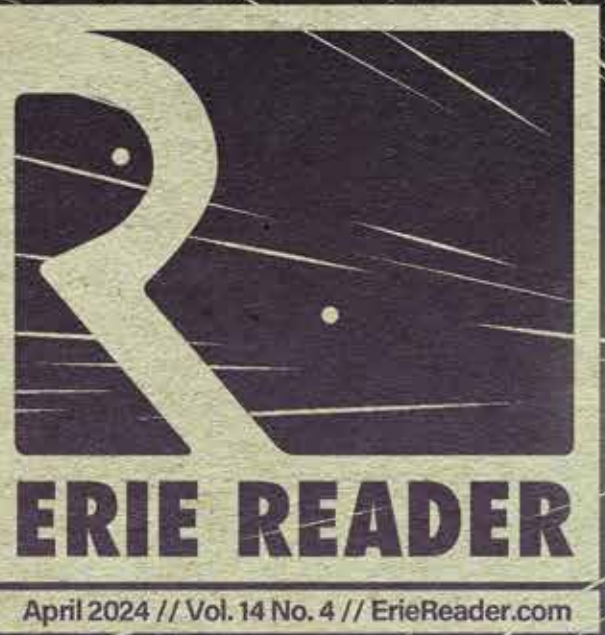
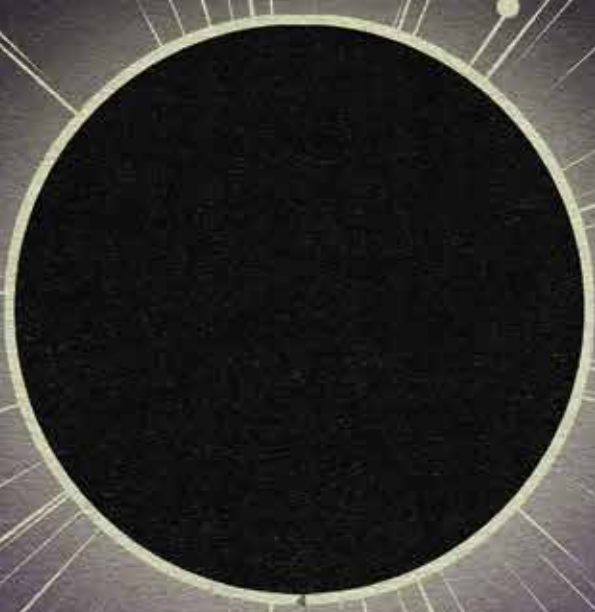


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Jeff Bloodworth

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Julia Carden

Anthony Carson

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Ally Kutz

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Aaron Mook

Brad Pattullo

Dan Schank

Melissa Sullivan Shimek

Jen Sorensen

Cara Suppa

Forest Taylor

Thomas Taylor

Jenny Tompkins

Bryan Toy

Amy VanScoter

Larry Wheaton

Morgan Yezi

**Cover Illustration and Layout**

"Monster" Mark Kosobucki

1001 State St. Suite 1315  
Erie, Pa., 16501  
contact@eriereader.com

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## From the Editors:

### Eclipse shades perspective

There is nothing that can make a human being feel less significant than a celestial event.

And we're about to experience a pretty humbling one right here in Erie on Monday, April 8 when the moon will align between the earth and the sun, dunking Erie into darkness for a few moments. The experience is disorienting, liminal, cosmic — birds quiet, the temperature drops, winds slow, and the planet Earth feels exactly like what it is: a giant rock spinning through space that has no human agenda whatsoever.

It feels both fitting and upsetting that this celestial event is happening during Earth Month, just two weeks before Earth Day. April is a month set aside to reflect and act upon the impact that human beings have on the health of our planet, and that impact is undeniably devastating. We've just, yet again, experienced our hottest summer on record and freak weather events are becoming the norm. As soon as we emerge from winter here in Erie, we'll be jumping right into wildfire season and the sun will be blocked out by a haze of smoke from Canada rather than the moon.

April also happens to be the month in which Pennsylvania's primary occurs this year — remember to get out and vote on April 23, which just so happens to be the day *after* Earth Day. While the efforts of nearly all of local, state, and national leaders (and potential leaders) have been lackluster in terms of climate action, there are definitely candidates who will obviously set us back (which is something we unequivocally cannot afford). And as the partisanship chasm grows deeper and deeper (as described in detail by Jeff Bloodworth this month), one can certainly feel helpless in our collective ability to make meaningful change. However, within this issue, one local climate advocacy organization PennFuture and its campaign manager offer up a number of ways that local citizens can get involved and work towards change on the local level — whether that's pushing to make our streets greener or speaking out at climate-related community input sessions.

As we all experience the eclipse together, standing side by side on this giant ball hurtling through space, may we all feel a little more connected to it and to each other. The world will keep on spinning with or without us, so let's do our best to make sure we hang on for the ride.



# Reviving the Rural Democrat

Current campaigners seek to capitalize on the oft-neglected countryside

By: Jeff Bloodworth

“I used to be a Democrat, but they don’t care about us anymore.”

E-Jay Fyke knows this mantra well. The longtime Erie Democratic operative has heard it countless times from area rural voters. Surprisingly, the liberal Fyke agrees with them. To be clear, he thinks Democrats offer better policies for rural Pennsylvanians but he sighs and admits, “We ignored the rural voter. We concentrated too much on Philly and Pittsburgh. The Pennsylvania Democratic Party only cares about Philly and Pittsburgh.”

For generations, rural western Pennsylvania comprised the backbone of the state’s Democratic Party. Even during the Reagan era, the region voted Democrat at the state and national level. Mirroring the region, Erie County also went Democratic in seven consecutive presidential races, from 1988 to 2012. But starting in the ‘90s, the state party shifted its focus to vote-rich Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. By 2016, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the quiet part out loud, “For every blue-collar Democrat we lose in western Pennsylvania, we will pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs in Philadelphia.” This strategy worked for Pennsylvania Democrats — until it didn’t.

In 2016, Donald Trump took rural western Pennsylvania by historic margins. Mitt Romney, for example, won Mercer and Lawrence counties in 2012 but Obama kept the tallies within single digits. In 2016 and 2020 Trump won at least 60 percent of the vote in both. The Republican duplicated this effort throughout the region, including a narrow win in Erie County. These rural landslides provided Trump with the margins to overcome his urban deficit and win the state by a scant 44,000 votes.

Erie County and rural western Pennsylvania are merely a microcosm of the national scene. The rural vote is where MAGA predominates. Donald Trump took 65 percent of the rural vote in 2020, up from 62 percent in 2016. Among rural whites, the Republican took an eye-popping 71 percent of the vote in 2020, a 9 point improvement over 2016. Only one in five Americans live in rural environs and small towns, but the GOP’s monopoly automatically puts more than two dozen states with significant rural populations out of reach.

The rural-urban political divide is a byproduct of political neglect alongside economic and cultural fissures. Democrats rule the cities where three-quarters of the nation’s economic activity and wealth resides. Middle class knowledge workers, who comprise the Democrats’ donor and activist base, are befuddled by Trump’s “American carnage” rhetoric. But rural Americans, who subsist on the crumbs of our information economy, understand it. Drive through almost any small western Pennsylvania town: shuttered storefronts, dilapidated homes, and crumbling infrastructure abound. The signs of economic despair are pal-



Often overlooked by Democrats as a lost cause, many rural areas in Pennsylvania haven’t received liberal campaign attention in decades, further widening the divide and exacerbating hyper-partisanship in politics, a trend seen both locally and nationally.

pable.

But the rural-urban divide is not purely a product of economic decline. Anthony Flaccavento is a labor activist and farmer in southwestern Virginia. He has run for Congress twice as a Democrat. Today, he runs the Rural-Urban Bridge Initiative, which is dedicated to healing polarization. Flaccavento told me the rural-urban divide starts from a cultural fissure wherein rural people “believe Democrats just don’t like them.” His neighbors and friends are “damn proud and they feel preached to and demeaned. Liberals, in their experience, don’t respect working people or believe the educated think they might have something to learn from you. They are utterly and wholly aware of this.”

Blue cities and red countryside define our hyper-partisan politics. We see this polarization most obviously at the presidential level. Every cycle, the White House is decided by a handful of states. Beyond the presidency, the Constitution’s rural tilt offers two senators for every state, which today results in a deadlocked 50-50 Senate. At the state level, rural voters give Republicans nearly double the number of state legislative chambers that Democrats possess. These bodies, in turn, draw legislative maps inflating

rural America’s power in the House, which, like the Senate, is also stalemated.

Matt Barron, who specializes in rural Democratic races as the principal at MLB Research Associates, told me, “Polarization is a byproduct of Democrats. They don’t even try to compete in rural America.” And Pennsylvania is a near-perfect embodiment of this polarization. A swing state at the national level, Democrats, fueled by the urban vote, control the governor’s mansion and statehouse by the slimmest of margins, a one-vote “majority.” Republicans, propelled by rural ballots, hold the senate. Cue the dysfunction and voter despair.

The rural-urban divide is the seedbed of the nation’s political polarization. But if rural America fuels Trumpism, it also offers an antidote to it. Adam Kirsch, a Midwest-based Democratic political consultant, told me even a 5-percent bump with rural voters would constitute “a game changer.” Control of Congress would not shift every two years. Biden’s 2020 popular vote victory could have been a crushing Electoral College landslide. Trumpism would likely be buried in the rubble. Those are the stakes — and the possibilities.





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Eva Posner does not put much faith in the party pooh-bahs seizing the possibilities. The Democratic political consultant and president of Evinco Strategies told me, “If the Democratic Party gave a shit, they would fund parties and campaigns from the bottom up.” But in Erie County and across the nation, a bevy of local and state Democrats and officials are trying to do just that.

Winning a majority of the rural vote is not their aim. Their formula for victory is to combine the city vote with reduced margins of defeat in rural regions. In Erie, Jim Wertz has led the way. Elected Erie County Democratic Party chair in 2018, Wertz realized “there were lots of rural Democrats who were left behind.” Setting up satellite locations throughout the county, he aimed to put every Erie County Democrat within a 15-minute drive of a brick-and-mortar site. His downtown Union City satellite location was a gamble. But he soon realized its worth. Days after it opened, he received a call from an area dairy farmer who exclaimed, “Hot damn, we have not seen Democrats here in 25 years!”

Wertz recalled a party gathering at the Union City headquarters where an elderly woman encountered an unexpected crowd of fellow Democrats. She exclaimed, “Who are all these people?” Adam Kirsch told me such episodes are typical for rural Democrats. The party’s woes are rooted in a “presence problem” that results in a “doom loop.” Democrats quit organizing and campaigning. The party’s brand in rural Ameri-

ca becomes “non-existent.” Rural Democrats, like the woman in Union City, feel that they are the only liberals in town.

Wertz’s organizing proved vital. Even as Trump increased his 2020 vote in Erie County by 6,800 over 2016, Biden earned over 10,000 more ballots than Clinton’s 2016 tally. The lion’s share of these votes came in

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**Middle class knowledge workers, who comprise the Democrats’ donor and activist base, are befuddled by Trump’s “American carnage” rhetoric. But rural Americans, who subsist on the crumbs of our information economy, understand it.**

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the city and suburbs, but cutting the margins in rural Erie County proved crucial in Biden’s narrow 1,424 vote victory. Two years later, John Fetterman earned plaudits for his “Every County, Every Vote” strategy. Campaigning heavily in rural, small town Pennsylvania, Fetterman improved on Biden’s 2020 percentages

in 60 of the state’s 67 counties.

Unlike past Democrats, Fetterman won on the strength of his rural, small-town vote. Wertz credits the senator but also claims, with some reason, “the Fetterman campaign of 2022 followed the Erie Democratic mold.” Wertz believes his rural-urban strategy will boost him to victory in his state senate contest against Dan Laughlin.

But Wertz and Fetterman are not alone. Candidates ranging from Sara Taber in North Carolina to Destiny Wells in Indiana, Sara Klee-Hood in California to Ty Pinkins in Mississippi and Dan Quick in Nebraska, are rebuilding the party in rural regions from the ground-up. They are joined by state party executives, such as North Carolina’s 25-year-old Anderson Clayton and Missouri’s Jess Piper, and even political action committees, such as the Texas 134 PAC. Their efforts are aimed at more than one election. They see political races as a chance to rebuild a grassroots Democratic Party in rural America beyond 2024.

E-Jay Fyke is optimistic. He believes, “It is one hundred percent possible to overcome this. But this is done one conversation at a time.” Politics is nothing more than talking to people. And an authentic groundswell of Democrats are doing just that.

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



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## Two Ways to Be a Climate Advocate in Erie in 2024

You have the power to affect change on the local level

By: Jenny Tompkins

The year 2023 was the Earth's hottest on record and the extreme temperature increase negatively impacted Erieites last summer. SeaWolves games, children's summer camps, and park classes were canceled in June due to smoke fueled by Canadian wildfires linked to warming temperatures.

Unfortunately, 2024 is shaping up to be even hotter. An erratic thunderstorm in January, similar to what Erieites expect in the summertime, brought unusually high winds. Impacts included disruption to Presque Isle State Park operations, storm damage for businesses and houses, and widespread power outages. There are more signs of warming temperatures and extreme weather this spring: songbirds arriving early to feeders and spring bulbs popping up only to be covered by lake effect snow.

In the Erie Reader's 2023 Year in Review, managing editor Erin Phillips emphasized the urgency of addressing climate-related disasters stating, "All other Year in Review summaries don't really matter if we don't address the major one: climate change...The tipping point has happened, the floodgates are open, and we can hope (while also advocating, protesting, attending council sessions, etc.) that 2024 will bring more development on this issue locally."

Environmental history shows us that policy action leads to impact, catalyzing long-term shifts in systems and processes. Formalizing municipal commitments through ordinances assures that progress cannot easily be undone later. This is especially important in local government where decisions greatly impact residents' everyday lives. There are two key initiatives to advocate for in 2024 from an environmental policy lens: the creation of the city's first Climate Action Plan and the use of its street safety study to jumpstart work on a Green and Complete Streets Ordinance.

### City of Erie Climate Action Plan:

Climate Action Plans are the most common tool for local governments to outline strategic environmental goals and prioritize corresponding policies and programs. Erie joined over 440 municipalities in Pennsylvania to ini-

tiate a climate action plan. In his January "State of the City" column, Mayor Schember briefly mentioned a \$10,000 Partners for Places Mini Grant awarded to the city by the Funder's Network to "set an agenda for Erie's sustainable future focused on the intersection of climate action, racial justice, and equity." Initially received in May 2022, but postponed by other efforts, staff turnover, and consultant hiring delays, the city is moving forward with the project's first phase this spring. PennFuture advocated for municipalities in the Lake Erie Watershed to engage in climate action planning, and we are serving on this project's advisory committee.

### Here's what you can do:

In Phase 1, community-based organizations are set to receive support and compensation for holding public input sessions about Erie's environmental challenges. Receiving feedback from those most impacted by these challenges, including young people, communities of color, and New Americans, is essential for shaping and prioritizing the city's actions. Attend one or more community input sessions planned for later this year, and encourage others to join you. More participation from the community will encourage elected officials to pursue funding for a second phase. A second phase is essential for a full plan outlining the partnerships and additional capacity needed to implement prioritized action strategies.

### Green & Complete Streets Ordinance:

A Green & Complete Streets Ordinance is another municipal tool to address climate issues by incentivizing less fossil-fuel-intensive forms of transportation — walking, biking, and public transit.

As of 2021, over 1,300 US municipalities adopted Complete Streets policies. Passing such an ordinance is seemingly the city's only published environmental legislative commitment, appearing as a recommendation in its 2021 Active Erie Transportation Plan. 2024 is the ideal time to build momentum for ordinance passage.

Currently, Erie is not a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly city, but it has the formula to become one. Top goals for Complete Streets ordinances are im-



This corridor on West 12th Street is currently under consideration for redevelopment via the 12th Street Reimagined study, which offers a great opportunity for local residents to advocate for a Green and Complete Streets ordinance to help make our community healthier and more sustainable.

proving road safety for non-motorist users and consistently including their needs in street improvement projects, which will also encourage healthier outdoor habits that will reduce vehicle use and associated emissions, making Complete Street policies climate-relevant.

