal elections.

The campaign to end *Citizens United*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that effectively opened the floodgates for private donors to anonymously fund political campaigns, has proposed four possible alternatives to the current system of campaign financing.

Option 1: *Public financing of campaigns*. This broadly means that candidates would

have to meet eligibility requirements in order to receive public funds that come from taxpayers. Presumably taxpayers then become engaged voters.

Option 2: *Full and immediate disclosure*. This would bring Washington and eventually local municipalities into the 21st Century by giving voters real-time campaign finance information rather than making interested parties wait for reporting periods to end in order to access financial data from campaign committees.

Option 3: *Government matching of small dollar donors*. This gives preference to micro donations from individual donors to allow grassroots campaigns to compete, if only marginally, with campaigns funded with corporate contributions.

Option 4: *Compulsory voting*. It wouldn't have sat well with the Founders and it doesn't sit well with much of the electorate, but it remains an option for increasing voter turnout. The concern with compulsory voting is that once you compel the electorate to turn out, you need a regulatory system that keeps candidates from compelling voters to make compulsory decisions.

The message that Doug Hughes ultimately hoped to deliver to both Congress and the American people from his gyrocopter was that there is a choice between the establishment process for funding elections that has drowned out the voice of the individual voter and campaign finance reforms – like those listed above – that will bring agency and opportunity to voters as well as candidates for public office. All that's left is for an otherwise apathetic electorate to do something even more radical than landing a gyrocopter on the Capitol lawn. They simply need to vote.

Jim Wertz can be reached at jWertz@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @[jim_wertz](https://twitter.com/jim_wertz).

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- ▶ Learn more about how to fit physical activity into your daily life at www.health.gov/PAGuidelines.
- ▶ Learn more about National Women's Health Week at womenshealth.gov/nwhw.



Sources
¹ www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf
² www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/has/2012/2067.pdf
³ www.cancer.gov/cancer-topics/factsheet/prevention/physicalactivity
⁴ www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter2.aspx

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Street Corner Soapbox

Everything is changing, everything is the same.



By: Jay Stevens

I mean, doesn't it feel like we're trapped on some kind of weird, in-between-events, same-old same-old treadmill lately? Like there's crazy important events going on all the time – only we've seen 'em all before, and nothing's really changing, just kind of hovering there, ready to drop on our heads?

Baltimore police clashed with protesters the other day. Some protesters got out of hand, stomped on police cars, broke windows, threw rocks and bottles at police. Fox News reports “dozens” are arrested; Reuters, twelve. The clashes wandered over to Camden Yards, where baseball fans weren't allowed to leave the stadium. Images from the action are pretty graphic. A man throws a chair through a window. Police huddle around a protester and beat him.

Reactions are predictable. And here's some advice: don't read the comments at Breitbart.com. That kind of poison doesn't wash away easy.

The most predictable thing was how the national news covered the riot. Or didn't cover the riot. CNN refused to break from its coverage of the White House Correspondents' Dinner – or the “nerd prom” – while cops and protesters fought less than 60 miles away.

Personally, I'm finding it difficult to muster any outrage over a couple of busted cop cars and store windows.

It's nothing compared to what happened to Freddy Gray, whose death at the hands of the Baltimore police sparked the protests and riot.

Picked up by police for nothing more than making eye contact with police and running, Gray died of spinal injuries he suffered while in police custody. Video of his arrest show him being dragged off by police in pain – he apparently hurt his leg – but no

Police clash with protesters in Ferguson, Missouri.

one's saying how he suffered three fractured vertebrae or a crushed voice box during his trip to the police station.

No one probably ever will.

And Gray's death is nothing compared to the contents of a recent Baltimore Sun report on the \$5.7 million in settlements paid to Baltimore residents for their treatment at the hands of police.

An 87-year-old woman was called a “bitch” by a white police officer, who threw her against a wall, forcibly handcuffed her, and shoved her face down on a couch, breaking her shoulder – for protesting the treatment of her grandson, who had been shot. A young pregnant woman was grabbed around the neck, slammed to the ground, and kneeed to the back – for urging the police to stop harassing victims of a recent assault, but to go after the attackers.

One-hundred and two settlements since 2011. A litany of broken bones and injuries and even deaths that resulted in no prosecution of Baltimore police, even as civil courts found authorities liable for millions in damages.

Apparently the only way a police officer will face any charges for killing suspects, bystanders, or random people is if the whole thing's caught on camera. Like when 50-year-old Walter Scott was shot by Michael Slager, a South Carolina police officer. Over a traffic violation. Slager's facing murder charges thanks to video showing Scott lumbering across an empty lot and Slager coolly shooting him in the back eight times – then planting a taser next to the body.

Without the video, it's just a case of another black man trying to wrestle a taser from a police officer.

But there's a White House Correspondents' Dinner. And an earthquake. And Hillary Clinton is planning to raise and spend \$2.5 billion for her presidential run, which is more than twice what Barack Obama spent in 2012, and which sounds like a lot, until you consider the Koch brothers *alone* are budgeting \$889 million in presidential campaign donations. Meanwhile, *Time* runs a piece on Hillary Clinton and menopause. And Bruce Jenner is a transgender woman.

We're frozen. We're caught in some weird space-time continuum shift where nothing changes, everything is the same.

Wait! Isn't that another Erie study? This is Kathy Dahlkemper's brainchild, a study on whether an intermodal rail terminal is needed for the area. A double-whammy, right? A study on an idea that's already left the station. (Ba-da-BUM!) The intermodal part of the rail terminal went ka-blooey along with John Elliott's inland port project, when a few hardy citizens complained about traffic.

But what the hell, studies are what Erie does best. So let's drop \$100,000 on the rail terminal study.

Has anyone commissioned a study on the feasibility of Erie becoming the study capital of the nation? We could study other people's futures for them, write glowing reports on how their futures are brighter than Youngstown's or Albany's or Reading's.

It's worth a study, right?

And between the time I write these words

and they're published, what are the odds another unarmed black man is shot by police?

Did anyone else read the Department of Justice report from Ferguson, Missouri? It told the story of a racially biased police force and municipal court system working hand-in-hand by harassing, charging, and fining the city's African-American population. It sounds similar to, say, a 2002 Mercyhurst University report that said Erie's minority drivers and pedestrians are more likely to be stopped and searched than the city's white citizens. And how many of Erie's 170-plus police force are African-American? Two? Four?

Harassment takes many guises. In Ferguson, a white-run law enforcement system judged a black community to lack the same basic values and respect for the law as its white community, and acted on that assumption by stopping, searching, and arresting African-Americans for petty crimes they more often let whites walk away from. The result? A community torn apart by criminal records and perceived lawlessness.

Now *that's* worth a study.

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

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News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

World's Worst Sculptor

It seemed like a good idea when the town of Celoron, New York, agreed in 2009 to pay for a bronze statue honoring the village's only celebrity. Lucille Ball had spent her childhood years there, and even today, everyone "Loves Lucy." The result was apparently a monstrosity, described in news reports as "frightening" and unrecognizable by anyone who has ever watched Lucy's TV shows or movies. The original sculptor first suggested a fee of \$8,000 to \$10,000 to make a better one, but after Mayor Scott Schrecengost started a fundraising campaign, the sculptor offered to make another one for free. [CNN, 4-7-2015]

Wait, What?

Tough Love: A Catholic priest (unnamed in news reports) in Taranto, Italy, was removed recently after reports that, while attempting to minister to an unemployed laborer, he arranged for online role-playing in which the man was Judas and the priest dispatched him to gay orgies to be punished (for betraying Jesus) by members of the Vatican security force. [Daily Mail (London), 4-8-2015]

Paulo Silva, 51, facing bestiality charges in April in Framingham (Massachusetts) District Court, insisted that the charges

be reduced to only attempted larceny. Yes, he was caught fondling the male purebred pit bull, but he had no sexual motivation, his lawyer explained. Actually, he said a friend of Silva's owned a female pit bull and Silva had asked the male's owner if the two dogs could mate, but when the owner declined, Silva said he was simply trying to collect the sperm himself. Judge Jennifer Stark was unmoved and set the case for trial. [Metrowest Daily News (Framingham), 4-10-2015]

Leading Economic Indicators

In additional fallout from the budget cuts and personnel reductions at the IRS, the supervisory revenue official for the Dallas region disclosed in April that his office had so few collectors that it would pursue only scofflaws who owe the government at least \$1 million. "I have to say," the supervisor told a reporter, "nobody's ever going to knock on (the) door" of anyone who owes from \$100,000 to \$999,999. [Washington Post, 4-8-2015]

Unclear on the Concept

At Australia's sixth annual National Disability Summit in Melbourne in March, all of the speakers except one were able-bodied. That person, in a wheelchair, had to be lifted up to the stage because there was no

ramp. Furthermore, disabled activists in attendance told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that the "disabled" section's table was at the back of the room, the food tables were elevated to accommodate standers, and one accessible toilet was being used as storage space. [Australian Broadcasting Corp. News, 3-26-2015]

Bright Ideas

German high school student Simon Schrader, 17, preparing for the all-important "Abitur" advanced-level tests to identify top-performing students, filed a formal request in April, under North Rhine-Westphalia state's generous freedom of information law, for an advance copy of the test. "I just wanted to see what they would say," he said. (He filed a little late, in that the state's deadline for responding came after most of the testing.) [The Guardian (London), 4-9-2015]

Raising Our Most Delicate Generation: In preparation for the National Union of Students Women's Conference in Solihull, England, in March some attendees requested that clapping for any of the speakers be discouraged, but that approval from the audience be expressed by "jazz hands" -- open hands, palm directed to the stage, and the fingers extended wildly. Using "jazz hands" would show compassion for attendees who have anxi-

ety and other disorders, and for speakers who might be distracted by the din of approval. [BBC News, 3-24-2015]

People Different From Us

Venezuelan women's well-known obsession with bodily beauty usually focuses on face, breasts and buttocks, and model Aleira Avendano has certainly had those surgeries. However, Avendano's signature feature is her 20-inch waist, which she says has been maintained by wearing an absurdly tight corset for 23 hours a day for the past six years. "I wash myself and rest for an hour, and then I put it on again. At first, it was terrible, then I got used to it, and (it) became a necessity." [Medical Daily, 3-30-2015]

Compelling Explanations

California Law: A jury in Atascadero, California, having already convicted Mark Andrews, 51, of murder, concluded in March that he was legally sane at the time he shot his neighbor to death even though he claimed she was a vampire and that he himself had been, for 20 years, a werewolf. (A month later, a judge in San Francisco acquitted Santino Aviles, 41, of robbery and other felony charges after he claimed that the apartment he broke into was a spaceship that would take him to safety before the imminent explosion of the Earth. His lawyer called his condition a "meth-fueled psychosis," and he was convicted only of misdemeanors.) [KEYT-TV (Santa Barbara), 3-10-2015] [KPIX-TV (San Francisco), 4-9-2015]

Readers' Choice

No charges were filed in the April incident in Lee County, Georgia, even though a 74-year-old woman was shot by her son-in-law. Deputies accepted the explanation that Larry McElroy shot at an armadillo with his 9mm handgun, killing it, but that the bullet ricocheted, traveled about 100 yards, first off of a fence and then through the woman's mobile home, hitting her in the back. She was not seriously hurt. (2) Robert Abercrombie became the most recent practitioner of DIY tooth extraction when he yanked out a front tooth of his 8-year-old son, Jason, by tying the tooth to his Camaro and driving away. Jason was perfectly cool with the stunt, which was captured on video and posted on the Internet. "It came out!" Jason is seen shouting joyously (and bloodily) into the camera. [WALB-TV (Albany, Ga.), 3-14-2015] [WTVT (Tampa), 4-1-2015]

Recurring Themes

Too Much Information: The most recent fatwa, announced in April by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey, declared that "toilet paper" is now acceptable for pious Muslims. The directorate had previously decreed that only water could be used for such cleaning (or, if none was available, the left hand). (Toilet etiquette, called "Qadaa al-Haajah," which obviously predates the invention of the actual "toilet," requires entrance by the left foot, exit by the right, a post-ablution prayer and, most challengingly, "no reading.") [Jerusalem Post, 4-9-2015]

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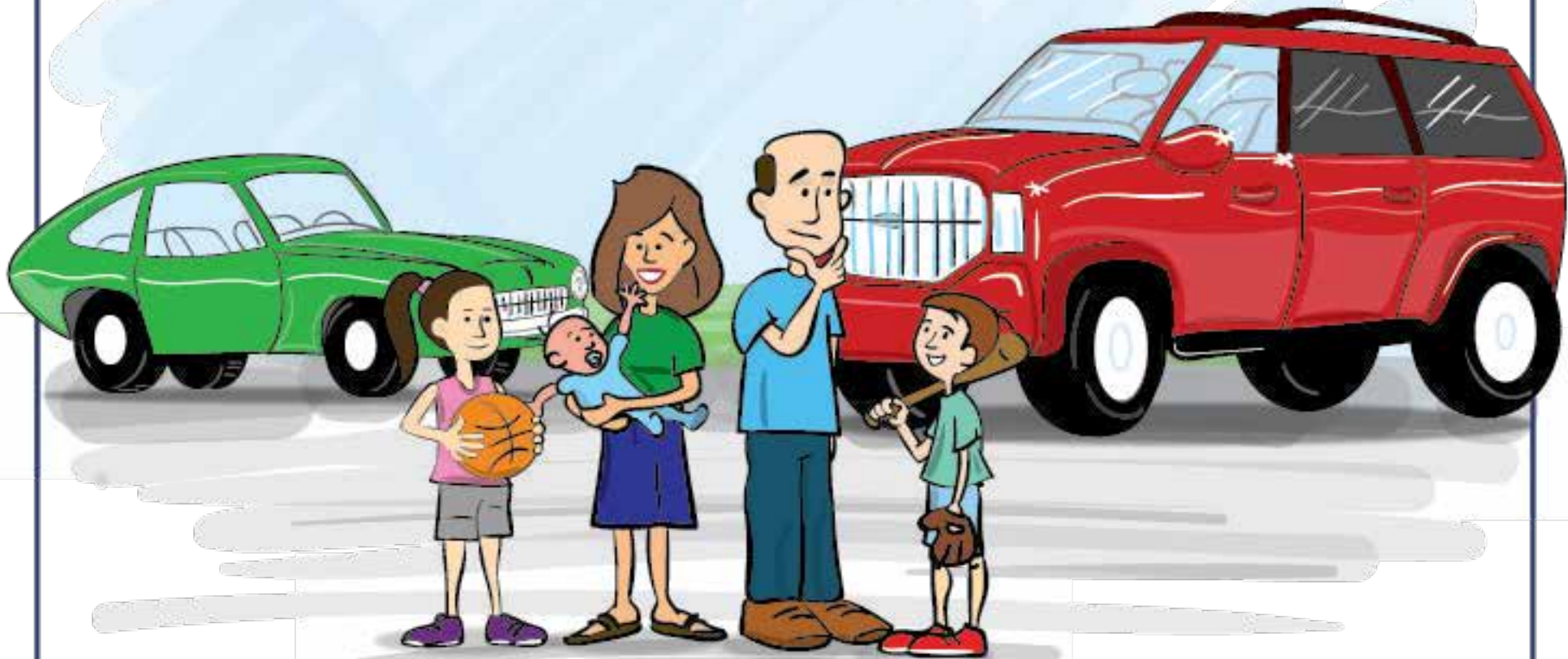
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Country Fair Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Erie's favorite, homegrown convenience store hits a milestone.



BRAD TRIANA

With 71 locations in Northwestern Pennsylvania, Western New York, and Eastern Ohio, Country Fair is more than just a gas station.

who joined Country Fair in 2002 and has been involved with United Refining for 29 years. "We have an infrastructure here. We have 40 stores in Erie County, so we're based here and remain here from an accounting standpoint, from a buying standpoint, and from an operations standpoint as opposed to centralizing in some corporate area."

So, even after being bought by Catsimatidis and United Refining, Country Fair continued to build momentum from its base in Erie. Now the company has 71 different convenience stores located throughout Northwestern Pennsylvania, Western New York, and Eastern Ohio, serving an estimated 40 million customers each year. Food service is a growing part of the business, just like how McGarvey thought it would be back when Rankin met him at that Subway meeting.

According to Rankin, the chain sold roughly three million breakfast sandwiches, five million cups of coffee, and, appropriate given the company's roots, one million gallons of milk last year. The company has also strived to offer the best in drink selection, with updated stores containing upwards of 22 coolers of soft drinks and any other cold beverage you'd like to snag during a stop at your local barn. Of course, with all of the services Country Fair offers, Rankin knows that the company has a lot of rival businesses to plan for.

"It's been staggering the competition that comes on all fronts against us," the vice president says. "We try to have value in our product, but we're probably realizing that for us to remain viable, we have to not only have value but values."

Rankin stresses that a big reason why Erie and the surrounding areas remain loyal to Country Fair is that in addition to providing quality products at con-

venient locations, it's more than just a Northwest Pennsylvania business.

Starting with McGarvey, Country Fair has a history of contributing to the community, whether it's supporting Little League teams, providing money so that students could continue to visit the Flagship Niagara after the state cut some of its funding, or raising \$1.2 million for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Even the company's 50th Anniversary will benefit the community, as Country Fair will raffle off a '65 Ford Mustang at the Bayfront Convention Center, with proceeds going toward The United Way of Erie County's Imagination Library. Then there's the roughly 1,200 people that the company employs, as well.

"In the McGarvey tradition, we've always believed in our mission, which is to provide a pleasant shopping experience for every customer every time, and we believe a part of that is being involved in the community and what we can do for it," Rankin says.

The chain sold roughly three million breakfast sandwiches, five million cups of coffee, and, appropriate given the company's roots, one million gallons of milk last year.

There are still challenges, but Country Fair is continuing to evolve along with the times. The company is close to having a mobile app that will provide specials at the gas pump and inside the store. In the next month, Country Fair will start experimenting with TVs at the pump showing CNN or weather reports, making what could be a tedious task more enjoyable. Rankin and the rest of the company recognize that it needs to attract a younger audience, the type that are active on social media and refer to the chain as "CoFair."

In such a competitive market, the company is working hard to be a convenience chain that truly makes the shopping experience convenient. Country Fair has evolved over the years, but it has always been a big player in the Erie community.

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

By: Alex Bieler

Country Fair can represent a lot of different things for a lot of different people. For many, it's a gas station, a place where you can fill up your car to help you get where you need to go. Others make Country Fair a part of their pre-work ritual, picking up a Roasters Cup and a breakfast sandwich before hitting the office.

Then there are the Erieites who know it as the establishment that models its store exteriors after red barns.

After beginning operations in 1965, Country Fair is all of these things, but more importantly, it's a longtime local staple, and on April 30, the iconic Erie company will celebrate its 50th anniversary at the Bayfront Convention Center from 7 to 9 p.m.

While gas is a major part of Country Fair's business, it wasn't always that way. In fact, the first major fluid that Country Fair provided was meant to fuel a person, not a car, as the company was born to serve as a milk store for Meadowbrook Dairy. After realizing that milk deliveries were slowly becoming outdated, Ray McGarvey and his family started the first Country Fair to allow Erieites back in the '60s to buy fresh milk from the store.

From there, McGarvey began to acquire convenience stores and grocers to add to Country Fair's product line, quickly expanding the business' ser-

vices. Roughly 20 years after the first location opened, gasoline was brought into the fold, marking the first of some very big changes for the local company.

"I met Ray about that period of time," says Country Fair Vice President of Retail Marketing Paul Rankin, who was with United Refining Company at the time. "Subway was trying to come into the market, and I was down in Florida and ran into him at a Subway meeting. He told me at that time that he didn't want the deal but he thought he could come up with a better product and bring better food to the market and do his own brand. That became the Country Fair mission, to buy larger lots and develop larger stores to bring food into those programs to make it viable."

As Country Fair got bigger, so did its affiliations. The company was eventually purchased by United Refining in 2001, a move that is often a sign that the smaller-market franchise would be forced to merge with its new parent corporation or move its headquarters to a place like New York City. However, United Refining Owner John Catsimatidis, a Greek immigrant who worked his way up in the business world, made a commitment to keep Country Fair's history and legacy in The Flagship City.

"We believe there's a benefit of having the people who run the company and oversee things be based in that area as opposed to having a corporate thing a long ways away," says Rankin,

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COUNTRY FAIR

The Truth About Our Trash

An environmentalist searches for answers to questions about Erie's trash collection system.



Bales of aluminum (pictured left) packed and sorted for shipping.

MARY BIRDSONG

By: Mary Birdsong

“Everybody wants us to pick it up. Nobody wants us to put it down.” This, according to Rich Carniewski, senior district manager for Waste Management, is the *First Law of Garbage* to those in the solid waste business. He tells me this as we sit in his truck in front of the gaping maw of the four-story shed at the recycling transfer station on Erie's west side.

It's not a pretty place, but what he's telling me is true. We all want our trash to magically disappear to some place out of sight. We don't want to see it, hear about it, or smell it, ever again. And, furthermore, we don't want the landfill, transfer station, or recycling processing plants near our homes. Period.

Every year, Americans produce more trash than they did the year before. According to Environmental Protection Agency statistics, 88.1 million tons of municipal solid waste were produced in 1960, which is, per capita, 2.68 pounds per person per day. By 2000, the per capita amount had jumped to 4.74 (1,730 pounds per year), with a total generation of 243.5 million tons. And while the per capita poundage dipped to 4.38 in 2012 — the last year for which figures are available — the overall amount rose to 251 million tons.

Despite our desire to create the illusion of a trash-free and pristine world, we pro-

duce lots of it. Food, paper, plastic, metal, soiled diapers, cat litter, dog waste — officially called municipal solid waste — has to go somewhere. In the City of Erie and surrounding municipalities, that means either the Lake View Landfill or a material recovery facility, or MRF (say it like smurf without the 's').

The City of Erie has an extra layer of complexity since it operates its own waste disposal pick-up system instead of contracting it out to a commercial firm. And it's in the city where issues are most complicated and voices the loudest when it comes to trash night.

Mention trash and recycling to a city resident and you may get an earful. “They take everything all at once and put it in the same truck;” “The city doesn't really care if we recycle;” “It all goes to the landfill anyway.”

Are any of these true?

In an attempt to find out, *Erie Reader* conducted a small experiment. We recruited volunteers in four quadrants of the city — northwest, southwest, northeast, and southeast — to watch their refuse pick up for three or four weeks. The volunteers had noticed irregularities and were upset about it, which is why they agreed to participate. They did, however, wish to remain anonymous, with which the *Erie Reader* complied.

Volunteer A in the northwest quadrant,

volunteered based on past observations, telling of watching a crew pick up white bags heavy with cat litter along with the recycling, despite the fact that it had been placed near her trash can and away from the recycling pile. She also tells of watching the recycling crew paw through her trash can and take bags from it after she deliberately started putting the trash in a can to try to make it more distinct from the recycling pile. “Why would they think a heavy white bag on another pile is part of my recycling?” she asks. “The city designates a system, we follow it, and yet the crew seems to go out of their way to take bags from what we have clearly designated as not recycling.”