### More Benefits of a Complete Streets Ordinance:

One of the National Complete Streets Coalition's 10 elements of a strong Complete Streets policy is defining and prioritizing investment in underserved communities. In historically redlined communities like Erie, communities of color often face lower vehicle ownership rates coupled with a lack of investment in infrastructure for walkers, cyclists, and public transit users. The well-maintained roads are often meant to divert traffic through these areas and act as barriers for residents to access services, as seen with Erie's Bayfront Connector. Proximity to these busy arterials elevates exposure to air pollutants from vehicle exhaust and its long-term, negative health impacts.

Robust Complete Streets policies also

consider trees and green water infrastructure essential to inclusive roadways. This urban greening beautifies neighborhoods and builds community resilience to climate change and extreme weather. Trees and plants cool urban heat islands and reduce toxic runoff into Lake Erie during heavy rain. As a Great Lakes community, the passage of a Green and Complete Streets Ordinance is more inclusive of our role as water stewards.

### Where the City of Erie left off:

2024 is the ideal time for the mayor and city council to chart a course toward passage.

Late last year, the city requested proposals from consultants to prepare a Comprehensive Transportation Safety Action Plan due to rising vehicle crash statistics. A Safe Streets for All Steering Committee will be created to inform the plan. If the city is already convening these stakeholders to discuss transportation safety, they are also well-positioned to advise on and create momentum for passing a Green and Complete Streets Ordinance.

Additionally, the Erie Metropolitan





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## NEWS & VIEWS

Planning Organization (MPO), our regional transportation planning board, is setting aside \$7,000 annually for Complete Streets ordinance development per new federal funding requirements. This year, the city should collaborate with Erie MPO to incorporate this \$7,000 annual funding stream and other funding streams into the city's roadmap for Green and Complete Streets ordinance passage.

### Here's what you can do:

Passage of a strong Green and Complete Streets Ordinance promises clarity, transparency, and formality for decision-making processes that the city and residents can rely on. However, community members play an important role in ensuring a strong ordinance is ultimately passed. If safe, inclusive, and climate-resilient streets matter to you, attend city council meetings to tell the mayor and council that you want action toward a Green and Complete Streets Ordinance. Consider emailing or calling these elected officials to voice your opinion too. As we strive for a Green and Complete Streets ordinance, participating in the plan-

ning of individual projects, like the Safety Action Plan and 12th Street Reimagined study, is critical. If you can access special meetings on these topics, attend and voice your concerns. Advocating for green and inclusive designs for ongoing projects will only strengthen the case for ordinance passage.

The City of Erie is taking significant measures within its jurisdiction to combat climate change, but to bring about a substantial impact, we need policy changes. This year, our local leaders have two crucial opportunities to address climate change's overarching and intersectional challenges. Local experts are tackling housing, transportation, land use, and more. We need more voices to ensure Erie's first Climate Action Plan and a strong Green and Complete Streets ordinance make it over the finish line.

*Jenny Tompkins is the Erie-based campaign manager for clean water advocacy at PennFuture, a statewide environmental organization with five offices across Pennsylvania. She can be reached at [tompkins@pennfuture.org](mailto:tompkins@pennfuture.org).*

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## The Erie Cook Book Revisited: Breaking Toast

Local home cook reheats historic recipes

By: Morgan Yezzi

Mrs. Laura Sterrett, author of 1881's *The Erie Cook Book*, opened up her collection of recipes with this passage: "A belief that I have collected, from various reliable sources, enough that is new and useful to justify the undertaking, is my excuse for issuing *The Erie Cook Book*." As such is my personal belief, I sense that Sterrett and I share the same gritty and practical visionary spirit it takes to produce a cookbook.

As a consumer science and physical recipe enthusiast, I plan to cook my way through *The Erie Cook Book*, cover to cover, and record notes on what works and what doesn't, hoping to improve upon the recipes and practices set out by Sterrett and her friends. I aim to ensure the recipes put forth are reliable and kitchen-tested by updating the concepts, language and ingredients when necessary.

To revise these recipes is to reflect upon history — family customs, entertaining trends, and food tastes have changed in the past 150 years, but the sense behind them is still applicable to the cooking sense of today. This goes for heritage and vintage cookbooks in general. Through the lens of old Erie, I want to take on the role of teacher as a civic responsibility and find out what people don't know about cooking and why.

### Recipe: Buttered Toast

By: Laura Sterrett

"Although toast is commonly used, few know how to prepare it nicely. Take bread, not too fresh, cut thin and evenly, trim off the crust edges for the crumbjar; first warm each side of the bread, then present the first side again to the fire until it takes on a rich, even, brown color; treat the other side in the [same] way; butter and serve immediately. The coals should be bright and hot. Toast properly made is very digestible, because the moisture is extracted and the bread has become pure farina of wheat, but when it is exposed to a hot fire and the outside charred, the inside remains as moist as ever. Butter applied to it while warm does not penetrate, but floats on the surface in the form of rancid oil. Or, beat one cup of butter and three tablespoons of flour to a cream, pour over this one and a half pints boiling water; place over a kettle of boiling

water for ten minutes, dip into it the toast, and serve hot. Or dip each slice of toast in boiling hot water (slightly salted) spread with butter, cover, and keep hot."

Toast has always been one of my favorite foods: contrasting crisp and soft textures, a vehicle for butter, and appropriate anytime of the day or night. Flashy toasters and toaster ovens made toast popular for the aforementioned reasons, but also because it can be eaten "on the go." No wonder I have had blinders on cooking toast on a skillet my whole life! These devices have pulled me away from what real toast actually is: drawing the moisture from the exterior of a piece of bread and crisping

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To revise these recipes is to reflect upon history — family customs, entertaining trends, and food tastes have changed in the past 150 years, but the sense behind them is still applicable to the cooking sense of today.

---

it evenly. Prior to the invention of the toaster, there were particular methods for cooking toast for breakfast, methods that warranted Sterrett to publish a 22-line recipe on the subject. Below, I've regarded her methods, but built upon them:

### Stovetop Toast

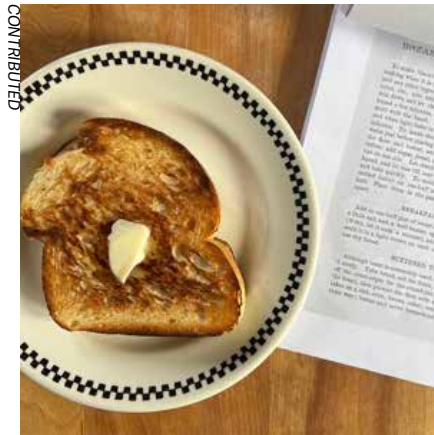
By: Morgan Yezzi

Begin by heating cast iron (I use a Griswold #9 skillet) or any heavy skillet on the stovetop at medium heat. Evenly slice a piece of bread and place it on the warming pan. As the moisture begins to release, the bread will elicit a slight hiss. After 2-3 minutes, flip the bread over and let it brown on the other side. Continue flipping the piece of toast until it reaches your desired darkness. Butter the hot bread and serve immediately with preserves.

### To Revive Stale Toast

2 cups water, salted  
1-2 slices stale bread  
Butter and preserves for serving and spreading

If you find yourself with bread that has become stale, it can be revived with



Local home chef and historic recipe preservationist Morgan Yezzi is testing and updating the recipes found in the 1881 *Erie Cook Book* written by Laura Sterrett. He begins with something so simple, yet so profound: toast.

moisture.

Boil 2 cups of salted water.

Using tongs, dunk the stale bread into the water and then pass it over to a plate.

Spread the bread with soft butter and cover with a lid.

Serve with baked eggs over a bed of sautéed greens, albumen grapefruit, and hot coffee.

Sterrett presents a "cream toast." I found it to be quite cumbersome, cakey, and flavorless — this is coming from someone who can make a soufflé for four, moments after rolling out bed. I updated it to be a more flavorful bread confection: custard toast, which is bread that is soaked in a custard mix until its fully absorbed, browned on all sides, and served with fruit.

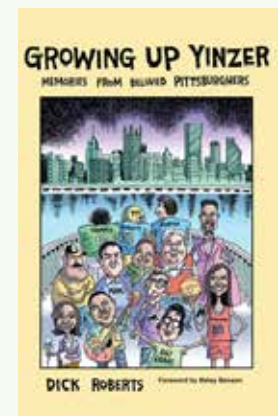
### Custard Toast for Two

2 2-inch thick pieces of bread  
1 cup of milk  
1/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

1. Whisk all of the ingredients in a loaf pan.
2. Set the bread into the custard mixture and let it absorb for 10 minutes. Flip the bread after 5 minutes and push down onto it gently to help the bread absorb the custard.
3. Heat a pan on the stovetop and melt 1 tablespoon of butter. Just as the butter stops bubbling, place the sopping bread into the pan. Cook on all sides until golden brown.



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## FEATURE

# Erie's Typhoid Epidemic Expedited Need for Clean Waterways

Unsanitary conditions prevailed during city's population boom

By: Jonathan Burdick

**T**yphoid is a deadly infection contracted from *Salmonella Typhi* bacteria. It usually spreads through contaminated food or water and, if ingested, the bacteria quickly multiplies within one's bloodstream and intestinal tract. Long-lasting symptoms can include fever, fatigue, headaches, nausea, stomach pains, constipation, diarrhea, rashes, delirium, and even death. Needless to say, it's not a fun experience.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are still millions of cases of typhoid around the world annually resulting in over 100,000 deaths. In the United States today, cases are relatively rare, but that was not always the reality. Typhoid outbreaks were common in cities all across the country in the past. The City of Erie was no exception.

As Eugene Ware wrote for the Erie Times-News in 2021, there were waves in the 1860s when over a quarter of the city's population was sick with typhoid. In response to these outbreaks, a water commission was created in order to find solutions related to the polluted city water supply. Progress was slow. "It may only be coincidental that the city leaders and Water Commission members all drew their water from the safe Brown Hotel wells," Ware pointed out.

Entering the new century, typhoid was still a significant issue. Between 1900 and 1911, there were over 3,200 reported cases of typhoid fever in Erie resulting in at least 320 deaths. Where it originated wasn't universally agreed upon, although to local health officials, it was quite clear that releasing raw sewage into the local creeks, bay, and lake was a problem, especially since that water was the source of the city's public supply.

Water from natural springs was used in Erie's earlier years, but as the population grew, so did the demand for water. In 1868, when the population was approaching 20,000, an intake pipe was installed about 975 feet into the polluted Presque Isle Bay. In 1896, with the population around 50,000, a second intake was built in the bay further away from the sewage discharge.

The water commission discussed in 1902 the construction of an "intercepting sewer" to reroute sewage away from the bay as well as, at the insistence of health officials, building a filtration plant. One study noted that "it was evident that sewage pollution of the intake took place almost constantly." Instead, city leaders focused on another potential solution designed by George H. Fenkell, the University of Michigan-educated city waterworks engineer. His plan involved extending a 60-inch pipe across the peninsula and nearly a mile out into Lake Erie where water would be far less contaminated. While it wouldn't be completed until 1908, the goal was

WILLIAM PITT MASON, 1916



MECHANICAL FILTER PLANT, ERIE, PA.

**Following a devastatingly deadly typhoid outbreak in Erie in 1911, due largely to the lack of clean water and the presence of raw sewage in the population's drinking water, the need for greater public sanitation was finally taken seriously and a water filtration plant was erected.**

to provide the city with "uniformly pure water" by bringing the water supply from "gross pollution" to only "occasional pollution."

During these years, city health officials, led by Dr. John W. Wright, worked to improve sanitary conditions across the city. Between 1908 and 1910, they reduced the 3,000 outdoor "unsanitary privies" in Erie to about 1,400. They passed regulations for the remaining on how often they had to be cleaned, encouraging having waste carted out to the rural areas for farms — although this wasn't enforced and many outhouses were overflowing with the "night soil."

As a result, typhoid outbreaks were common. Cases generally spiked between January and March. Even by 1910 though, there still wasn't a consensus in Erie on its origins (or even that it was typhoid at all). Some believed it was caused by the rainy, cold weather. Others blamed the milk supply. After all, the health department had only recently begun inspecting milk and, using Department of Agriculture standards, around 62 percent of Erie County's dairy farms were rated "poor" or "bad."

Some speculated that it spread through garbage or flies. Despite being advocated for by Dr. Wright and other health officials, the city wasn't responsible for garbage collection or incineration. Residents disposing of garbage relied on "licensed scavengers" who'd take it for a fee. This proved ineffective. As one federal report on Erie noted, they often neglected poorer districts and focused on more lucrative affluent neighborhoods. So, many residents simply let garbage accumulate in their backyards or they'd dump it in vacant lots, alleyways, or creeks.

Erie's population in 1910 was now 66,525 and growing fast. Immigration was increasing. Manufacturing boomed. General Electric was building their plant



nearby in what would become Lawrence Park. This boom made solving the waste problem that much more complicated.

"The entire sewage of Erie goes into Erie Harbor and Lake Erie," read a report by the National Institute of Health. Nearly the entire city had sewer connections by this point with 11 sewer outlets dumping into Presque Isle Bay and another three into Lake Erie just east of the harbor. Cascade Creek, Little Cascade Run, Mill Creek, Garrison Run, and Lighthouse Run all functioned as sewer outlets. Waste from the docks, ships, and manufacturing plants along the bayfront and lakeshore all released into the water too.

Before the newest intake out in the lake, the entire public water supply was taken from this "grossly polluted" bay water where it was "delivered untreated and unfiltered to consumers." A report by the Department of the Interior stated that the bay's "contamination is so offensive ... and so great in amount as to make the water utterly unfit for drinking or domestic use." The city's creeks were "practically open sewers" of "foul condition" with garbage, human sewage, and farm waste. "[T]he sewage odors from the open ditch are offensive and have been the subject of much complaint," explained the report.

Nearly 10 million gallons emptied daily from 43 outlets into Mill Creek alone (which did not yet run under the city). At its mouth was thick "sewage sludge" as well as "garbage, dry waste, rubbish of all kinds, and ... factory sewage."

That winter saw two massive outbreaks. In December 1910, a sickness referred to as "winter cholera" (but was actually enteritis) first ripped through the population, sickening one-third of the city. While generally not fatal, it hit suddenly causing a slight fever and severe abdominal pains lasting as long as five to six hours followed by one to two days of diarrhea and potentially weeks of weakness. Health officials again pointed to the water supply and stressed the need for filtration, citing a study done in Albany in which

filtration had led to an "enormous" decrease in waterborne illnesses.

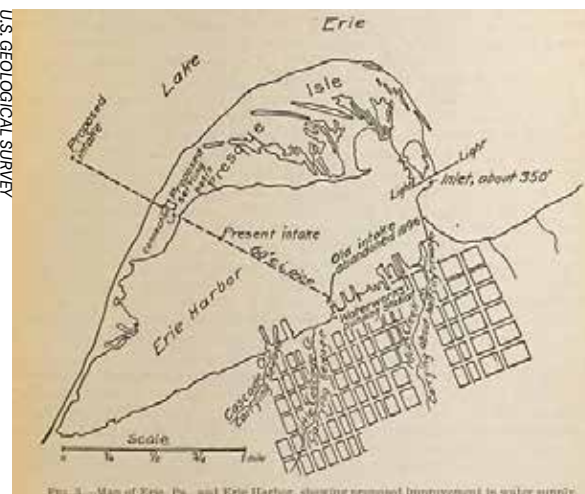
Then a few weeks into 1911, the city was hit abruptly by an "explosive" typhoid outbreak described as a "serious menace to public health." January had 240 reported cases and would total over 700 by the epidemic's end. Each day, the Erie Daily Times daily published names of those sick, those recovering, and in many cases, those who died.

There was George A. Kuhn, a 36-year-old driver for Wayne Brewing Company, who succumbed at St. Vincent Hospital. "His death is a great blow to his devoted wife who is left with three small children to mourn the loss," eulogized the paper. More obituaries were published: a 33-year-old factory worker, a 51-year-old woman who took care of her elderly mother, a veteran of the Spanish American War and popular employee at Hammermill Paper, a 17-year-old "esteemed young man ... [who] enjoyed the confidence and respect of a wide circle of friends," and a 13-year-old with a "great, big, loving heart" who was known for building treehouses for the neighborhood squirrels.

"Boil the drinking water," advised the Erie Daily Times. Despite this warning, the editors were still skeptical over the water supply as the source, saying the origins of infection were "not definitely settled." They were increasingly agitated as the weeks passed and began to, quite aggressively, defend the city's water and even criticize calls for filtration due to the potential costs. "Alarmists would make Erie people think lake water is bad when it is shown by analysis to be as good as water filtered in many cities where plants costing millions of dollars have been installed," they asserted. "[I]t is very evident that the lake water is not to blame."

The Committee of Erie Businessmen's Exchange was frustrated too, saying the epidemic "has been greatly exaggerated much to the detriment of the business interests of the city." Many residents appeared to agree, much to the frustration of health officials. Ty-

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



From the mid- to late-1800s, an intake pipe for the population's water supply was taken directly from Presque Isle Bay, which was intensely polluted with human, animal, and industrial waste from waterways throughout the county. This graphic shows the proposed new water intake from the lake, a mile out from the bay, which was constructed in 1908.

phoid cases increased. Meanwhile, F. Herbert Snow, "sanitary engineer" for Pennsylvania's Department of Health, was brought to Erie to assist. With his help, city health officials worked to unequivocally identify the source, eliminating garbage, flies, vegetables, imported bananas, milk, ice, and mere contact with infected as the primary cause of the outbreak.

City hospitals were beyond capacity by January's end. "Every inch of space is being taken up to make room for the patients," reported the Erie Daily Times, adding that hallways in St. Vincent Hospital were "transformed into wards to accommodate the large number of sufferers." Hamot Hospital built a temporary pavilion on the lawn with steam heat and electric lights that could hold another 18 beds. The hospitals had around 100 nurses and six physicians, already beyond exhausted and taking turns sleeping 4 to 6-hour increments. One doctor made 40 house

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calls in one day. Medical students and 16 of the Sisters of St. Vincent assisted, but staffing was still stretched thin.

One of the Erie Daily Times reporters soon contracted it. He later described being taken by stretcher and ambulance to St. Vincent Hospital. He suffered two weeks of “burning fever, oblivion and delirium” as his nurse tended to him with cold towels and a “calm, sympathetic voice” with her “tender strength,” bathing him daily, feeding him, and changing his sheets frequently.

The paper redirected its anger away from health officials and toward two competing papers, which they argued were still “sensationalizing” the epidemic by making readers “believe that Erie is the worst place on the face of the earth” and prematurely blaming the water supply. To be fair, Snow still hadn’t drawn any definitive conclusions. Water samples were sent to expert chemists elsewhere to analyze, but when typhoid cases escalated in February, the city brought in a renowned chemist. They and city health officials all soon met with the water commission with their results: despite the bay intakes being closed off, sewage was indeed identified in the public supply lines.

“That this was the cause of the outbreak can scarcely be doubted after a consideration of all the facts,” read a report. “It is clear, then, that the sewage pollution must have reached the mains by way of the lake intake.”

How that happened remained a mystery to them though. There was speculation that contamination occurred back in November after the dredging of “filthy muck” and “sewage solids” in the bay, which was dumped east of Erie near Four Mile Creek. Perhaps it drifted westward to the lake intake. Another local study suggested that storms and strong winds had produced underwater currents moving east to west. Some further theorized that there was a leak in the piping under the bay which was contaminating the water being drawn from the lake (some time later, this would indeed be discovered as true).

Snow recommended the immediate chlorination of the water supply, saying it would be “especially fatal to typhoid and other similar intestinal bacteria.” This was only a temporary solution until a more permanent purification plant was constructed. The recommendation was applauded by public health of-

ficials. “The people of Erie owe a great deal to the men who have given so freely of their time and attention to this great problem,” one expert said. With a proper filtration plant, he added, Erie would “arouse the envy of other lake cities.”

Residents were told that once chlorinated, the water could be used without boiling. For a few weeks, it might taste and smell “obnoxious” from the influx of sanitizing chemicals, but it would soon level out and be “consistently clear and safe.”

The Erie Daily Times softened their rhetoric too, saying, “It is a fortunate thing for Erie that some of her most level-headed, far-sighted men have had the management of her water supply system all these years.”

The city also began planning for a disposal plant and sludge drying beds along with interceptors that would reroute sewage. It wouldn’t outright prevent sewage from reaching the bay, but would certainly reduce the amount.

The danger was not over yet. The health board stressed that the ongoing epidemic would continue. These solutions would take time. Residents still needed to boil all water for 20 minutes and avoid visiting the sick. Health officials were also increasingly frustrated with much of the public for ignoring their warnings.

“So long as people persist in drinking unboiled city water ... the primary typhoid epidemic [will] probably continue,” they warned. “[T]he typhoid situation in Erie is critical. It is very serious right now.” A failure to cooperate, they warned, could result in the epidemic lasting for a year or even longer. Instructional placards were placed all around the city.

In February, Civil War veteran Henry Mayer donated two floors of his building (known today as the Performing Artist Collective Alliance or PACA building) for an emergency hospital. He refused payment. Annie Wainwright Strong assisted with the setup, while also paying for food, milk, and heating coal for families of patients.

Water chlorination was officially adopted by the city in March. Dr. Wright announced that he thought the “backbone of the epidemic” was broken. It was time to prepare for the future. A permanent plant needed fast-tracking. The city must also immediately take on the responsibility of garbage collection and incinera-

tion, he demanded, criticizing city council for ignoring his past pleas in favor of paving roads instead.

“Every day of delay may mean illness and perhaps death,” agreed the Erie Daily Times, adding that city council likely would not act unless the citizens of Erie demanded it. “Time something was done for the welfare of all, rather than of the few. ... The city has just passed through a period of sickness and death that ... has but few parallels.”

On March 27, it was reported that the sterilization was working. Not a single water sample demonstrated any danger. Over the following month, all of the state health officials returned to Harrisburg. Snow said in his final address that Erie was better protected against typhoid than ever before in the history of the city. “There remains but one thing still to be done,” he added, “the erection of a filtration plant.”

“[T]he public health demands that no delay shall occur in making the necessary permanent changes,” bacteriologist and Commissioner of the State Department of Health Samuel G. Dixon wrote in a statement. The city’s board of health announced it would continue taking “extraordinary steps to clean up the city.”

Over the following decades, the sanitary conditions of the city readily improved. More upgrades to the water and sewage systems were implemented. According to a study by the American Medical Association, by 1925, typhoid deaths decreased by 80 percent or more in dozens of cities, including Erie.

For the remainder of his life, Dr. Wright continued doing what he did best: addressing public health issues from helping the city through the influenza pandemic of 1918, to promoting vaccinations, to encouraging the pasteurization of milk, to even simple tasks such as using garbage cans with lids and preventing the growth of poison ivy. In 1926, he died of a heart attack at his West Eighth Street home. He’d worked in public health for over three decades.

There was an outpouring of grief and tributes. As the Erie Times News eulogized, “His record will stand in the healthy generation that developed under his regime.”

*Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at [jburdick@eriereader.com](mailto:jburdick@eriereader.com)*

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## FEATURE

# Local Family Flower Farm Growing Nature's Love Letters

Why locally-grown blooms are better for the Earth

By: Amy VanScoter

**Y**ou may have noticed there is a growing crop of businesses around the Erie area: locally grown flowers. The slow flower movement, much like the local food movement, encourages consumers to question the origins and impact of the flowers they buy. One local family has made it their mission to spread love through their local flowers, art, and the printed word.

During the pandemic, loveletters.ink became a collaborative partnership between mother Sue Barton and her daughter Kelly Poese. Barton, a calligrapher, has been exhibiting at art and craft shows throughout the Midwest for the past 45 years as Sue Barton, Ink. Her daughter, Poese, uses floral design as a way to combine the beauty of the natural world and the expression of emotions such as love, connection, and thoughtfulness. Together, they became loveletters. Kelly's daughters Susannah and Maddy are also family entrepreneurs with their natural and eco-friendly lip balm business, The Balm Shop.

"We wanted to be outside as much as possible during the pandemic and we started just growing about 10 flower varieties and going to the local outdoor markets. Now we are growing 45 varieties and doing weddings," said Kelly Poese. Although customers are usually only purchasing local flowers during the warmer months, the flower business is a year-round process. "Every flower for the most part comes from seed," Poese said. "In January we are planting thousands of seedlings in our makeshift greenhouse, there is soil blocking, planting in the fall and early June, then mid-June is market season, and after that we are preparing dried flowers from October through Christmas."

Poese says some of the most important differences you receive when purchasing local flowers are the local economic and environmental impacts. "There is a difference in the product between the flowers in the bouquets that you buy at a florist or grocery store. Most flowers in the U.S. at nearly any time of the year come from South America and because of the lax environmental regulations, the amount and variations of pesticides, insecticides, and preservative chemicals are shocking. Buying local flowers helps support the environment and also helps local families buy their groceries," said Poese.

The chemicals used on flowers not only stay on the blooms but also impact the local ecosystems where the flowers are grown and the people who work and live there. Once harvested, flowers are usually flown on airplanes and are part of the cold supply chain of refrigerated planes, trucks, and warehouses. Poese reports on the loveletters website that the transport of Valentine's Day flowers from Columbia to the U.S. alone incurs a global warming impact estimated to be equivalent to the annual operation of 78,000 automobiles. She points out that on top of the negative environmental impact of imported

CONTRIBUTED



**Kelly Poese's livelihood has blossomed since the pandemic to become a flower farmer – growing native, organic, natural bouquets for sale at local farmers markets and vendor events, as well as providing a weekly flower subscription service.**

cut flowers, there are many reports of poor working conditions on many of these large-scale cut flower farms.

"Locally grown flowers are typically grown using up-to-date agricultural techniques (such as organic pest management, minimal soil till, amendments that nurture the soil biome, etc.) that close the nutrient cycle and benefit humans as well as all of the other interconnected living organisms in our environment," said Poese.

You don't have to wait for an outdoor market to purchase local flowers. Flower subscriptions are a great option for those who like to keep their house full of fresh flowers or who want to give the gift of weeks of fresh flowers delivered to a loved one. "You may not be able to give local flowers for Valentine's Day but, the surprise and joy of getting fresh, in-season flowers is even more special — even if you order them for yourself," said Poese. "Because local flowers are not genetically engineered for transit, they bring with them more vivid colors and stronger smells. We have the flexibility to grow interesting, heirloom varieties of flowers, not just the ones that will ship well."

Another benefit to the flowers grown on most small, local flower farms is that they may last longer



than imported flowers (often a week or more), smell better, and the bouquets have a much wider variety of color, shapes, and sizes than you'll find in imported flowers. "Flowers figure so directly into some of our most important rituals such as weddings, graduations, anniversaries, memorial ceremonies that it's really good news that local flower farms are cropping up to provide these flowers cleanly, sustainably, with the love and care that reflects the celebrations for which they are such an integral part," said Poese.

Locally grown flowers take root in our collective soil, they clean our air, and nurture our insect and bird life. "Not only is the circle of these inputs and outputs much smaller geographically than the imported flowers, but the economic circle stays in Erie County, too. These flowers bring the joy of nature and her beauty to your home, and they bring joy to our home — the joy of making something desirable, of doing hard work together, and of financial security. When you buy our flowers, you lift up your neighbors — the love invested in local flowers flows in many directions," said Poese.

For more information about loveletters you can visit their website at [loveletters.ink](http://loveletters.ink). You can find more about The Balm Shop at [thebalmshop.com](http://thebalmshop.com).

Amy VanScoter is the founder/owner of Infinite Love Yoga, LLC, located at 310 E. 10th St., near Downtown Erie. You can find her at [infinitelove.yoga](http://infinitelove.yoga) or [avanscoter@gmail.com](mailto:avanscoter@gmail.com).



Most flower arrangements sold in grocery stores or florists have an unsustainable carbon footprint but local blooms like loveletters are grown in harmony with the climate and aid in sustaining local biodiversity.

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# ReLeaf's Commitment to a Greener Erie

LEAF's tree-planting initiative to mitigate the effects of climate change

By: Julia Garden

**L**ake Erie Arboretum at Frontier, or LEAF, has been a steadfast resource for Erie since the nonprofit planted their first tree in 1998, providing the community with accessible outdoor space and activities. Over the years, LEAF employees have evolved their programming to provide free environmental education.

In 2020, the organization launched its ReLeaf tree-planting initiative. The goal of ReLeaf is to plant 275,000 trees — each tree representing every citizen in Erie County. Since the culmination of the initiative, program partners and volunteers have planted 56,742 native trees throughout Northwestern Pennsylvania.

According to LEAF executive director Erin Green (40 Under 40 Class of 2023), the organization is committed to fostering awareness about the role of native trees and promoting environmental appreciation through educational initiatives and outdoor experiences. “We hope to impact Erie by planting these trees and making it a better place for us all to live,” she said.

When driving around Erie County, passersby can easily identify tree seedlings recently planted through the ReLeaf initiative. Standing around two to three feet tall, the native tree seedlings are protected by white tube shelters and supported by stakes. “You can see the younger trees with their space and shelters. You can kind of identify around the city which ones have come from us,” Green said.

The tree species and planting locations are carefully selected to ensure a healthy life for each tree, contributing to a greener future. LEAF only plants native trees to support local biodiversity like birds, insects, and wildlife. “Erie is part of a greater watershed. So the lake, the streams, and the creeks that run up and down the coast in our area are all benefited by the trees we plant here,” Green said.

Native tree species have numerous benefits — promoting biodiversity and mitigating the negative impacts of climate change. Trees absorb what humans put off — removing harmful pollutants from the environment. Their root systems absorb rainwater, preventing erosion and reducing urban

runoff. Further, trees raise property value and reduce noise pollution.

Beyond environmental benefits, Green noted the inherent aesthetic appeal. “Planting a tree is beautiful. It’s something nice to look at,” she said.

LEAF receives free trees and resources like planting stakes and shelters through their partnership with Keystone 10 Million Trees. Based out of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed area, this organization provides Pennsylvania-based nonprofits with tree-planting resources.

Originally, ReLeaf planned to reach its goal within five years. But organizers soon found that extending the timeline was essential to the vitality of the young tree seedlings. “Quality is more important,” Green said. “We’re planting thousands and thousands of trees every year so we’ll get there. What’s important is that they’re going to live.”

Before trees are fully grown, they are more vulnerable to weather and pest damage and require frequent upkeep. ReLeaf trees are maintained by dedicated volunteers, employees, and program partners.

Green noted the contributions of returning volunteers who have “become part of the team.” Several local partners sponsor the project, including Erie Insurance, First Energy, and The United Way. Erie Insurance has plans to plant 100 trees in Downtown Erie to further contribute to the initiative.

LEAF is working to spread the word to increase community involvement in order to reach their goal and spread public awareness. “We’re slowly inching up towards the goal. But we can’t do it alone. We really need volunteers, partners, and more people,” Green said, describing the initiative as a “team effort.”

Through educational programming, students have been a huge part of their progress. According to program director Hannah Rhodes, there are programs tailored for all age groups. “Elementary, middle, and high school students all have roles they can play,” Rhodes said.

Organizers hope the programming can help nurture a new generation of environmentally aware and responsible citizens. Rhodes further emphasized the benefits of hands-on learning experiences for young children, who are encouraged to get their hands dirty



ReLeaf's initiative of planting a new tree for each citizen of Erie County is off to a great start – since 2020, volunteers and program partners have planted 56,742 throughout the local environment and they are always looking for more people to help out the cause.

and learn how to plant and maintain trees. Already, organizers have observed a higher level of environmental literacy in the students involved in LEAF's programming.

The organization also provides trees for residents, farmers, and business owners to plant on private property. One benefit of tree planting, Rhodes says, is the level of accessibility: “A community member can plant that tree and watch it grow and that’s as involved as we need them to be,” she explained. “There are levels of accessibility that make it really positive for the community.”

One notable project of the ReLeaf initiative is the tiny forest at Mercyhurst University. In the fall of 2021, students, faculty, and volunteers planted 649 native trees in an excavated plot about the size of a tennis court. The tiny forest was planted near the university's Center for Academic Advancement, intentionally in view of drivers traveling along East 38th Street.

Tiny forests involve a tree-planting

method that expedites growth and offers several environmental benefits. Native trees are densely planted so the root systems intertwine to share soil and nutrients, allowing for the plant to grow quicker than a tree seedling in nature. After two growing seasons, many of the trees on the campus have already grown up to 15 feet tall.

“They will attract native insects which attract native birds and other wildlife. And you end up with this little biodiversity hotspot in an urban area,” said Christopher Dolanc, co-director of environmental science at Mercyhurst.

Dolanc further emphasized the significance of access to nature in urban areas: “People living in urban areas don’t have the same access to nature that rural areas have,” he said. “So little patches of land where we can kind of emulate nature are really important.”