The system mentioned can be found in the City of Erie Recycling Guidelines. To wit: trash goes in cans or bags that are not clear or blue, while recycling should be put in clear or blue bags. Then, the recycling should be placed on the curb “apart from trash.”

In Volunteer A's three weeks of observation for this article, she saw nothing amiss. The recycling was picked up and then, later, the trash, with no misdirected bags.

Volunteer B, in the northeast part of the city, had similar past experiences and stories. The crew was on their best behavior during her three weeks of observation. “I've had problems in the past, but I chalked it up to being one of very few people in the neighborhood who separate their recycling

out from everything else. Maybe they didn't want to bother with sending a truck to my neighborhood for a couple of bags?” she asked.

Volunteer C, in the southwest part of the city had nothing bad to report, either, in the three weeks he watched. The crew did its job as it was supposed to.

Volunteer D, however, had a mixed bag of results. She watched for four weeks, and for two of the weeks, crews picked up everything correctly. Not so the other two weeks. On one night, the workers took a trash bag along with the recycling, even though it was far away from the recycling pile. “In fact,” she says, “the guy tried to pick up a larger dark trash bag, too, but it slipped out of his hand, so he just left it. He would have taken both if he could have hung onto it.” On the second problematic night, they took all of her trash and all of the recycling together, and she watched from her front window as the crew moved down the street, picking up the recycling and taking some garbage bags, too, seemingly randomly. She took video of it.

One person who was willing to go on the record was Amy Jo Smith-Zola, executive director of Environment Erie. “We have seen trash and recycling go in the same truck, and have seen the crews choose randomly what goes and what doesn't. My husband called about the problem three times and never received a call back.”

Doug Mitchell, Director of the Erie Department of Public Works, and Sarah Galloway, Recycling Coordinator for the city, don't like to hear about mistakes being made or phone calls not returned. They encourage all Erieites to pick up the phone and call 870.1450 and report a problem if observed. They promised that the department will respond to phone calls and take action when needed. “It's in our best interest to make sure that everything that can be recycled is,” says Galloway. “It saves the city and residents money.”

Seeing the problems may not be very easy to do, though. Crews come at night, when a good majority of us are asleep.

Certainly, our experiment could be called unscientific at best, and what Smith-Zola reports is anecdotal. Both are perhaps not widely representative of the entire city, but do suggest that problems exist and that citizens might have some legitimate gripes.

Trash removal is a complex system, where lots of things can go wrong. Let's take a look: Anything that gets put into a trash truck (or is picked up from a commercial trash dumpster), whether it is a city truck or one operated by Waste Management, goes directly to the landfill. Sorting out anything

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that does not belong is impractical; it just gets dumped. Things that get picked up by a recycling truck (or picked up in a commercial recycling dumpster) go to a Waste Management transfer station at 16th and Raspberry streets, where items are loaded into semi-trailers for a trip to a MRF, in either Akron or Pittsburgh. At those processing centers, the material is sorted by type, baled, and sold to companies that either turn it directly into something else, or further process it for sale to third parties.

This sounds very cut and dry, but it sometimes isn't; glitches abound at all levels of the process. It is, after all, a human-driven system, fraught with all the strengths and weaknesses that implies.

If refuse gets in with the recycling, it goes to the transfer station, too. It gets trashed at the MRF during an initial sort. This wastes time and money. So, how "clean" the recycling material is when it arrives is of paramount importance to both Waste Management and the city.

How much gets into each system matters a great deal to the city, which pays \$48.25 per ton of anything going to the landfill. The material headed to recycling only costs the city \$6.50 per ton. They are motivated to get as much to the recycling center as possible.

According to Mitchell, recycling saves the city approximately \$200,000 a year in deferred landfill costs. Which is why the city prints and distributes a recycling guide every year to encourage citizen participation. The guide thoroughly outlines what materials can and cannot be recycled, how to correctly put your solid waste on the curb so that crews know what to pick up, and when to do it.

So why are irregularities occurring? There are many reasons, but one big one is, in a word, labor.

As you may imagine, working on a city trash crew would not be considered desirable employment by many people. It's a night shift job, worked outside in every kind of weather. One-third to one-half of all workers are considered "on-call" employees, meaning they make \$8.50 an hour and receive no benefits. Many are at the bottom of the employment ladder with no skills and are, in some cases, ex-cons trying for a fresh start. There is a lot of turnover. A high-turnover rate leads to errors by new employees and costs additional money for training and supervision.

"The crews are monitored regularly, and we try to correct problems when they are known," says Galloway. "We had to let three or four people go at the end of last year alone."

People's perceptions are partially to blame, too. Mitchell stated that, in the past, the recycling crews would grab bags of garbage and take them to a central collecting point such as the mouth of a cul-de-sac, as a favor to their trash co-workers. "People thought they were taking the trash. We ended that custom to avoid the appearance of bad practices," Mitchell says.

Unskilled crews and lingering memories

aren't the only problem, though.

We, the citizens of Erie, contribute to the problem by not doing what we are asked. We co-mingle trash and recyclables; we place everything in one big heap on the curb, making it genuinely hard to distinguish which is which; and, we don't use the proper containers.

"One of the biggest mistakes people make is using the wrong bag," says Mitchell. They'll use clear bags for garbage, put their recycling in something other than a clear or blue bag, or include something in either one that should not be there. One big mistake lots of people make are putting contaminated cardboard food containers, like greasy pizza boxes, in the recyclables. "The bureau chief regularly visits the transfer station to watch for trash in the recycling." In turn, crews keep track of residents who do not comply with the rules. "We don't fine people. We want to use positive reinforcement and education instead," adds Galloway.

The good news is that the number of Erieites who do recycle is up. Eighty percent of people who put out trash, separate their garbage from recycling, according to Galloway. "We have pretty clean recyclables, too, but there is always room for improvement." According to what the department sees, the more affluent the neighborhood, the higher the rate of recycling. "People struggling to pay the bills will use what they have and not buy extra bags to recycle," says Galloway. "We ask grocery stores to provide clear or blue bags, but they don't always. People will take the cheapest route."

They certainly will. Waste Management's Carniewski tells a gruesome tale of how a voluntary recycling dumpster had to be removed from one county location. "We always saw a lot of non-recyclables in it — people will take advantage of what seems like a free place to dump anything — but we decided to pull it when we found a dead dog in it."

We have come a long way since the

mid-twentieth century when everything went to the landfill but it seems the public may be a little slow on the uptake as to recycling as a concept, how to value a free public service, and, well, maybe treating their pets with a little more respect. We have a long road ahead of us, still, and we may have to face the fact that reaching for something "better" may require something that's not "easy" or "convenient." Part of that could be taking a hard look at the plastic bags we are required to use for recycling that ultimately get wasted as we try to do a better job of dealing with our solid waste. Get wasted? Yes. The bags we use to put our recyclables out do not get recycled, even though they are, technically, recyclable. During the initial sort at the MRF, bags are emptied of their contents and put in a trashcan.

Why? Because any kind of "film-type" plastic — grocery store, deli, or bread bags, for example — jam the rolling screen machines used to sort materials. Workers have to clear the machines on each shift, which costs time, and of course, money.

Why not use permanent hard-sided containers for recycling instead of buying one-time use bags? Toronto, a city of 2.79 million people does, as well as many other municipalities. Mitchell says they have looked into containers, but obstacles such as initial start up costs, maintaining an inventory, climate, and reduced efficiency (he says it takes longer to empty containers than pick up bags), keep the city from jumping in. And he adds, "Many people are happy with bags."

Some are not, though. Smith-Zola of Environment Erie would love to see everyone use containers for recycling. "We shouldn't have to buy plastic bags to recycle our plastic. It would be great if everyone could use a container."

Erika Young, Public Affairs Coordinator for Waste Management in Pittsburgh recommends that rather than putting any film-type plastic that is marked as recyclable out on the curb, it should be taken to drop-off

locations that accept it, such as grocery stores. If massed together separately, plastic of this variety can be recycled effectively and economically.

But do Erieites have a choice? Do we have to waste money on plastic bags that end up in the landfill just so we can be good citizens and recycle? Maybe not. Rumors abound that suggest if a citizen wants to, she can buy any kind of large, blue hard-sided container, put her recycling in it, place it on the curb, and the recycling crew will accept it.

So I tried it. They took my recycling. I'm a convert. Perhaps if everyone did this or petitioned city hall to go to containers, we could effect change (and reduce the amount of plastic going to the landfill).

"We shouldn't have to buy plastic bags to recycle our plastic. It would be great if everyone could use a container."

Erie's recycling guide also states that we can recycle all plastics that bear the recycling symbol and are numbered one through seven, with the exception of "plastic toys, furniture, or styrofoam."

This is, semantically, untrue. Styrofoam, a trademarked name, is a specific type of closed-cell extruded polystyrene foam. Like the trademarked Kleenex, though, it has become a generic term, used loosely. The styrofoam in Erie's Guide should really be called "foamed" plastic. Examples are meat trays from the supermarket, foam plates and cups, and foam-style take out containers. Most are No. 6 plastic. Another type of No. 6 plastic, which is hard — CD cases for one — can go on the curb to be recycled.

Foamed No. 6 plastic is recyclable but reclaiming and processing it is not economically viable. "Most recycling collection facilities will not accept it, because it is too light and fluffy," says Galloway. "They would have to collect an entire warehouse full just to get one ton."

The bottom line is that if this type of foamed plastic goes in the recycling stream, it will end up in the landfill. The hard truth is that if a recycling company cannot make money on something, it does not reclaim it.

There's the good, the bad, and the ugly of the process so far. Now, after all the lucrative waste has been sorted and baled by type — at which point its name changes to

A single American produces, on average, 4.38 pounds of trash per day each year.



MARY BIRDSONG

MARY BIRDSONG

scrap material — what happens to it? Young of Waste Management could not share which companies buy their scrap, but could describe the geographic destinations of what they sell.

According to Young, corrugated cardboard is sold mostly in the domestic market, as is No. 1 and No. 2 plastics (the most valuable types). Also sold domestically are aluminum, steel, and glass. Paper cartons, such as cereal boxes, go to tissue companies (no location offered).

Everything else — newspapers, mixed paper (office and junk mail), and mixed plastics (No.3 through No. 5 and No. 7) — are exported to China, Korea, Vietnam, and India.

The going price for each type of scrap can determine its destination.

“All recyclables are listed on a commodity market, so their prices fluctuate daily,” says Young. Aluminum is Waste Management’s most coveted commodity, as it fetches the highest price. It is also easily recyclable and can be used an infinite number of times, if recovered. “Aluminum can be turned around quickly, and be back on the shelf in as little as 60 days as a new can,” says Young.

Although metals are the darlings of the recovery industry and have plenty of suitors, other materials have a bit more trouble finding the right match. The reclamation system for these is freighted with politics, regulations, corruption, and the whims of governments, primarily because they are messier, harder to handle, and fewer companies need the raw materials. The major market for them is Southeast Asia, where virgin resources are harder to come by.

In early 2013, for example, Chinese government officials grew weary of shipments of mixed scrap paper and plastic arriving at port contaminated with large amounts of non-recyclable materials — as much as 20 percent — that was going to their landfills. They cracked down with a policy that came to be known as “Operation Green Fence.” Rather than allowing shipments to reach Chinese companies that used the scrap materials, officials cracked down at the ports, turning away any loads that had more than 1.5 percent contamination. This was not a new law, but a step up in enforcement of an old one. In the first quarter of 2013 alone,



MARY BIRDSONG

Pictured: Plastic bags caught in a sorting machine.

imports decreased by 5.5 percent.