Students and faculty will monitor, maintain, and research the tiny forest and its progress. Dolanc has applied the tiny forest in several courses, including promoting student-driven research on



CONTRIBUTED



In 2021, students, faculty, and volunteers planted nearly 650 native trees in an excavated plot of land on Mercyhurst's campus. The purpose of these "tiny forests" is to attract local insects, birds, and wildlife to inhabit an urban area.

the forest's carbon sequestration over time, compared to the output from the university dorms. Organizers hope to see more research-driven projects in the future to monitor the long-term impact of the ReLeaf initiative.

"Trees are our future," Rhoades said.

toric solar eclipse, occurring over Erie from 2:02 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

On Saturday, April 15, the organization is holding an Arbor Day celebration at Franklin Park. During this event, volunteers will plant a new tiny forest. And to celebrate Earth Day, the

Native tree species have numerous benefits — promoting biodiversity and mitigating the negative impacts of climate change. Trees absorb what humans put off — removing harmful pollutants from the environment. Their root systems absorb rainwater, preventing erosion and reducing urban runoff. Further, trees raise property value and reduce noise pollution.

"When we help community members grow trees, they are growing their future."

LEAF is gearing up for a series of spring events. The nonprofit is inviting community members and visitors to Frontier Park for their "Park Side of the Moon" solar viewing event on Monday, April 8. The event runs from noon to 5 p.m., aligning with the his-

organization is hosting a spring clean-up and tree-planting event at Frontier Park on Wednesday, April 22.

*Those interested in supporting ReLeaf can find more information at [releaferie.org](http://releaferie.org).*

*Julia Carden can be reached at [juliacarden91@gmail.com](mailto:juliacarden91@gmail.com)*



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## Eclipsing Erie: The Path of Totality 2024

Community events on and surrounding the total solar eclipse

By: Larry Wheaton

MONDAY, APR. 8

Some are calling it a rare celestial event, others a once-in-a-lifetime experience — a total solar eclipse will leave Erie in the path of totality on Monday April 8 at 3:16 p.m. This occurs when the moon's orbit comes directly between the Earth and the sun, casting darkness over certain parts of America. Weather permitting, people in the path of a total solar eclipse can see the Sun's corona, or outer atmosphere, which is otherwise obscured by the bright face of the sun.

Erie is the only city in Pennsylvania where one can experience this totality. The rarity of a solar eclipse is due in part to the fact that it can only occur during a new moon and when the moon's orbit is tilted five degrees to the Earth's orbit around the sun, according to the National Weather Service. The next total solar eclipse over the U.S. won't be until 2044.

The 2024 eclipse path will pass over more cities and densely populated areas than the 2017 path did (which cut a narrow swath across the central U.S. from northern Oregon to South Carolina), making it easier for more people to witness totality, with an estimated 31.6 million people able to experience totality this year, compared to only 12 million in 2017, with an additional 150 million people living within 200 miles of the path of totality. The upcoming eclipse will last up to 3 minutes and 21 seconds. NASA states that for safety, observers must wear a set of eclipse glasses that complies with the ISO 12312-2 international standard when viewing any solar eclipse. This provides protection that is 1,000 times darker than standard sunglasses.

Because experts predict a high volume of visitors to the Erie area (upwards of 250,000 by some estimates), locals are encouraged to choose a viewing event that is within walking or biking distance from your residence, to lessen the congestion of traffic and improve safety conditions. The following is a list of events (not exhaustive) happening in the Erie area. Choose one near you, and let's get ready to experience a historic celestial event together.

### ERIE BAYFRONT

**Liberty Park Amphitheater**  
828 W. Bayfront Pkwy.



**In case you haven't heard, Erie is about to be a part of something big – our city lies within the path of totality for the upcoming solar eclipse happening on Monday, April 8 and a number of local businesses and nonprofits are taking advantage of the influx of people to host watch parties and educational events.**

#### Gates open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

This is a family friendly event that offers free eclipse glasses while supplies last that will be hosted by DJ Bill Page with food from Lombardo's Concessions.

#### Oliver's Beer Garden

130 E. Front St.

11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Enjoy outdoor entertainment from DJ Josh, a round of mini-golf, and some brews on the bay while watching the eclipse. Eclipse glasses will be available while supplies last and a limited food menu will be served up by Oliver's food truck. \$20/person.

#### The Erie Land Lighthouse

2 Lighthouse St.

1 to 4 p.m.

Enjoy this eclipse watch party from the grounds of Erie's oldest lighthouse. The event is free but tickets are required. Enter a raffle to win one of eight spots to watch the eclipse from the top of the Land Lighthouse: truly an unforgettable Erie experience.

#### Sloppy Duck

726 W. Bayfront Pkwy.

1 to 5 p.m.

Enjoy the eclipse by near the water of Pr-

esque Isle Bay. Entertainment is provided by ReignMaker. \$5.

#### Victorian Princess

1 W. Dobbins Landing

2 to 5 p.m.

Take the opportunity to view the solar eclipse from the water aboard the *Victorian Princess*. With the price of a ticket, attendees will receive a pair of eclipse glasses and get to enjoy music, signature specialty drinks, and an Erie-themed food buffet, featuring a variety of dishes inspired by local cuisine. Tickets are \$100 or upgrade to the top deck viewing experience for \$125.

### ERIE DOWNTOWN

#### The Flagship City District

Downtown Erie at 5th and State

In addition to hosting a number of events pre-eclipse (including eclipse-related art at Glass Growers Gallery, special challenges and deals at Ascend climbing gym, and a Spring Market at Copper Carriage's new location on Saturday, April 6) the Flagship District will also be holding a couple of eclipse day events. Bricks American Steakhouse is hosting a watch party with specialty themed cocktails and the Flagship City Food Hall will have themed

specials and eclipse glasses available.

#### Voodoo Brewing Co.

101 Boston Store Place

11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Voodoo will host their eclipse watch party from their patio and will have a specialty cocktail menu for patrons with eclipse glasses available while supplies last.

#### Erie Ale Works

416 W. 12th St.

Beginning at noon

The folks at Erie Ale Works are hosting their Black Hole Sun Eclipse Parking Lot Party. With local brews, cocktails and mocktails, and local food truck Taqueria Montes.

#### Eclipse Day Downtown

Perry Square, 550 State St.

Noon to 4 p.m.

The Erie Downtown Partnership and the expERIENCE Children's Art Museum will host an eclipse event in Perry Square. The groups will have several teaching representatives from NASA on hand to speak to attendees about how the sun and moon cause a solar eclipse. Attendees will also hear from astrophysicist Zach Lewis about the science behind eclipses, the planets, and more.



## EVENTS

The Children's Museum will have STEAM activities available and the Erie County Library Bookmobile will also be on site to promote education. Penn State Behrend and Gannon University will be in East Perry Square providing a special sunscreen window for small children to be able to safely view the eclipse without having to struggle to keep their glasses on.

### **SeaWolves Eclipse Block Party** **831 French St.**

**Gates open from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

The Erie SeaWolves will host an eclipse block party at UPMC Park, presented by CVS Health and Erie Events. This free community event will be headlined by Emmy-winning TV personality, country music artist, and Erie-native Katie Linedoll. She will perform live with The Roads Behind beginning at 1 p.m. This event will also include youth activities, inflatable games, and autograph stations with SeaWolves players. Eclipse glasses will be available for the first 1,000 attendees. Concession stands and the SeaWolves ticket office and team store will be open for the event.

### **FEED Media Art Center**

**1307 State St.**

**2 p.m. to 4 p.m. (after-party until 10 p.m.)**

The brains behind the latest exhibit at FEED Media Arts Center, *Eclipsing Stars*, are holding a free watch party in nearby Griswold Park. Featuring a media art slideshow, trivia, music, a science talk, artist projects, projections, and (of course) the eclipse. Bring your own eclipse glasses and join the crew after the event in FEED's building for music, projections, and a laser show (\$5-\$15 for the after-party).

### **GREATER ERIE**

#### **LEAF - Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park** **1501 W. 6 St.**

**Noon to 5 p.m.**

The Park Side of the Moon eclipse event happening at LEAF is free and open to the public. LEAF offers lots of space to watch the natural phenomenon, and will provide eclipse safety and art activities for all ages. Erie Ale Works will be offering beers, Altered State Distillery will have cocktails, and coffee and tea will be provided by LZ's Barista Express. Food from the Que Abides, Atacolyse Food Truck, and Donatos Pizza will also be on hand. Live music from Phunkademic and Friends will perform a Pink Floyd tribute from 2 until 3:16 p.m. when they will recess for totality, returning to the stage at 3:30 p.m.

#### **Erie Zoo** **423 W. 38th St.** **Noon to 5 p.m.**

The Erie Zoo will be hosting Zooclipse: Solar Safari, a family friendly event with activities, entertainment, and some of the zookeepers educating attendees about the relationship between the animals and the moon. The event is included with the price of admission or free with an Erie Zoo Membership. The event is rain or shine.

#### **Erie Brewing Company** **6008 Knowledge Pkwy. and 4102 W. Lake Rd.**

**Beginning at 1 p.m.**

At the Knowledge Park location, attendees will be able to view the eclipse from their lake overlook. At the West Side location, the back parking lot will be open and drafts and cans will be available for purchase out of their draft trailer. Both locations are offering free eclipse glasses for the first 100 people.

#### **Erie Sports Center**

**8161 Oliver Rd.**

**1 to 4 p.m.**

There will be an eclipse watch party with viewing glasses available while supplies last from Erie News Now. DJ Amy Sas from HAPPI 92.7 will be playing music. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet members from the Erie News Now team and discuss fun facts and myths about the eclipse. Food and drink will be available to purchase (no outside food or drink is permitted).

#### **Penn State Behrend**

**4701 College Dr.**

**1 to 4 p.m.**

Penn State Behrend's campus will be open to all visitors during the eclipse, with viewing areas available on multiple lots and open spaces. Dr. Warren Williams, professor of physics and astronomy will be giving a scientific play-by-play of the eclipse, meteorologist Tom Atkins will be on hand, and there will be multiple concession stands and public restroom facilities available.

### **SURROUNDING AREAS**

#### **Mound Grove Golf Course** **10760 Donation Rd., Waterford**

Mound Grove is offering a day-of viewing package that includes breakfast, games, and mingling. Also included is a buffet lunch and a beautiful location from which to view the eclipse for \$50. If you want to come for the view only, ex-

pect to pay \$20 a carload for parking and \$15 per person for the buffet lunch.

#### **Lake Erie Speedway** **10700 Delmas Dr. North East** **10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

The Total Eclipse Festival at the Lake Erie Speedway will include Crazy Monkey rides and inflatables, food, and live music from Dan Baney & Stone Quarry Road and the Breeze Band, with a break for the eclipse. The event will also include drifting and monster truck rides. This event is rain, cloudy, or shine, but rides and inflatables will not operate in inclement weather. Free parking, admission is pre-sale \$10, \$20 day of.

#### **Church of the Cross** **5901 Millfair Rd., Fairview**

**10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

The church will provide parking for up to 399 vehicles with an unobstructed view of the northern sky facing Lake Erie. \$20 per vehicle (\$40 for oversized/RV), eclipse glasses for \$5, public restrooms, and food for sale. This event is cash only. It is advised that you bring your own lawn chairs.

#### **Sunview Miniature Golf Course**

**12270 Edinboro Rd., Edinboro**

**10 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

The golf course will have mini golf, the driving range, and go-karts open for fun, weather permitting. They will also have their arcade and candy shop open during the event.

#### **Port Farms**

**1925 Stone Quarry Rd., Waterford**

**11 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Attendees can enjoy everything that Port Farms has to offer including their goats, rope course, jumping pillows, slides, ball zones, barnyard fort, and ball zones. There will be food available for purchase from Jerry's Smokehouse & Grill, Harvest Barn Cafe, and food trucks (Marty's Nacho Mama, Pgh Crepes, and Cousins Maine Lobster). There will also be campfires located throughout the farm with music from a DJ on the front porch and an acoustic band in the events barn.

#### **Legacy Hydroponics**

**1357 Lane Rd., Waterford**

**11 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

Legacy will host a free farmers market leading up to the eclipse, with free glasses while supplies last. They're offering adult beverages and food for purchase, as well as craft vendors and live music.

#### **Peek 'n Peak Resort**

**1457 Olde Rd., Clymer N.Y.**

**Noon to 4 p.m.**

The resort is open to the public and will host a viewing party on the lodge deck starting at noon. Visitors can enjoy fire pits, music, and drinks for purchase. There will be several viewing stations including the main lodge, lower golf course trails, the sugar shack and more. They will also be hosting a Blue Moon after-party at Bistro 210.

#### **Goodell Gardens & Homestead**

**221 Waterford St., Edinboro**

**1 to 6 p.m.**

The Edinboro Eclipse Festival will feature an art show by astrophotographer and amateur astronomer Jackson Froman, who will also live-stream his astrophotography process during the eclipse, Goodell will also host vendors, food trucks, and more. Only 300 tickets are available for \$15 general admission or \$10 for members of Goodell Gardens & Homestead. Rain or shine, no refunds for inclement weather.

#### **Riverside Brewing Company**

**1 Fountain St., Cambridge Springs**

**1 to 7 p.m.**

The eclipse party at Riverside Brewing Company will have live music from Juvenile Characteristics at 2 p.m. There are several ticket options that include a full buffet from 4 to 7 p.m. and appetizers from 1 to 3:30 p.m. with eclipse glasses. Prices range depending on the package chosen.

*The following is a list of parks and open community spaces from which to view the eclipse:*

**Asbury Park, 4106 Asbury Rd.**

**Bayview Park, 598 W. 2nd St.**

**Belle Valley Park, 5300 Henderson Rd.**

**Dobbins Landing, 1 State St.**

**Erie Bluffs State Park,**

**11100 W. Lake Rd., Lake City**

**Gravel Pit Park**

**10300 W. Main St., North East**

**Greene Township Park, 9333 Tate Rd.**

**Gridley Park, 598 Liberty St.**

**Griswold Park, 150 W. 14th St.**

**Harborcreek Community Park,**

**5850 Firman Rd.**

**Lighthouse Park, 2 Lighthouse St.**

**McClelland Park, 2600 E. 26th St.**

**PennWest Edinboro,**

**124 Meadville St., Edinboro**

**Pleasant Ridge Park,**

**8271 Barker Rd., Fairview**

**Rodger Young Park, 1750 Buffalo Rd.**

**Wesleyville Memorial Park,**

**1807 Eastern Ave., Wesleyville**





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**EVENTS**

**Erie Playhouse Delivers Message of Hope With *Inherit The Wind***

Director finds similarities in past and present political climates

**PREMIERES FRIDAY, APR. 5**

“**B**ecause fanaticism and ignorance is forever busy, and needs feeding. And soon, your Honor, with banners flying and with drums beating we’ll be marching backward, **BACKWARD.**” These lines, spoken by Henry Drummond, a fictitious defense attorney in a climactic courtroom scene, could be equally fitting if set in modern times.

*Inherit The Wind*, the 1955 play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee is fictional but based on the very real Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925.

“We chose this play because of its message that we hope resonates with audience members who have any grasp of the current political climate and feel the danger of being swept up by what the crowd thinks and religious conviction,” says director Carolin Lynn. “Our artistic director Richard Davis scouts potential shows for an upcoming season and we discuss their merits as a whole staff,” Lynn continues.

Lynn is an Erie Playhouse veteran of

29 years, “...since Charlie Corritore recruited me from the box office at the Academy Theatre in Meadville”, she says. When asked how she would describe this play (without spoilers) to someone who had never seen or read it, Lynn explained, “It’s a play about the Scopes trial, written in the ‘50s as a response to the McCarthy Era, that still needs to be seen and heard today. It’s about allowing yourself and others to come to conclusions about hard questions through thinking and questioning, rather than accepting that something is right or wrong just because the law or dogma says it is. And it’s about being brave enough to stand up for convictions, even when everyone else says you’re in the wrong.”