Green Fence set off a tidal wave in the material recovery industry, with both good and bad results. Some Chinese manufacturers lost money from lack of raw materials and MRFs around the world that were being sloppy with their processing had to clean up their act (and their bales) for fear of finding their cargo back on their doorstep with a hefty shipping and storage bill on top. Other companies benefited. U.S.-based users of scrap materials suddenly found new resources that were cheaper to acquire, boosting their capacity and bottom line.

In general, most in the material recovery industry think that Green Fence was a positive wake-up call. Environmental groups were pleased. The jury is still out if China will maintain its scrutiny at such a high level, but most experts agree, the industry is changed for good, and probably the better. There is a dark side though, as other Asian countries, hungry for resources are now becoming the dumping ground for the dirty scrap materials some first-world processors are unwilling to clean.

Trash is now a global concern. We’re running out of places to put it, and the 5 Gyres Institute estimates that 27 million tons of plastic have now made it into the oceans. According to EPA statistics, in 1960, less than one percent of the total tonnage of

solid waste was plastic. In 2012, that number rose to 27 percent. Incredibly, only nine percent of that 32 million tons of plastic waste generated in 2012 was recovered for recycling. Improving our recycling rates, especially our plastic recovery, will keep those landfills available much longer.

One of the few things left that we can do to change the dynamics of this growing problem is to make or consume fewer goods that are made of plastic or are packaged in plastic, a tall order in a world that drank 41 billion gallons of water out of plastic bottles in 2004. In 2014, in the U.S. alone, about 50 billion plastic water bottles were used. Thirty-eight billion of them were not recycled.

And yet, many of us are unmoved by this looming crisis. Like climate change, it’s hard to see on a personal level. In Erie, like just about everywhere else in this country, we don’t have to face our own mess. This is, for the most part, a good and sanitary thing. But we have to teach ourselves to see it, whether it’s right in front of us or conveniently out of sight.

The genesis of this story was a writer who was angry because an Erie recycling crew took her trash along with her recycling. It ends with a better understanding of where it all goes, a new regard for the (mostly) men who clear away her solid waste every week, a new respect for the people who process

it, and an even greater desire to do more to preserve this lovely earth we all share.

I invite you to join me. You may want to start with ditching one-time use plastic water bottles and buying a reusable water bottle (I recommend stainless steel). If you think bottled water is better for you, remember some of the most popular brands such as Dasani and Aquafina, come from a municipal tap, with minimal filtering. You could up your game by procuring and utilizing reusable tote bags for your grocery and other shopping (or using the ones you acquired with good intentions and then forgot because they’re not “convenient”). If enough people stop expecting plastic bags at retailers, things will change.

You could also stop before purchasing products that are plastic-heavy, choosing instead items that have less packaging or are made of renewable materials (canned or glass beverages rather than those that come in plastic, for example). Manufacturers have been shown to respond to consumer demand (or lack thereof).

And if you reside in the City of Erie, please consider acquiring and using hard-sided blue containers for putting your recycling on the curb. The one-time purchase of a standard 30-gallon blue storage tote (around \$10-\$15 at a big box store) that can be used for years is a bargain compared to purchasing one 100-count box of 13-gallon clear bags (approximately \$8 at a big box store) that will have to be continually replaced with more.

Early in 2014, Susan Collins, President of the Container Recycling Institute told a Public Radio International reporter “The public has been trained to put their stuff in their bin at the curb, and for the stuff to just go away. And of course there is no such thing as away, away is always somewhere.”

Somewhere is going to be our own backyard soon. If we do nothing.

Mary Birdsong can be contacted at mBirdsong@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Twitter @Mary_Birdsong.

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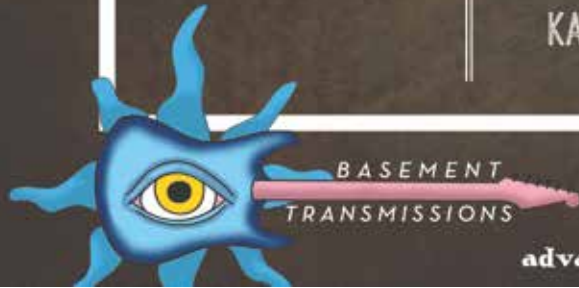
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Rootsy Americana rockers release debut EP May 8.

the kind of stuff you can easily find yourself singing along to, and maybe finding a bit of yourself in.

Now, with the upcoming release of their first EP, we can take the Radio home, out on the road, or wherever the hell else we'd like.

They'll be debuting the six-song, self-titled album — along with another new member, Doug Phillips, on keyboards — at a free EP-release show on Friday, May 8 at the Kings Rook Club, where they'll be joined by special guests Rivers.

"We're practicing week in and week out, and are really looking forward to getting out there full-force," Daybreak bassist Ryan Bartosek told the *Reader* recently, adding that, after a recent Rook after-party slot for prog-jam favorites Aqueous and a busy summer coming up, "we're hoping we can keep that momentum moving."

"Daybreak Radio has allowed me to explore more into my rock 'n' roll side," said lead vocalist and guitarist Tyler Smilo. "I'm very excited about what this project will bring."

Keep doing what you're doing, guys. And we'll keep tuning in. — Ryan Smith

Friday, May 8, 9 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/daybreakradio



Storm the Bay takes the Erie stage May 2 at Basement Transmissions.

Adding a hardcore element to the show are Harvey Pekar and Cattle Dogs, both on tour from Cleveland. Harvey Pekar's album *Upward, Not Northward* has a more melodic hardcore sound, comparable at times to Have Heart circa *Songs to Scream at the Sun* era and Defeater, but with harsher vocals.

Cattle Dogs have a more typical hardcore feel — fast, heavy, and easy to mosh to. Like Harvey Pekar, they do have some melodic tendencies, but focus more on the rhythm section than the lead.

The opening acts for the night are Archway (featuring yours truly) and The Standby from Erie and surrounding areas. Both bands play a pop punk/'90s emo fusion, comparable to bands like Lifetime and Citizen. Archway is finishing up its debut album *My Heart, A Home* at the end of April.

This show is a great showcase of two ends of the punk rock spectrum, and anyone who appreciates diversity should come out and have a great time. — Tommy Shannon

Doors at 6 p.m., Saturday, May 2 // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$10 All Ages // facebook.com/basementtransmissions

Daybreak Radio Headlines EP Release Party

Formed off the shores of Lake Erie about one year ago, Daybreak Radio — comprised of a group of long-time, well-known local musicians — has been busy honing its chops, playing out, and crafting its signature blend of straight-up rock 'n' roll.

The now-five-piece band — a heady mix of Erie talent with influences ranging from Jack White to the Grateful Dead — has a rootsy, Americana-in-the-garage sound, and they play, like they say,

MUSIC

2Blue w/ Dave VanAmburg

April 29 — 6 p.m.
Victor's Restaurant, Bel Aire Clarion, 2800 W. 8 St. jazerie.com.

Colony House Band

April 30 — 6:30 p.m.
Colony Club Pub and Grille, 2670 W. 8 St. jazerie.com.

Presque Isle Saxophone Quartet

April 30 — 7 to 9 p.m.x
Abiding Hope Lutheran Church, 5312 Peach St.

Rankin and Schell

April 30 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US-6, Venango sleepingchainsaw.com.

The Armitan Hand

May 1 — 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Halfway to Halloween Bash w/ Geek Army

May 1 — 7 p.m.
Docksider, 1015 State St. facebook.com/Docksiderbar

Jake Johns / The Arden Room

May 1 — 8 p.m.
Erie Ale House, 1033 State St. facebook.com/ErieAleHouse.

Mercyhurst University Student Jazz Ensemble

May 1 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Taylor Little Theater, Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38 St. jazerie.com.

The Return of 'Crawl'

May 1 — 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.



BeeDie with Norman Dean at Bobby's Place

The Pittsburgh-based MC comes to Erie Friday, May 8.

Erie will be getting a dose of Pittsburgh hip-hop this May. Steel City MC BeeDie will headline a DreamBig Promotions show at Bobby's Place Friday, May 8, a night that will feature some fine MCs from Western Pennsylvania.

BeeDie, born Brian Green, first got his start as a rapper in the duo The Ill Spoken, which featured fellow Pittsburgher Mac Miller, who headlined a show at Edinboro University's McComb Fieldhouse back on April 10. Like Miller, BeeDie is a notable Steel City performer, receiving accolades from publications like *Pittsburgh City Paper* and *JENESIS Magazine* for past works like *The Beat Bully*.

Now the 27-year-old MC is touring in support of his latest album *Counter Culture*, which drops just a few days before the Bobby's Place gig. Even before its release, *Counter Culture* is garnering attention, with a pair of singles already making the Billboard Emerging Artists Charts, including the Wiz Khalifa-assisted "Make a Wish."

BeeDie won't be alone at Bobby's Place. Fellow Pittsburgh artist Norman Dean will show off his own skills on the mic, while a quartet of local MCs in C. Brown, Nick I Am a Don, Jonny Evans, and GP will provide even more hip-hop goodness on a night already packed with talent from Western Pennsylvania. — Alex Bieler

10 p.m. Friday, May 8 // 1202 W. 18th St. // 455.9840

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The Clarks Return to Sherlock's In Support of Upcoming Album

After more than twenty years together with thirteen studio albums behind them, The Clarks refuse to call it quits. And with good reason – they're still rocking just as hard as they were on 1991's *I'll Tell You What Man...*

The Pittsburgh-bred blue-collar rockers often refer to Erie as their second home, and they'll be making the trek up I-79 in support of 2014's *Feathers & Bones* and their forthcoming effort, *Rewind*, an album of cover tracks that pay tribute to some of the band's favorite songs, from their garage-rocking days of the late-'80s, to more recent tunes they've trotted out at live shows.

Although a track list hasn't been released yet to the public, given the band's approach to music, it wouldn't be out of the question to expect covers of bands like R.E.M. or The Replacements, but a lot of intrigue to what'll make the cut remains.

And while some critics may be quick to write off cover albums, pegging them as quick cash cows for bands with loyal followings looking to make some quick bank, anyone who's been to a Clarks' show and heard their rendition of The Stones' "Paint It Black" knows that this troupe packs as much energy in interpreting other artists' music as they put into crafting their own. For in-studio proof, one needn't look further than their driving punk-rock take on Louis Armstrong's 1967 classic "What A Wonderful World," on 2009's *Restless Days* or their 1991 grunge-rock cover of The Beatles' 1968 "Dear Prudence."

For a band that's never been shy about spending time on the stage (I've seen more Clarks shows than I can keep track of, dating back to the early-'90s, and I've never seen a show when they do fewer than twenty songs), expect a fun mix of Clarks' crowd-pleasures ("Penny on the Floor," "Cigarette," "Hey You," "Born too Late," and more) mixed in between the eagerly anticipated experimental covers, which all adds up to a hell of a good night of rock 'n' roll at Sherlock's. – Ben Speggen

7 p.m. Saturday, May 9 // Sherlock's, 508 State St. // facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace

Riffriders
May 1 – 9 p.m.
Last Shot Bar and Grill, 3064 W. 12 St. 833.7106.

The Blind Owl Band + Matt Texter
May 2 – 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

theCAUSE and Cosmic Rhythm
May 2 – 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

The Joe Robinson Band
May 2 – 12 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.ning.com.

Juvenile Characteristics
May 2 – 6 p.m.
Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US-6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

Storm the Bay, Harvey Pekar, Cattle Dogs, Archway
May 2 – 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11 St. facebook.com/

gimpguyunderground.

Kurt Sahlmann Memorial
May 3 – 12 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.com.

2Blue w/ Dave VanAmburg
May 6 – 6 to 6:30 p.m.
Victor's Restaurant, Bel Aire Clarion, 2800 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.

Colony House Band
May 7 – 6:30 to 7 p.m.
Colony Club Pub and Grille, 2670 W. 8 St. jazzerie.com.

The Lomax Project
May 7 – 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5 St. erieartmuseum.org.

Bus 17
May 8 – 8 p.m.
Siebenbuerger Club, 2114 French St. sieberie.com.

Chasing Moira
May 8 – 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 W. Lake Rd. oasispub.net.

Daybreak Radio EP Release Party
May 8 – 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Frank Singer
May 8 – 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. jazzerie.com.

Malpractice
May 8 – 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Beedie w/ Norman Dean
May 8 – 8 p.m.
Bobby's Place, 1202 W. 18 St. 455.9804.

OH NO! It's Mustard Gas w/ On the Cinder + 6
May 8 – 6 p.m.
The Beer Mug, 1108 Liberty St. 454.4753.

Salmon Frank
May 8 – 8 p.m.
Sprague Farm and Brew Works, 22113 US-6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

The Clarks
May 9 – 7 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

JC Nickles
May 9 – 2 p.m.
Erie Ale House, 1033 State St. facebook.com/ErieAleHouse.

Obelus w/ Manokin + 6
May 9 – 5 p.m.
Bobby's Place, 1202 W. 18 St. 455.9804.

Of Shadows w/ Irukandji
May 9 – 7 p.m.
Bobby's Place, 1202 W. 18 St. 455.9804.

Wild Adriatic and VWLS
May 9 – 8 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Sykosis, Lazy Ass Destroyer, Slaughter in Meridian, + 2
May 11 – 6 p.m.x
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11 St. facebook.com/gimpguyunderground.

Slipknot w/ Hatebreed
May 12 – 8 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Official Slipknot After Party
May 12 – 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

FILM

Rocky Mountain Express
Ongoing – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Living in the Age of Airplanes
Ongoing – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Wonders of the Arctic
Ongoing – 11 a.m. to 5 p.m..
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

FILM Presents White God
April 29 – 6 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5 St. erieartmuseum.org.

Edinboro Film Series Presents Ghost in the Shell
April 30 – 8:30 p.m.
Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Road, Edinboro. aux.edinboro.edu/filmseries.

Carnival of Souls
May 1 – 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

MIAC Presents A Most Violent Year
May 3 – 2 p.m.
Taylor Little Theater, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Orphans of the Storm
May 7 – 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Invasion of the Bee Girls
May 8 – 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Goodfellas
May 9 – 4, 9 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

VISUAL ARTS

92nd Annual Spring Show
Ongoing – All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5 St. erieartmuseum.org.

Higherglyphics: Annex Stairwell Project, Annex Stairwell
Ongoing – All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5 St. erieartmuseum.org.

Ian Brill: Storm, McCain Family Gallery
Ongoing – All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5 St. erieartmuseum.org.

Heeschen's Creatures, Robert E. Holstein Gallery
Ongoing – All Day
Erie Art Museum, 20 E. 5 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.

Mark Hulings: Original Paintings
Ongoing to May 30 – All Day
Meadville Fine Arts, 242 Chestnut St., Meadville. meadvilleart.com.

Mary J. and Fran Rosiak: APPLIED Images
Ongoing – All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5 St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Scott Rispin, Recent Paintings
Ongoing – All Day
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5 St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

The Stories We Don't Tell
Ongoing – All Day
Kada Gallery, 2632 W. 8 St. kadagallery.com.

Interior Design Senior Thesis Exhibition: Full Spectrum
April 29 – 9 a.m.
Cummings Art Gallery, Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Second Sundays
May 10 – 2 to 4 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 10 E. 5 St. erieartmuseum.org.



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- UP6 TAPHOUSE **\$3.50** DOS EQUIS AMBAR DRAFTS
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STAY THIRSTY, *my friends*

FIESTA DE MAYO SPECIALS



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DANCE

MIAC Presents Raw Edges

May 1 – 4:30 p.m., May 2 – 2, 7 p.m., May 3 – 2 p.m.
 Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Qigong with Jenn Shepherd

May 4
 , 11 – 5:30 p.m.
 LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Sq.gannon.edu.

The Tale of the Allergist's Wife

May 5 – TBA
 Dramashop, Renaissance Center, 1001 State St. dramashop.org.

Peter Pan

7 p.m. May 8 and 9, 2 p.m. May 9 and 10
 Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Play On

May 8, 9 – 7:30 p.m., May 10 – 3 p.m.
 All An Act Theater, 652 W. 17 St. allanact.net.

Male Order Brides

May 12 – noon
 Station Dinner Theater, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

Cavalleria Rusticana & Pagliacci

May 9 – 12:55 p.m.
 Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

VARIETY

Erie SeaWolves vs Bowie Baysox

April 29 – noon
 Jerry Uht Park, 110 E. 10 St. milb.com.

What the Founding Father Would Say About America in 2015

April 29 – 11:30 a.m.
 Jefferson Education Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Exploring the History, Mystery, and Magic of Magnets

April 30 – 12:30 p.m.
 LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Changing Seasons, Changing Lives

May 1 – 6 to 9 p.m.
 Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafra Pier eriedawn.info.

Examining Human-Robot Interactions (Lecture)

May 1 – 12:30 to 2 p.m.
 LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Asbury Woods Toadally Cool House

May 2 – 6:30 p.m.
 Asbury Woods, 4105 Asbury Road. asburywoods.org.

Riverside Inn Dinner Theater Presents 'Harvey'

May 3 – 2:30 p.m., May 5, 6, 12 – noon
 Riverside Inn, 1 Fountain St., Cambridge Springs. theriversideinn.com.

Cucina Italiana: Italian Cooking School with Scott Schillinger

May 4 – 5:30 p.m.
 LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Thomas Jefferson In His Own Words: Slavery, Women, and Religion

May 6 – 7 p.m.
 Jefferson Education Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Napoleon vs. Hitler - A Comparison

May 7 – 7 p.m.
 Jefferson Education Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Asbury Woods Salamander Hike

May 8 – 7 p.m.
 Asbury Woods, 4105 Asbury Road. asburywoods.org.

Erie SeaWolves vs Reading Fightin Phils

May 8, 9 – 6:35 p.m., May 10 – 1:35 p.m.
 Jerry Uht Park, 110 E. 10 St. milb.com.

Riverside Inn Dinner Theater Presents The Great American Songbook

May 8, 9 – 7 p.m.
 Riverside Inn, 1 Fountain St., Cambridge Springs. theriversideinn.com.

MCA Improv Comedy Night

May 9 – 7:30 p.m.
 Market House, 910 Market St., Meadville artsmeadville.org.

Erie SeaWolves vs Akron RubberDucks

May 11, 12 – 6:35 p.m.
 Jerry Uht Park, 110 E. 10 St. milb.com.

A Sixth Mass Extinction? The Importance and Status of Global Biodiversity

May 11 – 7 p.m.
 Jefferson Education Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

CSI: Real or Hollywood?

May 12 – 7 p.m.
 Jefferson Education Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Metal stalwarts Slipknot and Hatebreed share the stage when the "Prepare for Hell" tour comes to Erie

May 12 will be loud – very, very loud.

A monster of a show is coming to the Erie Insurance Arena. On May 12, Slipknot and Hatebreed, two of the biggest names in metal of the last 20 years, will be sharing the stage as part of the "Prepare for Hell" tour.

A band the caliber of Slipknot needs no introduction, but on the off chance that some readers are unaware, Slipknot was one of the most popular bands of the nu-metal era. Hailing from Des Moines, Iowa, the nine-piece band took the metal world by storm in the late '90s with their gruesome masks, distinctive instruments (including beating a trashcan with a baseball bat – yes really), and above all else, their raw, relentless, and powerful music. Their fans, which they call "maggots," are some of the most loyal in any music scene.

Slipknot's fifth and latest studio album *5: The Gray Chapter* is named after its late bassist and founding member Paul Gray, who died in 2010. Released on Oct. 21, 2014, the album peaked at No. 96 on the Billboard 200 and hit No. 4 on the Billboard Hard Rock albums chart. Vocalist Corey Taylor stated that the album sounds like a combination of their albums *Vol. 3 (The Subliminal Verses)* and *Iowa*, utilizing the melodic and artistic direction of the former while maintaining the brutality of the latter.

Hatebreed tiptoes on the fine line between metal and hardcore, often getting categorized as "metalcore" or "metallic hardcore." The band was among the leaders of those respective scenes from the late '90s to mid 2000s with albums like *Supremacy* and *Perseverance*, and helped define a generation of hardcore music.

You would be hard pressed to find a metal or hardcore musician who wasn't influenced in some way by either of these bands, and spent their childhoods head-banging to Slipknot's "Wait and Bleed" or yelling the words to Hatebreed's "I Will Be Heard" at the top of their lungs. Tickets start at \$50 and are selling fast, so get them while they're hot.

– Tommy Shannon

Tuesday, May 12 // Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. // erieevents.com

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Australian Guitarist Joe Robinson Brings His Talents to PACA

"The wonderful thing about the acoustic guitar is it's really just a wooden box with strings on it, so you can create all sorts of different sounds ... the sounds of a drummer, a bass player, a rhythm guitar player, and even, like, a piano."

Australian guitar virtuoso – check that, visionary – Joe Robinson said that

all the way back around 2008, when he was only 17, on a straight-shot performance video I found posted on YouTube.

In the handful of years since then, Robinson's been playing all over the world, getting spotlighted from all angles, and showing that he says what he means, and means what he says, about that wooden box with strings.

Having landed top spots on live-performance features like *Australia's Got Talent* and innumerable accolades from all over the international guitar community, Robinson displays the playfulness of Keller Williams, the adventurous spirit of John Fahey, and the technical acuity of Tommy Emmanuel, all mixed in with the whispers of other guitar greats to create a fusion very much his own.

It suffices to say, then, that Robinson is a world-class artist who must be seen and heard. And he can be, right here in Erie, when he makes a stop at Performing Artists Collective Alliance on Saturday, May 2, as part of his current tour of the eastern U.S. – Ryan Smith

8 p.m. Saturday, May 2 // 1505 State St. // paca1505.com.

THEATER

Never Too Late

April 29 – noon, May 2 – 5:30 p.m., May 3 – 2:30 p.m.
 Station Dinner Theater, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

Pygmalion

April 30 to May 2 – 8 p.m., May 3 – 2 p.m.
 Schuster Theater, Gannon University, 109 University

Erie's VWLS Opens for Wild Adriatic and Releases Debut Album at King's Rook Club

From soaring guitars to a glockenspiel, there's a lot to like about VWLS.

By: Mike Iverson

They've got a guy playing glockenspiel and doing vocals, another vocalist whaling on some lead guitar riffs, a second guitarist that's looping at least two different licks, a drummer that's almost as techy as Chris Pennie, and a rapper who plays bass.

In other words, VWLS isn't your standard local lineup.

And while all that might sound like the makings of a colossal mess, the band's diversity is what drives their highly experimental sound. VWLS is made up of musicians that hail from a wide range of musical backgrounds, all of whom are committed to pioneering novel sounds.

After sitting in on a practice session with the full band, I can only describe them as a blend of psychedelic rock and progressive sensibilities. Soaring guitar riffs from Luis Pontillo and Alik Kujkowski are grounded by Dom Ferrare's meaty bass tones and James Perk's complex rhythm work, while Todd Paropacic brings in a melodic blend of vocals and keys.

Overall, VWLS provides fresh and funky sounds. I talked to the band members about their beginnings, and what the future might hold for the group as they prepare for their upcoming show at the King's Rook Club.

Mike Iverson: When did VWLS really become a project for you guys?