The Erie Playhouse production stars familiar faces Mike DeCorte as Matthew Harrison Brady, Victor Kuehn as Henry Drummond, and Zach Flock as E. K. Hornbeck as well as a large cast of Playhouse regulars and newcomers. Lynn wants theatergoers to know “*Inherit The Wind* is not a dry documenta-



As relevant today as it was when it was written in 1955, *Inherit the Wind*, currently on stage at the Erie Playhouse, tackles issues of political division, religious dogma, and standing up for one’s own convictions.

ry... it has been written to be entertaining ... audience members who might think they have no interest in history or politics should still enjoy the story.” — Edwina Capozziello

Fridays and Saturdays through Apr. 20 at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Apr. 18 at 7:30 p.m., Sundays, Apr. 14 and 21 at 2:00 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // \$18.49 - \$29.40 // For tickets and info: [erieplayhouse.org](http://erieplayhouse.org)

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## MIAC Live Hosts Three End-of-Season Events

Dance, song, and drama close out 2024 season

### BEGINNING TUESDAY APR. 9

As the school year slowly winds to a close, so does the action at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center at Mercyhurst University, as the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) finishes out their 2023-2024 season. But they're not ducking into the wings quietly: with three events scheduled within the next month, the folks at MIAC are busy preparing for a diverse, energetic slate of entertainment. Beginning with an artful, polyrhythmic, percussion-based dance performance from Step Afrika!, the return of "The Voice of Broadway" Betty Buckley, and an appearance by award winning star of stage and screen, Gavin Creel.

Dr. Brett Johnson, artistic director of MIAC, is excited that these upcoming performers are not only putting on a show for the Erie community, but that they're also stepping up to help further the educational opportunities for Mercyhurst theater students. He informs, "Step Afrika!, Betty Buckley, and Gavin Creel will all offer workshops or master classes as part of their Mercyhurst engagements, which is a testament to how MIAC furthers the educational mission of Mercyhurst University by providing opportunities for students to study with world-class artists."

The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) isn't ducking into the wings quietly: with three events scheduled within the next month, the folks at MIAC are busy preparing for a diverse, energetic slate of entertainment to finish out their 2023-2024 season.

### TUESDAY, APR. 9: Step Afrika!

Step Afrika! uses the body as an instrument. The group was actually the first professional dance company to call upon the tradition of using stepping and percussive dance as a way to achieve their sound. The group was founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, who, while living in South Africa, began to research traditional dances that utilize the auditory properties of step. From that experience, he creatively interpreted those ideas into what eventually became Step

CONTRIBUTED



With three outstanding performers coming to Mercyhurst University this month, patrons will be able to experience a diverse slate of world-class talent, back to back to back. Enjoy energetic and engaging performances from Step Afrika!, Betty Buckley, and Gavin Creel.

Afrika! which has gone on to become a worldwide phenomenon, as the group has toured to 50 countries across the globe. Attendees of the show can expect a melange of songs, storytelling, comedy, and audience participation — to see Step Afrika! is truly an experience.

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$20-\$45

### FRIDAY, APR. 19: Betty Buckley

Talk about star power — Betty Buckley's resume is impressive (to say the least). Known as "The Voice of Broadway," she has won or been nominated for countless awards for her appearances on a breadth of Broadway stages. But live theater is just the beginning: Buckley has appeared in multiple major motion pictures (including a short film that she wrote, narrated, and produced called *The Mayfly*, which just premiered on March 24) and smash TV hits including *Law and Order*, *Oz*, and *Pretty Little Liars*. She's won three lifetime achievement awards.

And she has been generous enough with her time and talent to stand as the current Artist in Residence at Mercyhurst University, returning annually to host workshops and offer performances for the benefit of the students in the theater program and all of the Erie community. Of her time at Mercyhurst, Buckley glows, "It is one of my greatest joys to share what I have learned from master teachers and watch students use those tools in their own work. I was knocked

out by the caliber of students at Mercyhurst, led by the wonderful Brett Johnson. He has created an atmosphere of total support and freedom of expression while instilling the discipline, skill, and knowledge of history necessary to pursue a career in the performing arts."

Buckley will be in residence for the students at Mercyhurst from April 14 through 18 with a public concert at Walker Recital Hall on Friday, April 19.

7:30 p.m. // Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. // \$35-\$40

### WEDNESDAY, May 1: Gavin Creel

Tony award-winning actor Gavin Creel (who won for his performance alongside Bette Midler in *Hello, Dolly!*) is bringing his magnetic, multi-talented presence to the Mary D'Angelo stage for the closing performance of MIAC's 2023-2024 season. Creel's latest creative endeavor *Walk On Through* (which will be debuting in a limited run Off-Broadway this fall) is his foray into theatrical songwriting, with songs and compositions inspired by the art collections at the Metropolitan Museum. For his performance at Mercyhurst, attendees can expect a presentation of Creel's favorite Broadway songs and pop hits, along with selections from *Walk On Through*. This evening of true vocal talent is sure to be an entertaining treat for audiences. — Erin Phillips

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$25-\$50

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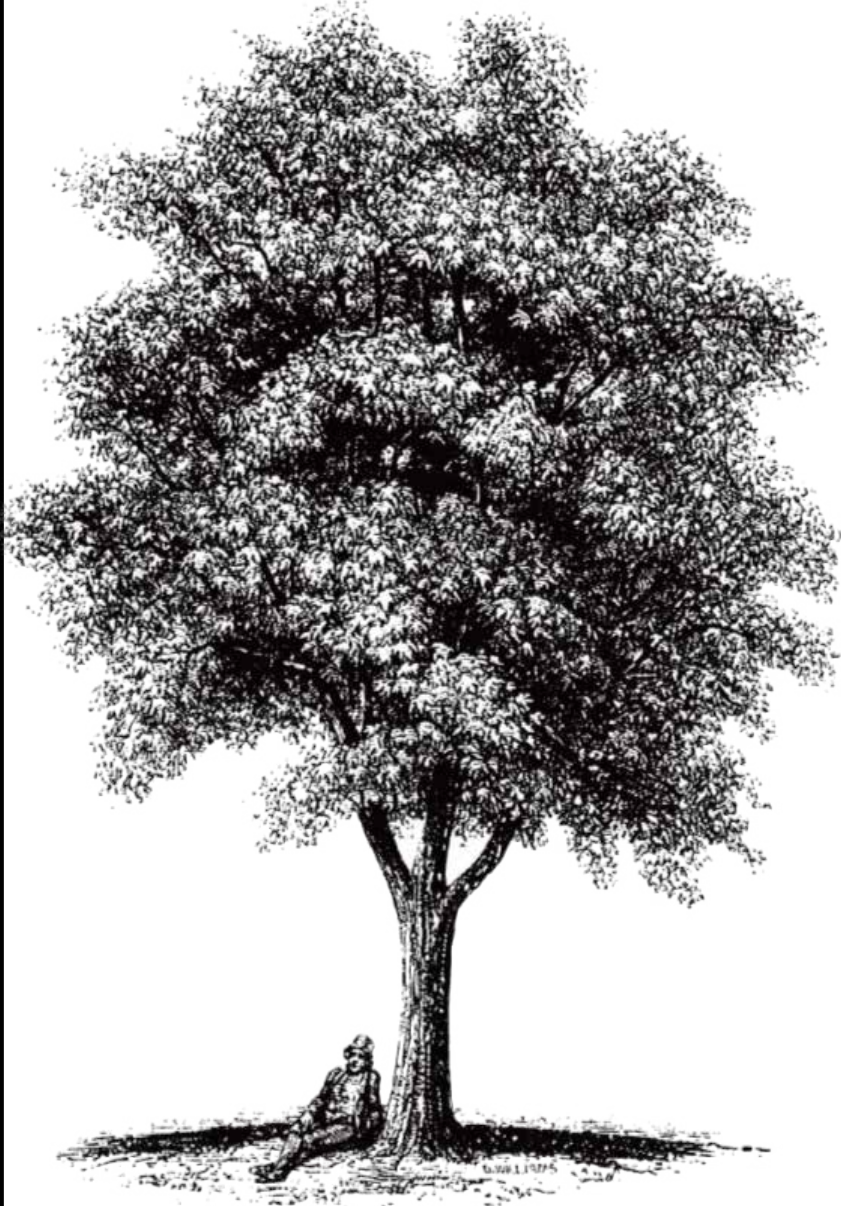
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# Hello, neighbor.

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## EVENTS

### Dramashop Originals Festival: Locally Written, Directed, and Performed

Area playwrights serve up seven selections for the stage

#### PREMIERING FRIDAY, APR. 12

**D**ramashop is known for productions of modern, of-the-moment theatricals — including works that held their world premieres as recently as 2017 and 2019.

So, in keeping with that tradition, Dramashop is set to bring to the stage a new collection of full-length and short plays which can proudly mark the year of their world premieres as 2024 — opening night for the Dramashop Originals Festival, to be exact.

This over-two-weeklong event, which runs from April 12 through 28, follows in the footsteps of last year’s One Act Festival, which itself came about as a progression of the Shorts Festival and the Blue Bowl Monologues. It features — you guessed it — original full-length and short plays, all written, directed, and performed by local talent.

One such talent is Brenna Thummler, graphic novelist, playwright, and 2023 40 Under 40 honoree, who adapted her own work — the graphic novel *Delicates* — into the full-length staged reading entitled *Delicates the Musical*, which is one of seven featured works in this festival.

In her own words, “It’s the story of three characters who are encountering ‘death’ in different ways — loss, ideation, and death itself — and how their individual obstacles become obstacles in their friendship.”

Thummler continues, “But these dark undertones are lifted by humor and whimsy, as ghosts, both real and emotional, are brought to life inside a retro Pennsylvania laundromat. I think the emotional depth of *Delicates* is doubled in the musical adaptation.”

When asked about adapting her own work for the stage, Thummler remarked on the challenge of self-editing while staying true to your vision but found that putting her work into musical format was “a team mentality.” And, she added, “the team is exceptionally creative.”

Along with Thummler’s piece, featured full-length works include *Hades and the One Year Winter* by Charlotte Stowe and *Midst of Paradise* by Howard Lang; shorts include *Line* by Benjamin Snyder, *Drunk Works, Sober Thoughts* by Adam Jeffrey Rossi, *License to Marry* by Daniel Collete, and *Clearance Corner Training Video* by Chris Pederson.

These performances are staggered and repeated throughout the festival, so if you can’t make one showing, there will be two more, along with a playwrighting workshop on the final Saturday and panel discussion with the playwrights on the final Sunday. — Cara Suppa

Beginning Friday, Apr. 12 with various times and plays through Sunday, Apr. 28 // 1001 State Street, Ste 210 // \$17 // For tickets and info: [tickets.erieareader.com](http://tickets.erieareader.com)



Join the folks at Dramashop in April for a uniquely local slate of performances. With seven original plays and shorts written, directed, and performed by area talent, the Originals Festival is a celebration of Erie’s brightest in theater.



## Smilo & the Ghost Heating Up for Album Release

Thanks to crowdfunding, *Twang & Fire* debuts at the 10/20 Collective

**SATURDAY, APR. 13**

One of Erie's best-loved bands is gearing up for the release of their third full-length album, and they have a lot of people to thank for it. Smilo & the Ghost, led by the prolific songwriter Tyler Smilo (40 Under 40 Class of 2023) are set to release *Twang & Fire* on Saturday, April 13 at the 10/20 Collective.

This one is a special one. In 2023, the band launched an IndieGogo campaign to fund the album's recording (with the album's original and less snappy title of *Hope & Hurt* in the headline). Over 100 people contributed to the cause, inspired by perks like Smilo's handwritten lyrics, private concerts with the band, cds, and in a Smilo-first, a soon-to-arrive vinyl pressing. "With your help we can create the best album possible" reads the first paragraph of their campaign page.

The band ended up breaking their \$12,000 goal by over \$2,000.

"This is the first time we ever immersed ourselves in the recording process," Smilo noted. "Before, we would go up for a

day or get a 48-hour block and get a hotel or something. But this time we spent an entire week there, just kind of writing as we went. There were some songs that have been staples in the set for a while and we wanted really, really good recordings of them." That place was Suma Recording Studio in Painesville, Ohio with engineer David Alan Shaw. The nearby studio has worked with artists ranging from Fleetwood Mac and B.B. King, Brian Wilson, Yes, and the Black Keys. Now, Smilo & the Ghost is on that client list as well.

Songs for the album were written with the full band in mind and others have evolved through Smilo's solo work. Lately he's been packing houses with his "storytelling" style shows throughout the region, including one in his hometown of Coshocton, Ohio, sharing his personal struggles with drug addiction. He's also been playing at treatment centers throughout the area, and is actively applying for grants to do so even more.

Opening the show will be Josh Travis, who released his full-band debut album

CONTRIBUTED



Local musicians Smilo & the Ghost are set to release their third full-length album, the creation of which was funded by fans of the band. A release show with special guest Josh Travis will be taking place at 10/20 Collective this month.

*Few of Days & Full of Trouble* in September of last year. A perfect pairing of Americana, folk, and alternative country, this is shockingly the first time the two will play together.

"We're just really excited," Smilo admitted. "We're extremely grateful, we could have never afforded the level we were recording at, with that amount of time,

without everybody's contributions." He added that the band is excited to get each and every one of the contributors' perks to them. "We're excited and we want to keep this thing growing in 2024."  
— Nick Warren

7 p.m. // 10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland St. // \$20  
// For tickets and info: [smiloandtheghost.com](http://smiloandtheghost.com)

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## EVENTS

### Erie Philharmonic Brings Theatrical Spirit with Broadway in Concert

Relive stage's most-beloved musical moments at the Warner

**SATURDAY, APR. 13**

The Erie Philharmonic is bringing showbiz back to the Warner Theater with Broadway in Concert, featuring the musical talent of the Erie Philharmonic Chorus and the Erie Junior Philharmonic. Returning to the theatrical spirit of 2021's Rogers and Hammerstein in Concert, Erie musicians will be performing pieces from renowned musicals of the past 80 years.

"Each selection promises to deliver the raw emotion, intricate storytelling and memorable melodies that have made these shows Broadway staples. This concert offers an opportunity to experience the magic of Broadway right here in Erie, blending powerful performances with a cast of Erie's finest performers," the Erie Philharmonic describes. "Whether you've seen these musicals on the big stage or are discovering them for the first time, this program is sure to provide an enchanting, inspiring, and unforgettable evening of musical theater."

The main cast includes Shawn Clerkin, Casey Conrad-Medvis, Brendan Daugherty, Christine Daugherty, Kyle Filbeck, Rachel Freenock, Leah Johnson, Will Steadman, Kate Thiem, Patrick Thiem, Brandon Vogt, and Devon Yates.

With songs ranging from over eight



decades of Broadway history, these are the showstopping musicals that will be performed during the concert: *Carousel* (1945), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), *A Chorus Line* (1975), *Company* (1979), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979), *Les Miserables* (1980), *Cats* (1981), *Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (1982), *La Cage aux Folles* (1983), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986), *Into the Woods* (1987), *Jekyll & Hyde* (1990), *The Secret Garden* (1991), *Beauty & The Beast* (1994), *Ragtime* (1998), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1999), *Wicked* (2003), and *Shrek: The Musical* (2008). —Thomas Taylor

Saturday, Apr. 13 at 8 p.m., Sunday, Apr. 14 at 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$17-\$66

// For tickets and info: [eriephil.org](http://eriephil.org)

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## EVENTS

### Inaugural Rainbow Fest Showcases Spectrum of Talent

Celebrate the creative depth of the LGBTQIA+ community at Basement Transmissions

SUNDAY, APR. 13

Calling all members and allies of the LGBTQIA+ community: the first Rainbow Fest is happening in Erie this month. Presented by OddCity Entertainment, the full-day event will take place at Basement Transmissions starting at noon.

When creating the event, organizer Cypher Eihwaz wanted to create a space in which all members of the LGBTQIA+ community could feel welcome, both in the audience and on stage. "I feel a lot of female-presenting, trans, and non-binary people tend to get excluded [from certain events and show types], so we thought Erie needed a place for those performers to shine," they said.

Open to all ages during the day, the event will feature live music, drag performances, food, speakers (including Riana Czech, Susannah Faulkner, and the PA Equality Project), vendors, and informational booths. Face painting, makeup, and balloon animals will be available

for kids (or kids-at-heart) throughout the day, with those 17 and under requiring adult accompaniment after 8 p.m.

Eighteen musical performances are scheduled to take place throughout the entire event, featuring both local favorites and out-of-town talent. Odd Atrocity, Nancy Boys, and Dumpster Garden are among the local bands featured, with visiting acts including Spirit Board, Lylyth, Psych Ward Grips, and Platonic Boyfriends.

Central Outreach will also be on site providing STD tests as well as additional healthcare resources. There will also be a voter registration booth, which will feature information on which local candidates will be the best picks when it comes to supporting the queer community.

All proceeds from the event will benefit the LGBT Funds of the Erie Community Foundation, with additional donations of the following items being accepted at the door: non-perishable food items,



The crew from OddCity Entertainment have organized a full day of entertainment, arts, activities, and information celebrating and supporting the local LGBTQIA+ community. This family friendly event will take place at Basement Transmissions and will feature local acts alongside out of town performers.

binders, transgender/transitional products, and clothes. — Ally Kutz

Doors at noon // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // All ages (with adult guardian), parental discretion after 9 p.m. // \$10-\$20 // For tickets and more information, including all of the performances scheduled visit: [facebook.com/oddcityentertainment](https://facebook.com/oddcityentertainment)

### Decision Height Chronicles Women's Airforce Legacy

WASP women featured in all-female PACA production

PREMIERING FRIDAY APR. 19

During World War II, a civilian organization called Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) was established. These women were classified as non-military, civil service employees, but they played a key role in the success of the war by volunteering to fly planes, so as to free up men for combat roles. Their service was remarkable, many of them choosing to leave their homes and children to come to the aid of the country, back when most women lacked agency in deciding their life's direction.

*Decision Height* (which is an aeronautical term), was written by Meredith Dayna Levy in 2014 and shines a spotlight on these important women. Lisa Simonian, director of the local production of this play coming to PACA in April, feels like the stories of the WASP women are important to tell: "The women of *Decision Height* bond in a sisterhood to succeed, and they support each other through thick and thin. It is a wonderful story of empowerment, friendship, and love. I think these themes are forever relevant."

The play's cast and production team consists totally of women and Simoni-

DIGIT DAVE SCHROEDER



The latest production coming to PACA, *Decision Height* is about a group of female Air Force service pilots during World War II. Director Lisa Simonian points out that the themes of sisterhood, empowerment, friendship, and love make this play relevant to any time period.

an is grateful that it came together so seamlessly. The assistant director for *Decision Height* is Gretchen Knapp, who is a recent transplant to the Erie theater scene, but who brings invaluable experience with her, having previously run her own production company in New York City. Simonian reflects, "This cast is amazing and each member fits their role perfectly. I find it hilarious that I managed to get a cast whose personalities match their characters. Many in the cast will be recognized by Erie theater audiences, with a few great new actors thrown in. This is an ensemble cast and the women are working so well together and bringing such a great vibe to the stage."

The WASP program was never fully recognized for its service during World War II as a military operation. In fact, it wasn't until 1977 that WASP service was officially designated as active duty and therefore entitled to veteran's benefits. Simonian is proud to enlighten audiences about the services of these women, "This is an incredible program that very few have heard about. I would strongly encourage folks to take a trip back to the 1940s and see this amazing piece for themselves." — Erin Phillips

Fridays and Saturdays through May 4 at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Apr. 25 at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, May 5 at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // \$20 // For tickets and info: [tickets.eriereader.com](http://tickets.eriereader.com)



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# MINI GOLF TOURNAMENT

Oliver's Bayfront Mini Golf | May 19

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## EVENTS

### Flagship City Comedy Fest Builds a Community Around Comedy in Erie

Big comedians set to bring bigger laughs to venues across the city

**BEGINNING THURSDAY, APR. 25**

Get ready to have your sides split during the Flagship City Comedy Fest, taking place in a number of local venues across the Erie area from April 25 through 28. Over the span of four days, this uproarious event is set to showcase some of the nation's top comedic talent while celebrating Erie's vibrant comedy culture and community spirit.

"The Flagship City Comedy Fest was created to bring in talented comics from all over the country and show them how awesome Erie can be," says co-founder and organizer Anthony Morelli (Erie's 40 Under 40 Class of 2022). And of talented comics, we have plenty; headlining this year's fest are Reena Calm, Steve Wrigley, Derek Sheen, Sean Patton, and Luke Null. Embracing Erie's diversity, the fest will feature shows in various venues including Room 33, Calamari's, 10/20 Collective, the Erie Playhouse, and The Zone, among others.

In addition to well-known comedians like Sean Patton headlining at the Erie Playhouse, the festival has several one-of-a-kind shows planned for the festival,

like a brunch set hosted by local drag queen Rebecca Mae at The Zone and a wild Sunday afternoon at Andromeda Studios where select comics will be getting tattooed during their act.

Celebrating local talent is a key focus, with rising stars like Amanda Daniels, Gabi Catrabone, Jim Franks, Brian Bailey, Nicole Benedi, and Jamie Benedi taking the stage.

"Having the Flagship City Comedy Fest really brings light to the art of comedy and how Erie is building [its own community]," continues Morelli. But more than anything, he is filled with gratitude.

"We are blown away by the local support. You can grab tickets off our website and enjoy discounts and special offers from our generous sponsors," says Morelli. Since its debut last year, the festival has received overwhelming support from the local community, with businesses like A Compassionate Hart Massage Therapy, the Erie SeaWolves, and others stepping up to sponsor and collaborate.

You won't want to miss out on the unique laughter, camaraderie, and sheer

CONTRIBUTED



The Flagship City Comedy Fest will feature four days of comedy scheduled at a variety of local venues. Five headlining out-of-town acts including (top, from left) Luke Null, Derek Sheen, (center) Reena Calm, (bottom from left) Steve Wrigley, and Sean Patton will perform alongside local talent.

hilarity of this year's Flagship City Comedy Fest. — Aaron Mook

Thursday, Apr. 25 through Sunday, Apr. 28 // Various times and venues // Free-\$30 // For tickets and info: [tickets.eriereader.com](http://tickets.eriereader.com) or [flagshipcitycomedyfest.com](http://flagshipcitycomedyfest.com)

### Announcing The Erie Reader Book Club

In partnership with Werner Books and welcoming to all Reader readers

**BEGINNING SUNDAY, APR. 28**

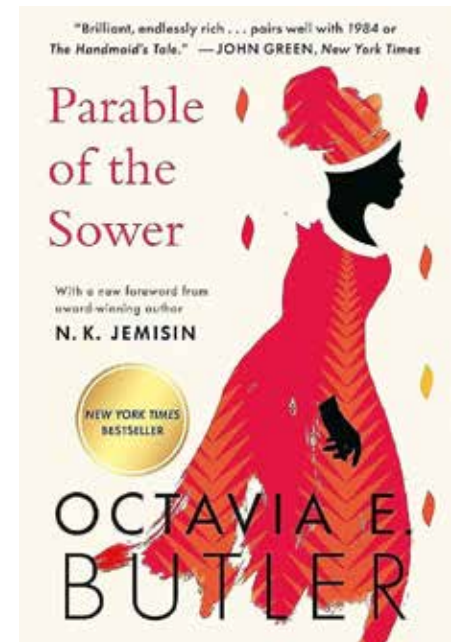
It comes as no surprise that the folks at the Erie Reader have become pretty big fans of the folks at Werner Books & Coffee (owners Kyle Churman and Lauren Shoemaker were both represented in 2023's 40 Under 40 Class and their business won multiple Best of Erie categories in 2023, including Best Local Bookstore). It was, therefore, a logical next step for the Reader and Werner to collaborate, and we're doing so starting in April as we launch the Erie Reader Book Club, giving us an opportunity to engage with our Reader readers outside of the pages of our publication.

Each month a book will be chosen by the group that corresponds with that month's issue theme and will be announced at the beginning of the publication cycle. The club will meet on the last Sunday of each month at 3 p.m. at Werner Books and Coffee. The discussion will be led by our insightful book reviewer Ally Kutz and our managing editor Erin Phillips. Everyone who would like to attend is

welcome: those who are fans of the Reader, those who write, edit, or create art for the Reader, or those who simply enjoy reading a great book and discussing it with thoughtful, interesting people. It will be a casual discussion with some predetermined discussion topics, but we will ultimately go where the book leads us.

For April, our Earth Day issue, and the inaugural book club meeting, the selection is *The Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler. This book, written by the first published Black female science fiction writer, takes place on a post-apocalyptic Earth that has been heavily affected by climate change and social inequality. Although the book was written in the early '90s, it actually takes place in the year 2024, making it particularly poignant in terms of the current climate disaster and devastating social inequality we're actually experiencing today.

Keep an eye on our social media platforms for more information on discussion topics, event information, and updates. Copies of the book are available

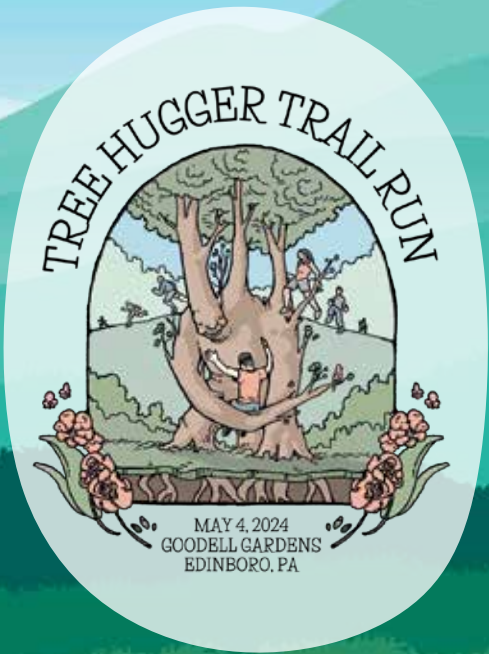


to purchase at Werner Books. We hope you'll join us this month and beyond. — Erin Phillips

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## EVENTS

### Young Adult Author Tiffany D. Jackson Reinvents Genre Tropes

Bestselling novelist headlines Penn State Behrend's upcoming gender conference

By: Dan Schank

As a parent of two small children, I am amazed by the expanding world of high-quality literature for young people. Gone are the days where bookish students had Madeleine L'Engle, C.S. Lewis, and little else to choose from. If you venture into Pressed or Werner Books these days, you'll find a customized array of stories and perspectives for kids of all ages. And Young Adult (YA) author Tiffany D. Jackson exemplifies this literary transformation.

Known for her inventive approach to genre, Jackson has been releasing a novel on an almost yearly basis since 2017. Her first book *Allegedly* tells a gritty story about child care, foster care, abuse, and mental illness. Her second, *Monday's Not Coming*, uses tropes from the mystery genre to explore the often-neglected real-life cases of missing Black girls — who have disappeared with alarming regularity in recent years. Jackson's next two books, 2019's *Let Me Hear a Rhyme* and 2020's *Grown*, examine the music industry — with the latter taking loose inspiration from the allegations surrounding R&B star R. Kelly.

More recently, Jackson has turned to the horror genre to tell stories about mental illness, gentrification, racism, and cultural history. 2021's *White Smoke*

is technically a haunted house narrative, but she uses this template to explore social themes like racial subjugation, economic disenfranchisement, and gentrification. Her most recent book, 2022's *The Weight of Blood*, is a loose re-imagining of Stephen King's *Carrie*, involving a mixed-race protagonist whose bigoted father forces her to "pass" for a white girl in small-town Georgia.

This New York Times bestselling author is the keynote speaker for Penn State Behrend's annual Gender Conference, which will take place during the second week of April. This year's theme is "Art and Activism," so expect Jackson to touch on how she uses story-telling to expand social consciousness. We live in a world where teenagers can struggle to find stories that speak to their experiences. With her focus on social media, parent/child conflicts, generational trauma, and mental illness, Jackson provides them with narratives that speak to their fears and ambitions. —Dan Schank

Keynote speech: Thursday, Apr. 11 at 7 p.m.  
// Penn State Behrend, Reed Union Building #117, 4701 College Dr. // Free and Open to the Public // More information is available here: [pennstatebehrendgenderconference.wordpress.com](http://pennstatebehrendgenderconference.wordpress.com)

CONTRIBUTED



Prolific young adult author Tiffany Jackson will be making a stop at Penn State Behrend during their annual Gender Conference in April. The theme of the conference is "Art and Activism" and Jackson will speak on connecting storytelling with social consciousness.



## CEE Brown's "Growing Apart" Trilogy Brings Fading Relationships Together

A Q&A with Erie's best-known hip-hop artist gives insight to his latest works

By: Nick Warren

In January of 2023, local hip-hop artist CEE Brown released "Growing Apart Pt. 1" on YouTube. Amidst his other work, he subsequently debuted Part 2 in October of 2023, with Part 3 coming out in March of 2024. A thematic series about fading friendships, the three pieces illustrate an all-too-familiar feeling we experience as we grow older. We sat down and talked to him about it.

**Nick Warren (NW):** With the "Growing Apart" trilogy, was that always the plan from the start to write, record, and release them that way?

**CEE Brown (CB):** When I wrote Part 1, I had so much on my heart. But I had no clue that I was going to do a trilogy and what feelings were going to be exuded. I just knew that I had more to say, which is why the first one is titled "Pt.1." I honestly thought that I would be done after Part 2. But as far as the one long-verse format, that was intentional whether I was going to do one song or three.

**NW:** You can hear definitive tonal shifts in each section. Did you feel your perspective change when writing each part?

**CB:** My perspective had deepened with each song. As time passes, I become more appreciative of close relationships. But the more that appreciation isn't reciprocated, the more it hits a sore spot.

**NW:** The first line is talking directly about death. How do you compare literal death with the death of a friendship?

**CB:** Sometimes I can't compare. A friendship that ends can hurt worse than a person actually dying. If a person you love is still alive but doesn't reach out to you, it stings because they're not taking the chance to continue that bond while they still can. With death, a person can leave this world with you both knowing that you tried and cared for one another. That alone can help heal.

**NW:** How was working with Crew Life? How many videos have you done with them altogether?

**CB:** Working with Crew Life has always been a blast! Lately, I've only been working with Dommy Doo of Crew



Local hip-hop artist CEE Brown gets personal in his latest series of releases, which came out in three distinct parts highlighting different emotional and personal perspectives. These videos were conceived and produced in a collaborative effort with Crew Life.

Life because his partner Devon Herbele shoots visuals out of town.

Both Dommy and Devon trust me creatively and vice versa. I don't feel held back or pressured working with them. Collectively, we have done over 20 videos.

**NW:** Which parts of the visuals were your idea vs theirs?

**CB:** For the "Growing Apart" series, Dommy shot and edited each video. Part 1 was my idea thematically. Part 2 mostly stems from Dommy with the location, angles, and effects. I only added one idea. Part 3 is a collaborative effort.

**NW:** As we get older, "growing apart" seems to happen more and more. In Part 3 you seem to have some advice for maintaining those relationships, can you detail that?

**CB:** Part 3 is definitely the most philosophical one. If you can't take five seconds out of your day to see how someone is doing, then that says enough about your character. Why wait on getting together or making a call? Why wait on texting someone back? Is it that strenuous? Stay in touch. Make plans. Have a tradition amongst each other. Check up on your people because they might be fighting a war that you know nothing about. Remember why and how you became close. Remember who you

already lost and how they can't come back. But, people make time for who they want to make time for. No one is that busy. No one.

**NW:** Do you hope that people you have grown apart from see these videos? If so, what do you want them to take away from that?

**CB:** I absolutely want them to, even if I lose them more than I already have! I'm sowing a seed. I want people to take away from my videos that we should do better before our time is up. And that can be anytime! With "Growing Apart," I'm taking everyone to trial for the betterment of our relationship.

**NW:** What is one time when you feel you let someone down as a friend?

**CB:** There was a time when I had let a lot of people down simultaneously. I had sent a mass text to folks explaining that I wanted to take myself out. It was so selfish but I couldn't see that. Thank God that I'm still here, and I am immensely sorry to everyone that had to go through that.

Go to [youtube.com/@CEEBrown](https://youtube.com/@CEEBrown) to view these videos and more. Look for CEE Brown's contributions in the Erie Reader championing Erie's hip-hop music/culture and mental health.



## Erie County Human Relations Commission

The Erie County Human Relations Commission (ECHRC) works to eliminate discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations through identification, consultation, and investigation of complaints.

- The ECHRC provides a system of equal justice for employer-employee, landlord-tenant, business-patron, and lending institution-homebuyer.

ECHRC's Ordinance makes it unlawful to discriminate against protected classes that include:

- Race; Color; Family Status; Religious Creed; Ancestry; Age; Sex; National Origin; Sexual Orientation; Disability; Gender Identity; Criminal History; and Source of Income.



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## Gem City Style: April 2023 Earth Day

An interview with PennFuture's Jenny Tompkins

By: Jessica Hunter

This month, I spoke with and photographed the campaign manager for clean water advocacy at PennFuture (a nonprofit focusing on a clean energy economy and protecting air, water, land, and sustainable communities in Pennsylvania and beyond), Jenny Tompkins, who also contributed an op-ed to the Reader this month in honor of Earth Day.

**Jessica Hunter (JH):** Jenny, tell us a little bit about yourself and a brief introduction to your role as PennFuture's campaign manager for clean water advocacy.