Luis Pontillo: We started working on VWLS this past October. I went on this Scotland trip with Todd to do a play for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and when we got back, I asked him if he wanted to start a group. He was doing some music on his own at the time and was into the idea, so we formed this group and it fell apart in like a week. And while that was discouraging, I wound up running into Alik at the Rook one night and convinced him to come jam with us. Long story short, that laid the groundwork for a lot of what we're doing now, and the band came together from that.

Alik Kujkowski: I'll never forget, I was like, "...you had me at that first song" [laughs]. From there, I brought James in because we were working on Sea of Teeth together, but wanted to experiment with something different on the side.

LP: So it was just me, Todd, James, and Alik for a while, then we brought Dom in to play bass about four weeks ago and started teaching him the songs we had worked up.

MI: It can be tough to bring a new member up to speed even if a band's just starting out. Dom, how was it settling in with the other guys?

Dom Ferrare: It wasn't hard to pick up what they were doing. I'd worked with James and Alik before on some pre-Sea of Teeth stuff, so it's been a pretty comfortable transition.

MI: You rap too, and the rest of you all seem to have projects outside VWLS; does it ever get hard to maintain a balance between every-



Recently formed indie rockers VWLS take to the King's Rook Club stage Saturday, May 9.

thing?

DF: I still rap, and I'm dedicated to that, but I've always found ways to put my all into whatever I'm working on, and I know the rest of these guys are the same way.

James Perk: We've been thinking about ways to bring elements from our other projects into VWLS too; maybe cover a Gorillaz song and have Dom rap, or bring in even more technical guitar work like we do in Sea of Teeth.

AK: I've always just been excited to try new things and experiment with different sounds, and I think all of us are like that in our own way. That attitude is really what's helped this project take off the way it has.

MI: You guys are doing some really interesting things with your sound in a scene that often defaults pretty hard on punk and hardcore standards. With that, I have to ask what some of your biggest musical influences are as a group.

LP: It's a pretty wide range at this point; people have told us that they hear notes of Tame Impala and Minus the Bear in our stuff, which is a weird combination in and of itself, but there's a lot of bands we could credit as influences.

AK: We really just like to draw inspiration from wherever we can. I feel like when it comes to music in general these days people just kind of end up infinitely describing bands with other bands. It's like this crazy mesh of influences all overlapping, and while that's all fine, we just want to pioneer our own sound.

Since this last conversation with the band they've done more than solidify their sound; they've played a handful of house shows and small venues, started working on merch, and even finished their first demo. While you can find one sample track from this demo at soundcloud.com/VWLS-music-1, you can pick up the full thing at their upcoming release show.

8 p.m., Saturday, May 9 // The King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. // [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub)

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+SEANN CLARK

CALENDAR

Oh No! It's Mustard Gas Headlines Final Show at The Beer Mug

After more than 30 years of cold drinks and fiery shows, the Beer Mug is set to close May 16. But Gimp Guy Underground Promos' CEO and Founder Alex Harrilla still has one last massive lineup to celebrate the end of the Liberty Street establishment.

Oh No! It's Mustard Gas will headline a talented list of punk acts for the final show at the Beer Mug Friday, May 8, along with a pair of Buffalo acts in the melodic On the Cinder and the hardcore Radical Operations. If three bands isn't enough, you'll be happy to hear that the night will also include all-female riot-punk crew Dysmorphia, the genre-crossing JC Nickles, Fredonia horror-punk outfit Crazies, the appropriately-named quartet Till the End, Genetically Enhanced Super Humans, and rock-punk trio Out of It.

Yeah, you'll get your money's worth out of this show, especially when you consider that entry is a mere \$3 to see the very last show at the Beer Mug. It's never easy to see a beloved music venue close, but at least you still have the chance to head to Liberty Street and celebrate the end of era, as Harrilla and a lengthy list of musicians will look to end the establishment's run on a good – and preferably loud – note. – Alex Bieler

6:30 p.m. Friday, May 8 // 1108 Liberty St. // facebook.com/gimpguyunderground

Marjorie takes her Mid-life Crisis for a Spin in Dramashop's Tales of the Allergist's Wife

Marjorie Taub is upper-class, middle-aged, and ready for her crisis. Her meltdown is the axle around which the play, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* spins. Marjorie's comfortable existence on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, along with a hefty dose of pseudo-intellectualism, have only fueled the feelings of

mediocrity that underlie her depression. The unexpected arrival of a long-lost and cagey childhood friend, Lee, buoys Marjorie's spirits at first, but dark and ulterior motives are at work, and Lee sends Marjorie and husband, Ira, down questionable paths.

Erie's Dramashop will present a free staged reading of *Allergist's Wife*, written by Charles Busch, who won the 2000 Outer Critics Circle's John Gassner Playwriting Award for this work. It also was nominated for numerous Tony and Drama Desk Awards. Before *Allergist's Wife*, Busch was best known for his drag performances, and campy, non-mainstream works, the two most notable of which may be *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* and *Die, Mommie, Die!*

Dramashop regular Marilee Warner plays Marjorie. She is joined by newcomers to this stage Stuart Siegel as Ira; Sue Ellen Wojciechowski as Lee; Doris Becker as Marjorie's overbearing mother Frieda; and Giovanni Ciminella as the doorman. Dramashop has added a narrator to the production to help the audience visualize the action and changes taking place, since a reading doesn't have props or actor interaction.

Veteran director Michael Weiss is at the helm, with an assist from Carolin Lynn. Weiss says it's a good comedy and a great cast. "It's an interesting story that deals with middle age and the aging process. And it does contain some colorful language, mostly from the 80-year-old," he says with a laugh, promising a good laugh and a fine evening of entertainment.

Artistic Director of Dramashop, Zach Flock agrees, saying "*Allergist's Wife* is a really funny, slightly offbeat comedy that definitely pushes some boundaries." He says that they chose it as part of this season because it fit well with the other productions in terms of content, themes, tone, available roles and other considerations. It also allows Dramashop to showcase the actors of different ages and experience. "The cast includes people with decades — maybe half-centuries — of experience performing alongside first-timers. It's a really great mix of talented individuals," says Flock.

Overall, *Allergist's Wife* is provocative, funny, and smart – all the things you want in a comedy.—Mary Birdsong

8 p.m., April 28 and May 5 // Free // Renaissance Centre, 1001 State St. // dramashop.org



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LIZ VENUOTO

Three Shops in Erie Set to Participate in Free Comic Book Day

Rejoice! Free Comic Book Day, an annual event where comic book aficionados and first-timers convene to check out what's in store for their favorite heroes in the coming year. Whether you are fan of Marvel, DC, or small publishers, like Image, our local brick and mortar stores want to service the community here in Erie.

Free Comic Book Day is a national event where local comic book stores get heaps of free comics that are meant to feature what has happened or what is going to happen with popular running series. I asked Action Toy Man owner Patrick Short what we can expect for this year's event, and he said, "This comic book day is showing off the end of the current Marvel universe and setting up the next." For Marvel, this takes the form of "The Secret Wars" and major crossovers are expected in the aftermath of this universe-ending event.

If you are a DC fan don't worry! DC is also having a major universe event in the form of "Convergence," where all forms of each of the heroes of the past 50 years are converging in a single storyline to ultimately decide what forms of each will take the focus in the coming years.

But what if you are like me and only dabble in comics and aren't completely up to date on current running stories? Again, Free Comic

Book Day is designed to bring in first timers or the comic curious by offering stories where there will be something for everyone. Also don't get the impression that this day is only for the die-hard adult comic crowd. At most shops there will be stuff for all ages, so bring your kids!

Patrick Short told me that the main purpose of Free Comic Book Day is to "bring awareness to small comic book shops everywhere around America." There are three locations in Erie that will be participating in Free Comic Book Day: Book's Galore, Action Toy Man, and Above & Beyond Comics.

Patrick mentioned that while the comics are free for the fans, it does cost each store to participate, but they do it to support and help foster our local community. According to the Free Comic Book Day website, all customers are guaranteed at least one free comic, but Patrick told me if you show up in a costume or bring a can of food for their Second Harvest food drive, each will net you an additional free comic at his shop. - John Lindvay

Be sure to contact your preferred store of choice on Saturday May 2nd, whether it be Books Galore on 5546 Peach St., Action Toy Man at 1215 W. 26 St., or Above & Beyond Comics at 1126 W. 26 St. Maybe go for the trifecta and hit up all three.



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Blur

The Magic Whip
Parlophone



After 12 years, Blur finally has a new studio album. Sure, the English rockers made a few sonic cameos between now and then, headlining Glastonbury, releasing a live record



of a show in London's Hyde Park, and dropping a few intriguing singles, but *The Magic Whip* represents the first true full-length release since 2003's *Think Tank*, and the new record certainly doesn't disappoint. Originally recorded in a five-day span in Hong Kong following a canceled music festival, the album exudes a sense of urbanity, although without as many of the flashing lights that may be expected. Instead, Blur examines the often sleepy city life from the blurry neon lights, and gives a leering look into how technology may impact our future. It's a somber album, overall, although "Lonesome Street" and "I Broadcast" do provide some extra pep in the veteran band's step, but songs like "Though I Was a Spaceman" really show off Blur's ability to create a gorgeous landscape of sound. – Alex Bieler

Daybreak Radio

Daybreak Radio EP
Independent



The self-titled release is a tricky venture, because it's typically an introduction to the sound of a band. Local music fans have been able to check out the Americana-infused



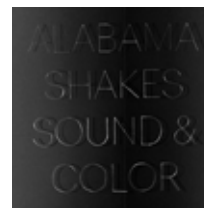
southern rock of Daybreak Radio during live shows, but would an album manage to capture the magic of a concert? The *Daybreak Radio EP* passes that test with flying colors, providing a collection of six songs that will have you stomping your feet and nodding along in the comfort of your home, car, or wherever people like to listen to albums nowadays. The quintet packs plenty of straight-up rock 'n' roll into the EP, serving up rousing experiences in four-minute packages thanks to songs like "Tradition Dies Hard" and "Texas." The addition of new keyboardist Doug Phillips provides some extra depth to the band's sound, primarily on the soulful "On My Way," while "Home With You" adds some feel-good vibes to the EP. In short, *Daybreak Radio* is a blast. – Alex Bieler

Alabama Shakes

Sound & Color
ATO



If anyone is taken aback by the direction the Alabama Shakes have gone for their latest album, *Sound & Color*, they shouldn't be. There were warning signs that the band



would begin to trend away from raw blues rock, such as when guitarist Heath Fogg said "We just don't wanna own the classic R&B title and let people down, because when we go electronic on the next record it might break some hearts" on Canadian radio show Q back in 2012. While change may be scary, the evolution of Alabama Shakes shouldn't be, as *Sound & Color* still maintains the soulful sentimentalities of its predecessor while showing a new side to the Alabama-based quartet. The dreamy title track shows that the band knows how to layer a track, while Brittany Howard's booming vocals still provide enough bluesy goodness on tracks like "Gimme All Your Love" to appease fans of *Boys & Girls*. – Alex Bieler

Tony Kellogg

Don't Give Up on Love
Independent



When everything you hope for from life is seemingly stripped away by a breakup, you can either lie down in defeat and mourn the loss or find hope and move on with



your life. Having just gone through the same heartache that Tony was going through as he wrote these songs, this album is exactly what I needed at just the right time. When self-doubt creeps in, it's consoling to hear the songs "I Don't Know" and "Love Again" to know that someone else is experiencing the same thing. Anyone who feels a deep anger at betrayal can relate to lyrics like "I don't care what you do any more" from the angsty "About You." Some of these tunes could have used the power of a band backing up his clear acoustic chord strumming, but Tony's stripped-down simple earnestness is perfect for most of the songs, especially "Song for Sophie #3," the closing tear-jerker. Thanks, Tony, for giving me some hope. – Bryan Toy

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Erie's Homeless Find Help and Hope at Our Neighbor's Place

By: Katie Chriest

“Do you need something?” the man asks me. “You look lost.”