**Jenny Tompkins (JT):** Originally from upstate New York in the Lake Ontario Watershed, I spent long summer lake days swimming, boating, and fishing. My personal connection to water fostered a sense of responsibility to protect it. Over my 30 years of life, I've also seen firsthand how our society and systems negatively impacted the incredible freshwater systems I grew up in and around. I knew I wanted to do something about that.

I now call the Erie Region home after living in NWPA for the last decade. I work daily to protect the Pennsylvania Lake Erie Watershed as PennFuture's campaign manager for clean water advocacy. In my role, I try to help everyone, particularly elected officials and decision-makers, understand what they can do to protect Lake Erie and her watershed communities. PennFuture is also a watchdog on policy decisions that threaten our water and will defend our environment in the courts.

I try to get to the water as much as possible in my free time, preferably in a kayak or canoe. I also enjoy hikes with my husband and two rescue pups, gardening, traveling, and trying new recipes for Sunday meal prep.

**JH:** It is so important to have community members in the Lake Erie region connect with PennFuture. How do you reach these individuals to help advocate and protect our water resources?

**JT:** I am thankful for our Erie region partners for their collaboration and support. A dozen area nonprofit groups signed on to our Erie campaign, recognizing we reach more people about shared concerns when we work together. Community events, led by PennFuture and our partners, are key spaces to connect with new folks who care about our watershed. This Earth Month and

JESSICA HUNTER



Jenny Tompkins, campaign manager for clean water advocacy at PennFuture, speaks to Jessica Hunter about her connection to conservation, community involvement and advocacy, working with governments, and the dire importance of keeping our waterways clean.

throughout the year, PennFuture tables or presents at events. Anyone can become an environmental advocate, so stop to say hello, get connected to our work, and share why you care about protecting Lake Erie!

Media outlets like the Erie Reader also provide a critical space to engage concerned Erieites. I often connect with like-minded advocates at public hearings and meetings. Of course, email and social media are the most important ways we encourage supporters to take action and tell decision-makers how they feel. Visit [pennfuture.org/subscribe](http://pennfuture.org/subscribe) to keep up with ways to engage in clean water advocacy.

**JH:** Our most important asset is Lake Erie. Clean water is the heart of the regional economy, overall health, and future. What types of threats are we facing if we do not address the issues immediately?

**JT:** Our health is tied to that of our waterways. A majority of Erie County residents rely on Lake Erie for drinking water. Research is increasingly linking the synthetic chemicals in plastics to poor health outcomes. Increasingly severe weather caused by climate change, including flooding, puts our critical infrastructure and homes at risk and costs us more in insurance premiums and repairs.

Regional tourism, centered on the lake,

generates more than \$1 billion in annual revenue. Harmful algal blooms and bacterial pollution threaten the safety of our local beaches and parks. Increasing water temperatures lower water oxygen levels that our coldwater fish species depend on, challenging our vital recreational fishing industry.

Inequity and environmental racism, unfortunately, tie all of these issues together. The great inequity faced by communities of color and people in poverty in Erie County is the largest obstacle to our region's reinvention of itself. The threats to our watershed also disproportionately impact people in these communities. Intentionally investing in communities more harmed by climate change, toxic pollution, and outdated infrastructure, will benefit all Erieites. To compete for the economic investments we seek, committing to healthier people and places will draw investors who share these values.

Addressing these challenges is critical to a healthier and more equitable future. A threat we face if we do not act is perpetuating the status quo.

**JH:** Your role requires you to lobby for policies at all levels of government to protect the Pennsylvania Lake Erie Watershed. What hurdles do you face finding representation for the Lake Erie region, and what are you doing to over-

come them?

**JT:** Pennsylvania's small relative share of the entire Great Lakes Watershed (500 of 295,000 square miles) and Erie County's geographic isolation from other commonwealth population centers are political barriers that Erieites are well aware of. One of the goals of PennFuture's clean water work is to shorten the distance of Erie between Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. Regional partnerships recognizing common goals while providing space to advocate for Erie-specific issues become essential.

PennFuture is the Pennsylvania State Lead for the Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition (HOW Coalition) which unites water advocates in all eight Great Lakes states around federal advocacy opportunities, including annual lobby days in Washington. The HOW Coalition also highlights the local successes of advocacy groups and creates spaces to learn from one another. Similarly, at the state level, groups from the Lake Erie, Ohio River, Chesapeake Bay, and Delaware River watersheds coordinate on policy advocacy. Letting legislators know how Erie is impacted by overarching clean water issues, and sharing stories of how constituents are impacted, challenges those decision-makers to work to build their own coalitions.

**JH:** How are you measuring the impact



## FEATURE

of your work? What does a successful campaign look like for you?

**JT:** In alignment with our recommendations, clean water action by leaders is one key part of a successful campaign. Creating and maintaining momentum is important. Some highlights impacting Erie include:

- The passage of a City of Erie storm-water fee ordinance
- Millcreek Township's sustainability department expansion
- Creation of the PA Clean Streams Fund, the first fund dedicated to clean water
- Passage of the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Defending against attempts to reduce or limit progress is also important. Examples are speaking against attempts to limit public engagement in decision-making, reduce clean water investments, and limit regulatory monitoring and enforcement.

PennFuture also values the number of organizations we partner with, individuals we reach through events and media, and those who take action to protect our waterways.

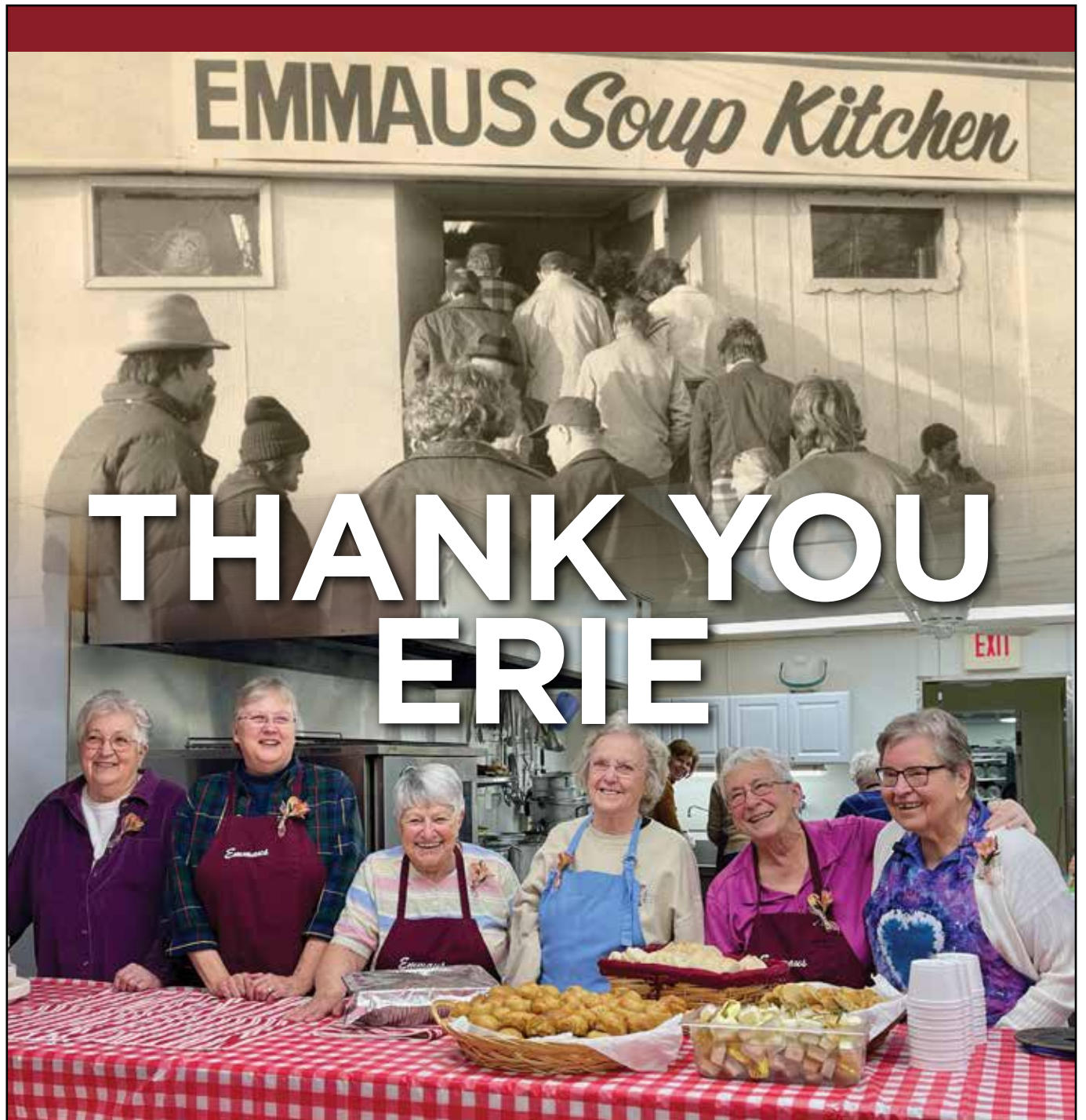
**JH:** What is your favorite water activity in the Lake Erie region? How can fellow citizens get involved to protect these types of activities in the future?

**JT:** Kayaking! Although, I've recently had opportunities to snorkel some of our regional waterways, which rekindled my love for being face-to-face (literally) with our amazing aquatic communities. To keep our waterways safe for these recreational activities, one of the most important things you can start with is to be civically engaged. Registering and voting in each election for candidates committed to environmental protection is so important. Individual behavior matters in your local community, but only systemic change will tackle these challenges at the necessary pace.

Lastly, because I know the formula works, get young people into and near waterways. It is essential to build a sense of stewardship in new generations and improve youth mental and physical health. Expanding access for kids who would otherwise face greater obstacles to water is even more important.

To learn more about PennFuture and their work in throughout Erie and Pennsylvania, visit [pennfuture.org](http://pennfuture.org)

Jessica Hunter can be found at [jessicahunterphotos.com](http://jessicahunterphotos.com)



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**Beaver Fever**

*Hundreds of Beavers* is gleeful, absurdist entertainment

★★★★★

One of the biggest joys of venturing out to the movie theater is the attempt to find something that you never would have expected to see. Something so uniquely original and so confident in its ability to entertain that audiences are just immediately entranced. It's a rare feat and it is exactly what makes Mike Cheslik's crowd-pleaser *Hundreds of Beavers* so special. Not since *A Town Called Panic!* or Takashi Miike's *The Happiness of the Katakuris* has a film had so much fun just reveling in the absurd rules of its own universe and even though it slightly overstays its welcome, one would be hard pressed to find a more entertaining movie.

In the American Midwest of the 19th century, failed applejack salesman Jean Kayak (Ryland Brickson Cole Tews) tries his hand at fur trapping. But when he becomes smitten with a merchant's daughter (Olivia Graves), he is tasked with obtaining



the pelts of hundreds of beavers to earn her father's (Doug Mancheski) approval and win her hand in marriage.

Cheslik is not the least bit concerned with anything relating to realism and instead gives us a dialogue-free adventure in which all animal characters are played by actors in costumes. The result is like Buster Keaton by way of Looney Tunes presented as a 1990s graphical adventure video game. In doing so, all the simple entertainment found in those genres is blasted on-screen for the entire runtime. He isn't trying for any

grand statement or big idea, but if the purpose of movies is primarily to have a good time, this may just be one of the best films in years. *Hundreds of Beavers* is currently playing in select theaters but comes soon to streaming. Look for it! — Forest Taylor

*Directed by Mike Cheslik // Written by Cheslik and Ryland Brickson Cole Tews // Starring Ryland Brickson Cole Tews, Wes Tank, Olivia Graves, Doug Mancheski, Luis Rico, Jessica Knap, Brendan Steere, Jon Truei, and Mike Cheslik // SRH // 108 minutes // Unrated ('PG' equivalent)*

**Satanic Panic**

*Late Night with the Devil* proves an interesting experiment, but little else

★★★

The term "analog horror" has really taken off in the last five years. The use of lo-fi, archaic video quality combined with disturbing and cryptic symbolism found its origins in online "creepypasta" but has risen to prominence in film with the unexpected success of *Skinamarink*.

This aesthetic is clearly what brothers Cameron and Colin Cairnes are striving for with their new film *Late Night with the Devil* and while the style makes for an interesting commentary on the exploitative nature of 20th century talk shows, as a horror film it leaves much to be desired.

Presented as the unaired Halloween episode of a struggling late night talk show in 1977, host Jack Delroy (David Dastmalchian) promises a spooky good time when he interviews a psychic (Fayssal Bazzi), a paranormal debunker (Ian Bliss doing a terrific James Randi impersonation), and, most importantly, a parapsychologist (Laura Gordon) and a young girl (Ingrid Torelli) claiming to be a vessel for demonic entities. The show takes a horrifying turn when



these guests turn out to be more than expected.

The filmmakers do a great job capturing the look and feel of 1970s television with the show itself, but the behind-the-scenes footage feels too staged to be authentic. And when the horror elements finally arrive, they are not as impactful as they could be and some visual effects look terribly dated (not surprising considering the film's budget, but it's still disappointing). The trashy television stuff is interesting but goes on so long that the scares

almost feel like an afterthought. Ultimately the film is a nice experiment, but I wish they could have taken things further. *Late Night with the Devil* is currently in theaters and comes to Shudder next month. — Forest Taylor

*Written and directed by: Cameron and Colin Cairnes // Starring: David Dastmalchian, Laura Gordon, Ian Bliss, Fayssal Bazzi, Ingrid Torelli, Rhys Auteri, Georgina Haig, Josh Quong Tart, Steve Mouzakis, and Michael Ironside // Shudder // 93 minutes // Rated R*