“Oh,” I respond awkwardly, “I always look kinda lost.”

“So other people have told you that, huh? I hoped I wasn't ...”

“No,” I reassure him. “When I look lost, people tend to help me, like you did.”

So starts my conversation with one engaging man outside Our Neighbor's Place, the overflow homeless shelter hosted this week by Church of the Covenant. Every two weeks from November to April, six city churches house 50 to 60 overnight “guests,” who are provided a cot, dinner, breakfast, and showers if facilities are available at the host church.

It's Saturday night. I'm early, but several men wait outside the church's basement door, downstairs from the sidewalk I share with my interlocutor, who requests anonymity.

He's the guest — and yet *he's* the one asking me if I need anything. But Our Neighbor's Place blurs the line between benefactor and beneficiary. And during our 15-minute conversation, the line disappears.

I first heard about these overflow shelters through Adria Johnson, owner of Head Cases Salon, whose family volunteers regularly. Johnson often tells me stories about the people being served; how routinely she's reminded that they're just one or two decisions — or chances — away from those of us living a so-called normal life.

At 7:30, the shelter opens. Mostly men and a few women filter in. I sit at the guest registration desk. Some are new. Most sleep here regularly. A banner displays Matthew 25:34-40, which ends, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

And so, all are served.

I'm sitting with Pastor Bob Schell. He doesn't usually register guests here, but that's what's needed this weekend. Talk to Schell even briefly, and you imagine that's how he's lived his entire life: recognizing a need and offering himself in the service of it.

Three years ago, Schell was moved by news reports of people living in a tent city on CSX property near the railroad tracks. “I felt God leading me to go and talk to the people who were living in that grove of trees,” he says. “I got to know several of them, and told them, ‘if you ever need anything at all, I'd be glad to help you.’”

That fall, the tent city was deemed unsafe and dismantled. Winter threatened. Two people Schell had met, now displaced, called him. “I saw firsthand the need,” he recalls. “All shelters were full, both for men and women. I had no place to tell them to go. I had to tell them, ‘I'm sorry. I tried. But



LIZ VENUTO

there isn't anyplace.”

A year earlier, Schell and Kitty Cancilla, Executive Director of Community Shelter Services (CSS), had discussed the need for an overflow shelter. Cancilla and her husband, Tim Hilton, learned about church-run overflow shelters at a Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa) event in Harrisburg.

Back in Erie, they organized a “call to action,” remembers Cancilla. “Everybody thought it was a great idea. Nobody was moving. But I thought, ‘we can do this.’”

“There was always somebody saying ‘what if some barrier prevents us from doing it?’ echoes Schell. “But Kitty said, ‘enough talking. Let's do something. We'll solve the problems when they happen.’ I stood up at [a]n early meeting and told her that I was going to be her first volunteer. So we started at her church, Holy Trinity. She would try to get more churches involved, and I would help to get more volunteers.

“So for the first month, it was Kitty, her husband, three program men, and myself, every night, all three shifts.”

“I wasn't going to make a fool of myself by not making it happen!” Cancilla laughs. “I felt certain that if others saw us do it, they would see it wasn't such a big deal.”

She was right. Soon six churches were on board. For the most part, the same six still are. This year, volunteers from other churches, too small or too far from downtown to host, are using bigger churches' spaces downtown. This allows easy access for guests, and less of a burden on each host church.

Still, if more churches don't become involved, the program's future may be threatened. Because of a lack of volunteers, it had to start two weeks late this year. The program is entirely volunteer-run, and heavily reliant on donations received from parishioners and via CSS.

Anybody may volunteer, though they must go through CSS or the host church for orientation. Church affiliation isn't necessary.

All are welcome at Our Neighbor's Place.

But the motivating force behind Our Neighbor's Place is clear.

“The training that I give volunteers is from the Bible,” says Schell, “basically telling them what our mindset should be. God said that there will always be poor in the land. And we are to have open hands toward those who are in need. Any one of the people we serve could be Christ, just checking us out.”

“We have committed to taking care of these people,” summarizes Cancilla. “They may not be doing right, right now. But if they die, they can never turn their lives around.” Unsurprisingly, Cancilla traces much regional homelessness to lack of support for mental illness. On December 1 of last year, St. Luke's Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit in Warren closed, leaving even fewer options.

“This is how our country treats mentally ill people,” Cancilla concludes. “But they are God's people and we are called to take care of them.”

Mary Hoffman and Mary Ellen Lieb facilitate Our Neighbor's Place at St. John the Baptist. “Unfortunately,” Lieb explains, “addictions, mental health, and bad circumstances keep many [homeless], and they can't seem to pull themselves out. They are people with stories to share and good to give. I am amazed at their faith and how they thank God daily for their blessings, although they have nothing. By the grace of God, I'm not one of them, but could be if circumstances were different.”

“Awareness and familiarity with people who are homeless breaks down barriers and fears, leading to a deep, personal spiritual experience,” adds Hoffman. She has become “more and more familiar with the me within. Knowing that God is the very center of me, I feel that I am living my faith by volunteering.”

“Volunteering really changes your idea about who the homeless are,” says Howard Copen, a Church of the Cov-

enant volunteer. “It's not for a lack of ambition. I am just amazed at the number of working poor.”

He recalls one couple who came as guests, both with minimum-wage jobs. But minimum wage — at \$7.25 — can't always cover the rent.

In Erie County, “the [hourly] wage needed to afford the rent of an average two bedroom apartment” is \$13.10, according to the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania.

“It's just not what I expected,” reflects Copen. “My preconceived notion about what is going on was really, really off.”

“But we feel better,” he summarizes, “if we can picture everyone as derelicts.”

Homeless. Unemployed. Mentally ill. Addicted. Derelict. How do we hide behind these generalizations?

As they settle into their temporary home in this lovely church, built during the Great Depression, I look around at tonight's guests. Some are unemployed, many are underemployed. Some are visibly intoxicated. Many are sober, charming, gracious.

In his book *Revolution*, comedian and activist Russell Brand reflects on his past of being “addicted to anything that could be cooked, snorted, or swallowed.” He continues, “Perhaps I'm an extreme case. But isn't that all addiction really is, ‘an extreme case?’ Aren't we all, in one way or another, trying to find a solution to the problem of reality?”

How many of us have used alcohol to escape? Gotten away with something illegal? Been medicated for depression or anxiety that inhibited our ability to function?

Surviving the “problem of reality” requires enormous support. Many of us have it. Some don't. Maybe that's really the only difference.

At the prayer circle before supper, Bob Schell invites anyone interested in sharing their stories to talk to me. Rolly volunteers immediately.

Rolly's a veteran who served from 1968-70. At his family home in Corry, he farmed beef cattle, then hay. Now, he points out, farmers are quitting because they can't make enough. “What do people think we're going to eat?”

So he has a stockpile of freeze-dried survival food and a solar generator in his van, where he's lived for a year. His red ballcap reads, “Jesus is my Boss.” He's added “& King” in black marker.

I ask about the food. Turns out it's from a Jim Bakker event in Missouri. Bakker, the teary, rape-accused televangelist once incarcerated for fraud and conspiracy, is now capitalizing on End Times, selling survival gear on his website, under “Love Gifts.” One choice is the “All Beans Offer - Time of Trouble”: seven years' worth of black bean burger pouches for a \$3,000 “donation.” While he still had the farm, Rolly dropped a bunch of money on Bakker's scheme.

“I was trying to be prepared for what's going to happen,” explains Rolly. “But [my family] came in and threw a monkey wrench in that one.”

Rolly cared for his mom, who had Alzheimer's, for ten years. But somehow, his sisters ended up with the farm. He's not sure why, but he had to leave. And like so many veterans, he's been unable to access VA support. Fortunately, he found Our Neighbor's Place.

"I could've just looked at the bad stuff, and got really mad," he realizes. "Like this kid last night who didn't want to talk to me. I finally told him, 'See that old man over there talking to himself? You keep drinking and doing what you're doing, you're gonna end up just like him. Is that what you want?'"

Rolly used to use drugs. "I got over it. Quit drinking thirty years ago."

He started back up briefly a year ago, though, when he became homeless. "It was a lot of stress," he recalls. "But now I've got more friends."

Still, Rolly says there's not enough friendliness on Erie's streets. "We need to get people happy somehow. Everybody seems so angry and preoccupied here. People need start communicating" and "helping each other out. It's made me happier, to see somebody smile since I did something for them."

"The only way we're going to make it," he concludes, "is if we help each other. Like they're trying to do here." Akin to many volunteers, Rolly believes he was called by God to take shelter at Our Neighbor's Place, though he is sometimes troubled by tensions arising in these close quarters. "I've

walked out of here some nights, like, 'Wow, is it worth it?' But, to see the change in some of [the guests]? Yeah. It's worth it."

Craig Martin is the "Convict Comedian." He's on YouTube. He has two DVDs: *Don't Drop the Soap*, and *Sleep with One Eye Open*. He shows me a picture of Reese Witherspoon on his phone. "She emailed me," he says. "She said, 'Keep on rockin' in the free world, Convict Comedian.'"

Martin's been to 32 states. "I've sold cars all over, sold cable TV, furniture, Direct TV, Dish Network — all that good stuff."

"So how'd you get here?" I ask.

"Greyhound."

He shows me his Illinois driver's license. An old business card from Georgia. He drops names of agents and celebrities who've admired his work.

"I'm gonna get where I need to be," he proclaims.

He tried JR's, "but I was too vulgar. My worst word now is 'freakin'." I took the big F-word out."

He breaks into a sketch about Larry the Cable Guy, then a fat lady at Giant Eagle.

"You see I'm the real deal. I can ad-lib so fast it'd make your head spin. I've got two hours worth of material. I quit for about a year, though." He pretends to cry. "Everyone was laughing at me!"

"Do you ever perform for the folks here?"

"In moderation," he says. "I tell them the good stuff costs money."

Martin has used the shelter for about a month. "I take full advantage of this. I'm trying to be where I need to be." He wants to get to his cousin's in Oklahoma. He could detail cars. Maybe get some shows.

I ask more about his story. "I had a rough childhood," he replies, faking tears again, weaving comedy with confession. "The doctor told my mama, 'we did everything we could, but he pulled through anyway.'"

Martin's been incarcerated, hence the name: Convict Comedian. Robbery and possession of stolen property. But he says his buddy lied on him; that he wasn't at the actual scene. Still, he did time. When he got out, he got into Xanax. He wrote bad checks amounting to \$35,000. When he couldn't pay, prison again. But he's been out of trouble for 14 years.

He asks me, "How far do you think I got in school?"

"Probably as far as you wanted to." I guess college. Who knows?

He recites the Gettysburg Address. Fast. Then rattles off parts of the skeleton. Occipital. Phalanges. Femur. Tibia. Lightning speed. "You don't know that?" he challenges. "That's easy stuff."

But Martin quit high school a month into freshman year. "I was bored. Then I got my driver's license. That's all I wanted."

"But I had something they didn't have a name for back then. I was autistic. I didn't know, but that's what helped me memorize

things. But I never turned in my homework. They cleaned my locker out, and found all my papers. The teacher graded them. I'd have gotten As and Bs. But I just wanted to be with my friends who were pot-smoking and drinking. I didn't care about school."

Now he thinks school is worth it. He'd still like to get his GED.

But mostly, "I just want to do the comedy. I want to make it for my 20-year-old daughter. I've never been able to do anything for her. She's got a great stepdad, good guy, hard worker. She couldn't have had a better dad. But I've never gotten to see her. I want to do something nice for her."

When Martin makes it, he also wants to give back to the great volunteers at these shelters. "I'll help those who helped me," he says. "And I'll still ride the bus. If I see a lady with ratty clothes, and some kids complaining about being hungry? I'll just give them money."

He asks when he can get a copy of this article.

"If it helps me get somewhere," he says, "I'll remember you, Katie."

I'll remember you, too, Craig.

Want to help? Contact Community Shelter Services (814) 455-4369 to volunteer, or to involve your church or group at Communityshelter.org. Donations of money, hotel-sized toiletries, and clothing (especially men's) also welcome. Our Neighbor's Place is on Facebook: facebook.com/OurNeighborsPlace

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Geeked Out: Netflix Presents Marvel's Daredevil

The gritty, dark series packs action and suspense in the 13-episode debut season.

By: John Lindvay

I'm going to be totally honest: I don't know much about Daredevil, the "blind" superhero by night and lawyer by day. I did remember that Ben Affleck – before donning the batsuit this summer – played him in a movie twelve years ago that left many disappointed. And as many Marvel superheroes have been getting plenty of blockbuster screen time, Daredevil went quietly off into the night with its less than heroic box office performance.

But forget everything you know or don't know, because Daredevil is back, as Marvel has released *Daredevil* season one on Netflix – and everyone is going crazy.

Let me preface this with a bit of what I have come to learn about Daredevil without digging up all of the *Daredevil* comics or perusing the Internet. His real name is Matthew Murdoch, and he was blinded as a kid while helping an older man avoid a traffic collision that caused radioactive material to splash him in the face. He went on to become a lawyer but took up vigilantism in New York City's Hell's Kitchen.

Other than the 2005 movie, I had no real opinion on the character of Daredevil, but after watching the Netflix series, I would place him in the "chaotic good" box on the Dungeons & Dragons character alignment grid. He is an "ends justify the means" kind of guy, and he's also a violent man.

After he was blinded, his other senses were raised to superhuman levels. And over the years he's watched Hell's Kitchen slide deeper into the dirt, and he wants to protect what he cares about. He understands that while using the legal system is effective at accomplishing some things, pummeling bad dudes and exposing those who operate in the shadows through violence is also a necessity.

The principal antagonist of the show is classic Daredevil arch villain Wilson Fisk, aka Kingpin. Actor Vincent D'Onofrio wplays the part of Fisk and crushes it. The story is about Fisk and Murdoch (played by Charlie Cox) and how they both want the same thing – a better, safer Hell's Kitchen. Spoiler alert: It isn't until the climax of the season that Fisk even realizes that he is "the bad guy" which makes the show even more enthralling as both Fisk and Murdoch do things that a carte blanche "good guy superhero" would never do.

It is interesting to note that the show is built into the "Marvel Cinematic Universe," meaning it belongs on the same timeline as *Iron Man* and the rest of the *The Avengers*. Although it's not explicitly explained initially, the show takes place after the alien attack on New York City, referred to in the series as "the incident," where Fisk is working with the government in spending the funds allocated after the disaster to rebuild the city, which is breeding the kind of turmoil and

seedy underbelly that has set up a cottage industry on profiteering while attention is being placed elsewhere.

But one of the key things that has everyone talking is the action.

Daredevil is a real bruiser. The series, even at only 13 episodes, has some of the best fight scenes on TV or in film. The hits always have impact that is felt off screen and the sheer amount of punishment taken and given by Daredevil had me gritting my teeth as he was stitched up. In particular, there is a scene in episode two where Murdoch fights his way through a hallway of Russian thugs to save a kidnapped boy in one incredible shot. It is also an homage to the film *Old Boy*, which had a similar shot. All of the action is given incredible detail to really convey the pain and suffering being inflicted, not in some attempt to glorify violence but to keep it gruesome.

Forget everything you know or don't know, because Daredevil is back, as Marvel has released *Daredevil* season one on Netflix – and everyone is going crazy.

An interesting aside is that Netflix has also released a special audio track for the entirety of *Daredevil* geared toward the visually impaired. A narrator describes the scenes and actions in between the dialogue, allowing everyone to enjoy – a nice touch to show that this isn't your typical approach to your typical TV show.

Netflix has been swinging hard, trying to change how we consume television shows in the past few years. With grand slams like *Orange Is The New Black* and *House of Cards* or with its own strikeouts, like *Hemlock Grove*, Netflix is working to become a major player in the TV show market. Regardless of your preference, Netflix has changed how we watch these shows. I'm sure they looked at customer behaviors and noticed how we all binge hard on the shows we love. Many of us have fallen into binge sessions, consuming 20-plus hours of a show over a weekend or holiday.

So when Netflix releases its own series, they don't drip them out in the traditional model; we get everything at once, and like the glutton I am, I consume with glee. That is of course if it's excellent, and *Daredevil* – planted firmly in the ever-expanding Marvel Universe – does a lot right.

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

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ER Sports

Women's World

By James R. LeCorchick



PAMELA McCORMICK

I HAVE BEEN covering sports for more than 40 years and I have run into many, many great athletes, most of them being incredibly inspirational. And one of the most impressive is **Pamela McCormick**, a true legend when mentioning marathons, duathlons, triathlons – and anything else that ends in “-athlon”.

McCormick, who is as humble as she is talented, is a mother of seven who has won so many triathlons she can't really keep count. “I think it's probably between thirty and forty,” she told the *Erie Reader* when pressed to come up with a number in the vicinity of first-place finishes. “I just love to compete against so many great athletes and train hard; while winning is enjoyable, it's not the most important thing.”

The former McDowell High School swim star reached true legendary status when she participated in the ski portion of one of the Erie Quad Games one month after giving birth to her seventh child and finished second in the race. That enabled her to capture one of her seven straight titles that she has won in the Quad Games.

While performing for the Trojans, McCor-

mick was the first female to ever participate on the boys' water polo squad, and while this was historic, it was also a bit of a downer, as she suffered a broken jaw during the season, the injury keeping her on the sidelines and unable to participate in swimming during her college career at Villanova University. She is, however, a graduate of the prestigious Philadelphia school.

She got serious about triathlons after her third child, and as she says, “I just loved it and stayed with it. “My children all enjoy working out, and I hope they stay with it.”

And if they have the same ability and drive as their mother, you will be seeing the McCormick name continue to appear in the Erie media for a long time to come.

There are inspirations, and there are INSPIRATIONS.

File Pamela McCormick under the latter.

TAYLOR RIDGE



JUST A JUNIOR at Mercyhurst Prep High School, **Taylor Ridge** is another female athlete that started mixing it up with the boys at a young age, the local hockey star starting off on the ice as a ten-year-old in a boys league, and she's been force to be reckoned with ever since.

She also excelled in soccer at a young age, but hockey was her first love and it has paid off at every level.

According to one local hockey aficionado, “Taylor possesses great speed and is a threat as a two-way player. If she so chooses, she will definitely be able to play at the college

level.”

The Laker 10th-grader was recently selected as Captain of the Mid-Am U19 Girls tournament team, the squad being made up of players from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. This unit won the National Showcase Tournament held in Pittsburgh, the local crew being tested by top teams from the United States and Canada.

Ridge helped her team post a 3-0-1 record, the champs winning the title game by a 10-2 count.

She will be returning for her fifth year with the Erie Lions U19 travel team in the upcoming season. The flashy skater ended this championship stint as the team leader in assists and penalties.

GINA CARANO



GREGG CARANO is a welcome addition to the Erie scene, as the Reno, Nevada, native is the Senior Vice-President of Food and Beverage and the top person at Presque Isle Downs and Casino. As you would expect from someone in that position, Carano has plenty of personality – and then some.

I also found out he not only has plenty of personality, he also has plenty of stories, including some interesting family members.

When I first met him and heard his last name, I asked him, “Are you any relation to...,” and he quickly answered, “Yes! She's my niece.”

Apparently, he didn't know I was old-school and going to ask if he was related to

former NFL quarterback **Glenn Carano**, a second round pick of the Dallas Cowboys in the 1977 draft behind **Tony Dorsett**. Gregg was talking about Glenn's daughter **Gina Carano**, a superstar among the younger generation.

After doing some research on Gina, it was easy to see why Gregg thought I was going to ask about his niece and not his brother.

The first story I found with her name in it was titled “The 15 Most Beautiful Daughters of Professional Athletes” and she was rated number-one. That's correct – numero uno! She was also rated the “Hottest Women in

The former McDowell High School swim star reached true legendary status when she participated in the ski portion of one of the Erie Quad Games one month after giving birth to her seventh child and finished second in the race.

America” by *Big Biz Magazine*.

But she isn't all looks, as she is also a talented actress and a mixed martial arts superstar, the MMA ace being a Top-10 most searched athletes on Yahoo! in 2013. That includes all athletes.

Other accolades include being the 16th ranked talent in Maxim's Hot 100 list in 2009, and then in late 2009, she shared the cover of ESPN the Magazine's Body issue with **Serena Williams**.

In April 2012, the star was the first recipient of ActionFest's Chuck Norris (Best Female Athlete Action Star) Award, given to the female action star of the year.

Meanwhile she appeared numerous times on the big screen, including a co-starring part in *Fast & Furious 6* as a member of Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent Luke Hobbs' (Dwayne Johnson) team.

So the next time you're up at PI Downs and Casino, ask Gregg Carano, “Hey, aren't you related to...?”

James R. LeCorchick can be contacted at JRLSportsReport@gmail.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @JRLSports.



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OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT

— SUMMER 2015 —

Tickets on sale at TicketWeb.com and Casino Gift Shop

JUNE 19 - The Charlie Daniels Band

JULY 3 - Pam Tillis & Lorrie Morgan

AUGUST 21 - Crystal Gayle

AUGUST 28 - Travis Tritt

SEPTEMBER 11 - Jamey Johnson



Saturday, May 2

Drive thru wagering available in the lower lot • 11am-6pm

\$5 Mint Julep in the Official 2015 Derby Glass

Fancy Fillie Hat Contest at 5pm in the Clubhouse

Winner receives dinner for four at La Bonne Vie Steakhouse

MAYWEATHER PACQUIAO

SATURDAY, MAY 2

WATCH
MAYWEATHER VS PACQUIAO
AT DOWNS CLUBHOUSE & LOUNGE

**ADMISSION: \$20 AT THE DOOR AND
RECEIVE \$10 IN FREE PLAY**

Purchase Tickets at the Gift Shop
or Online at TicketWeb.com.

**\$5 APPETIZERS AND DRINK SPECIALS
9PM-11PM • MUST BE 21 OR OLDER**

Meet & Greet with boxing legends: Lou Bizzarro, Johnny Bizzarro,
Ramiro Hernandez and Antonio Nieves

FIREFIGHTER APPRECIATION DAY

MONDAY MAY 4TH, 2015

\$10 in slot play and
free buffet to all
Volunteer
& Paid Firefighters
Visit Guest Services
to receive your
special offers. Buffet
offer valid until 9pm.
Please present your
ID card to receive
your offer.



Wednesday May 6, 2015

**\$10 IN SLOT PLAY & FREE BUFFET
TO ALL NURSES**

Visit Guest Services to receive your
special offers. Buffet offer valid until
9pm. Please present your ID card to
receive your offer.

presque isle
downs & casino
ELDORADO RESORTS

I-90 Exit 27, Erie PA
presqueisledowns.com
 1.866.ERIE.FUN

If You or Someone You Know
Has a Gambling Problem,
Help is Available.
Call 1-800-GAMBLER.