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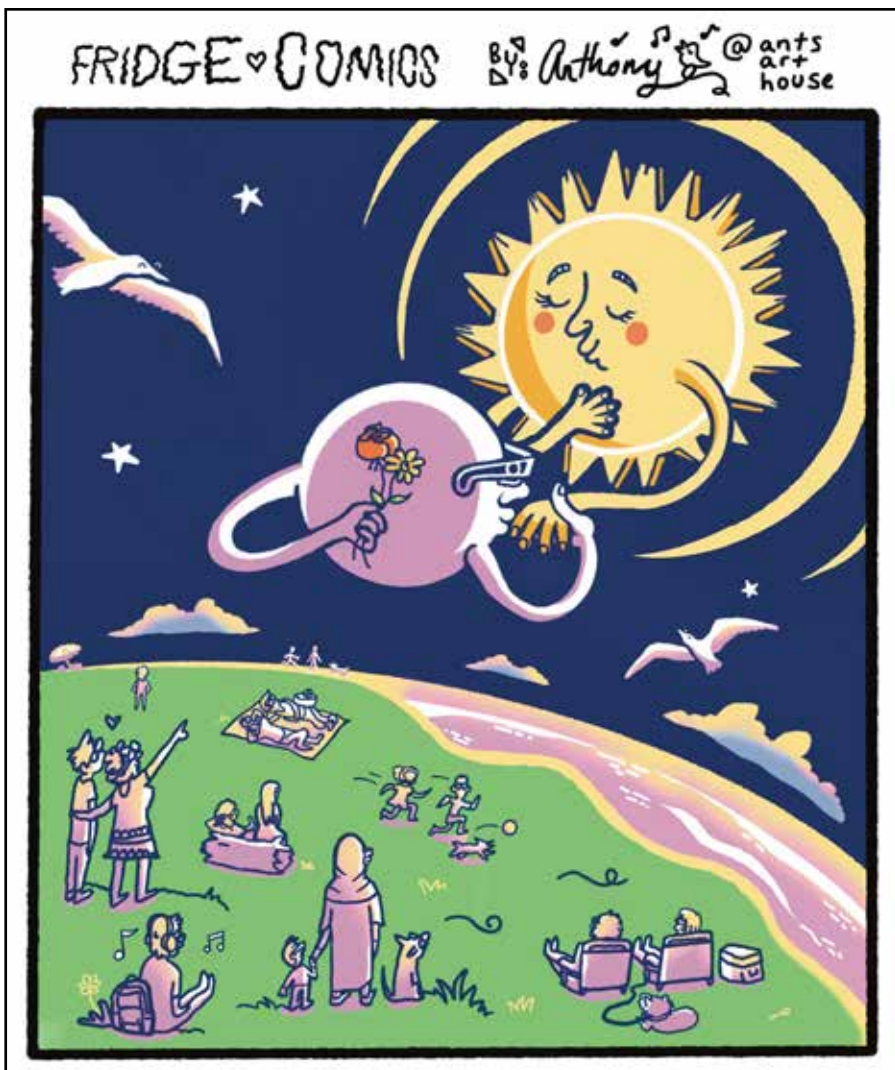
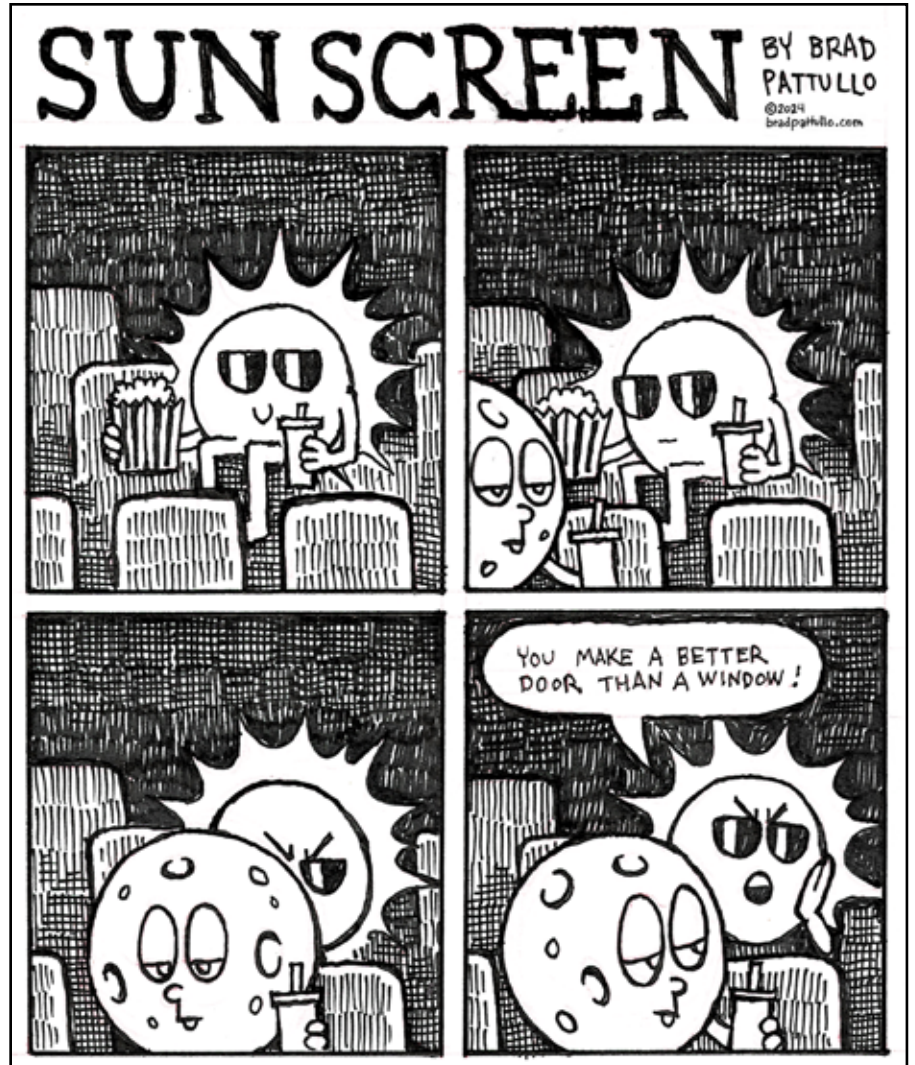
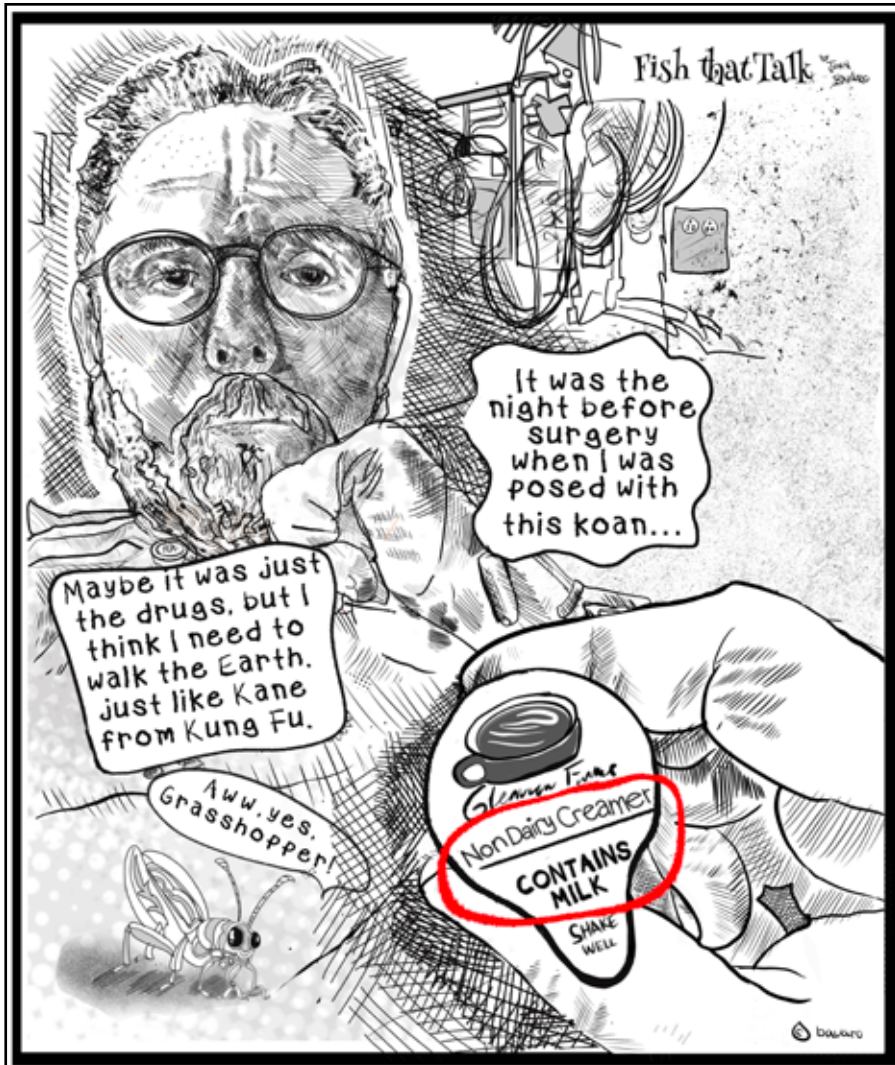


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**Elle Taylor**  
*See the Sun*  
 Self-Released  
 ★★★★★

It's been a little over two years since multifaceted local talent Elle Taylor released her first collection of



songs, but time seems to move differently in her world — after all, they say you have your whole life to write your first record, and that one was affectionately titled *Taken Me A While*. Fortunately, she hasn't seemed to have lost any momentum with *See the Sun*, a new album filled with singles and re-recordings of demos she's been previewing since the summer of 2022.

Alongside Taylor's unique voice and thoughtful writing, what really makes her music stand out is her ability to pull the right collaborators into orbit. The album's title track becomes textured beyond Taylor's usual acoustic arrangements with additions from Larry Wheaton and Ken Tate, the latter also contributing to "Josh's Song (Find Where I Belong)." Considering the heaviness behind a track like that, most will recognize Taylor's songwriting by the undeniable brightness underlining album highlights like "I Love You Yet" and "A Couple Saturdays." There's a spark here that simply cannot be manufactured, and as long as Taylor and co. continue to tap into the charm of her worldview, they shouldn't run out of stories to share anytime soon.  
 — Aaron Mook

**Yard Act**  
*Where's My Utopia?*  
 Island Records  
 ★★★★★

Coming two years after breaking into the post-punk sphere with *The Overload*, Leeds-based rock band Yard



Act returned in March with *Where's My Utopia?* Described as a free-formed follow-up by band frontman James Smith, the group weaves pop and disco sensibilities into their formative sound. A clear example of this mix is the record's lead single "Dream Job." A punchy and driving beat backs a singalong chorus and bridge.

Like most sophomore studio albums, Yard Act uses its larger stage to get cynical and reflective. Smith's lyrics are rife with social commentary surrounding the music industry and consumerism. Songs like "We Make Hits" and "Fizzy Fish" serve as direct cries against the downsides of groupthink and selling out.

However, the lyrics also serve as meditations on the internal.

"Down by the Stream" starts as a retelling of a childhood story before it quickly shifts into a rumination on how Smith and others relentlessly teased their peer Jono for being an immigrant. The track ends with Smith apologizing to Jono for his actions, admitting that he wishes he would have done something when it mattered.

*Where's My Utopia?* is a rallying cry for societal introspection and action.  
 — Nathaniel Clark

**Kim Gordon**  
*The Collective*  
 Matador Records 2024  
 ★★★★★

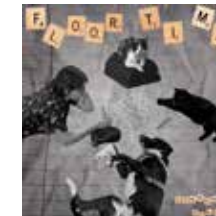
Kim Gordon exists in dualities — aloof and immediate, transgressive and futuristic, industrial and organic. The bassist/vocalist of seminal band Sonic Youth



secured her own relevance years ago in side projects like The Harry Crews and Free Kitten. Within *The Collective*, her second solo album, she again collaborates with producer Justin Raisen (John Cale, Charli XCX, Yeah Yeah Yeahs) who creates the tracks' decayed trap beats which are abrasive, dissenting, and raw. Imagine the distorted bass of a passing can-muffled Honda shaking your windows. They isolate and overwhelm. Yet Gordon's vocals drone and soothe. Her voice is iconic and provocative. She utilizes observations and list-making in lieu of traditional lyrics as in "Bye Bye." The difficulty has always been in distinguishing if Gordon embraces popular trends or creates parodies of them. She is vulgar and esoteric — the rainbow in the pool of spilt motor oil. "Treehouse" invokes the sparse ghosts of Martin Rev and Alan Vega. "The Believers" multi-tracking harkens back to Wax Trax artists like Jim Thurwell. Overall, this release swings between creative hip-hop like Company Flow and back to the tribal feel of her own "Burning Spear." This album is definitely not vanilla, but highly enjoyable for all who can take it.  
 —Melissa Sullivan Shimek

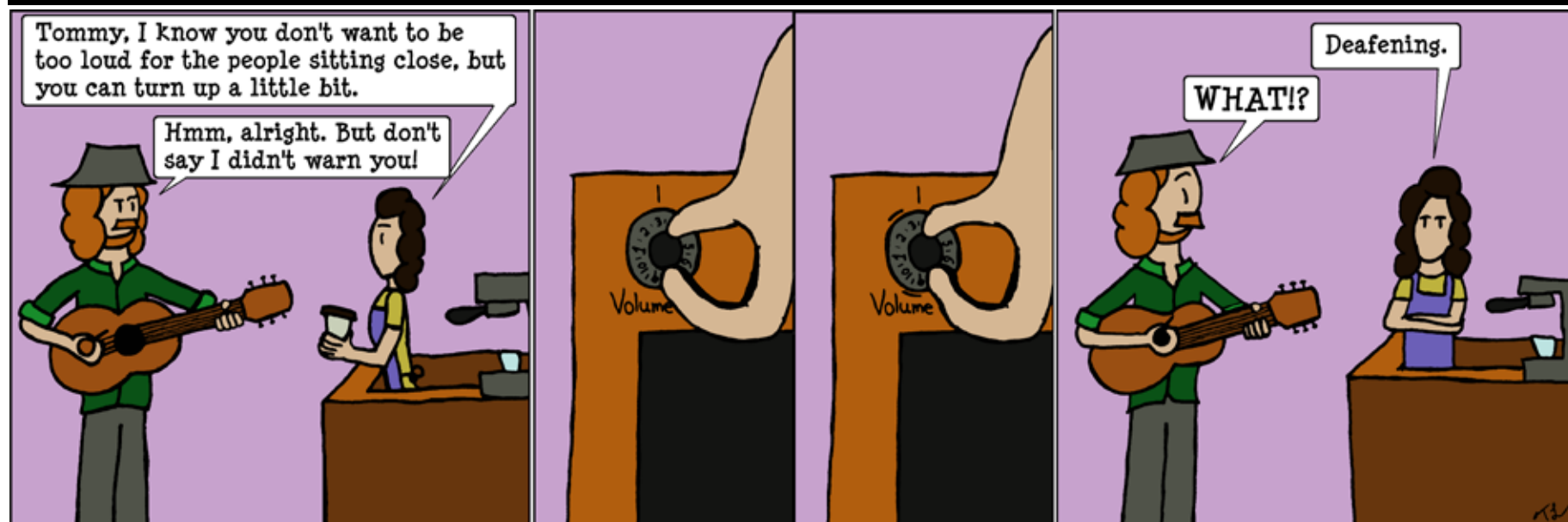
**Common Spence**  
*Floor Time*  
 Self-released  
 ★★★★★

The debut EP from Erie-based singer-songwriter Common Spence comes in strong. With so



many thoughts being tossed out at once, it may overwhelm weaker listeners, but it's utterly thrilling to this one. The opening track "no meds :(" starts out like an ADHD preamble of sorts, a stream-of-consciousness listing filled with detail, nuance, and dark humor. Spencer's work exists along the continuum of creators like AJJ, Kate Micucci, Phranc, and Mal Blum, a cross-section of artists capable of sort of frantic beauty in self-analysis. The album's slower and more melodic tracks like "long distance lovesickness" and "hit the bottom" show a different side of Spencer's work, with some breathing room that lets the listener take in their voice, one filled with sympathy and knowledge beyond their years. Produced by Sarah Haggerty, the production is perfectly sparse and exactly what's needed for such an intimate set. As the closing and titular track returns to the nearly breathless delivery of the opener, it's evenly bookended. One of the brightest new songwriters to come along in years, Common Spence is an artist to watch, and one that could become extremely important to a certain swath of fans.  
 — Nick Warren

TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK







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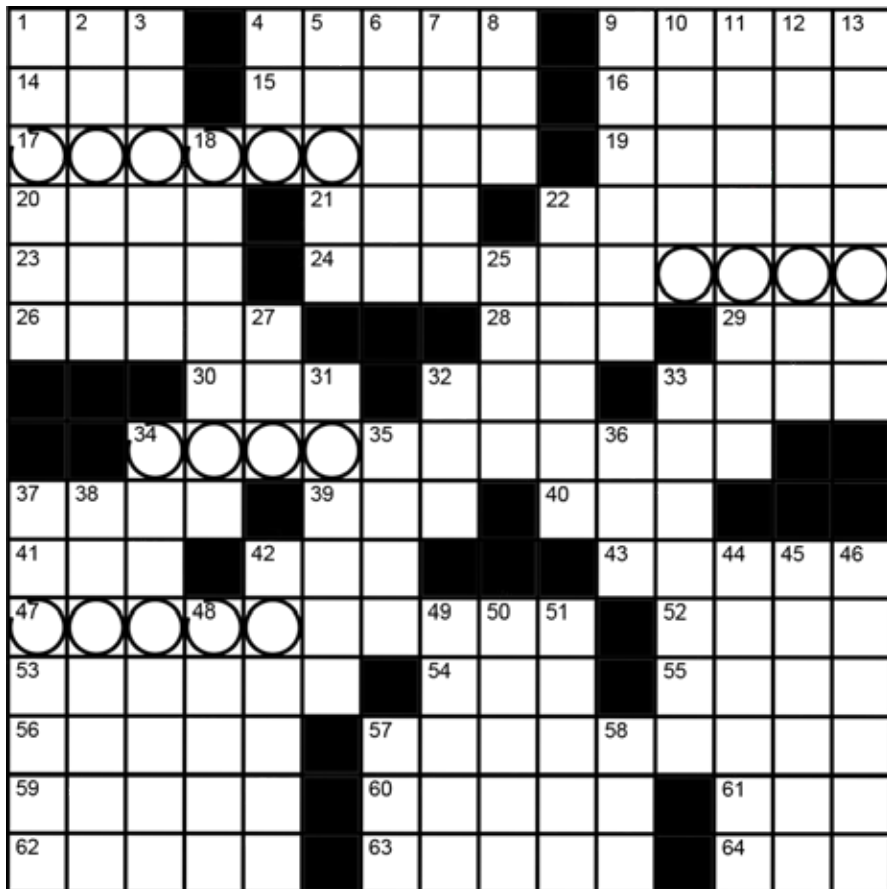
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## Across

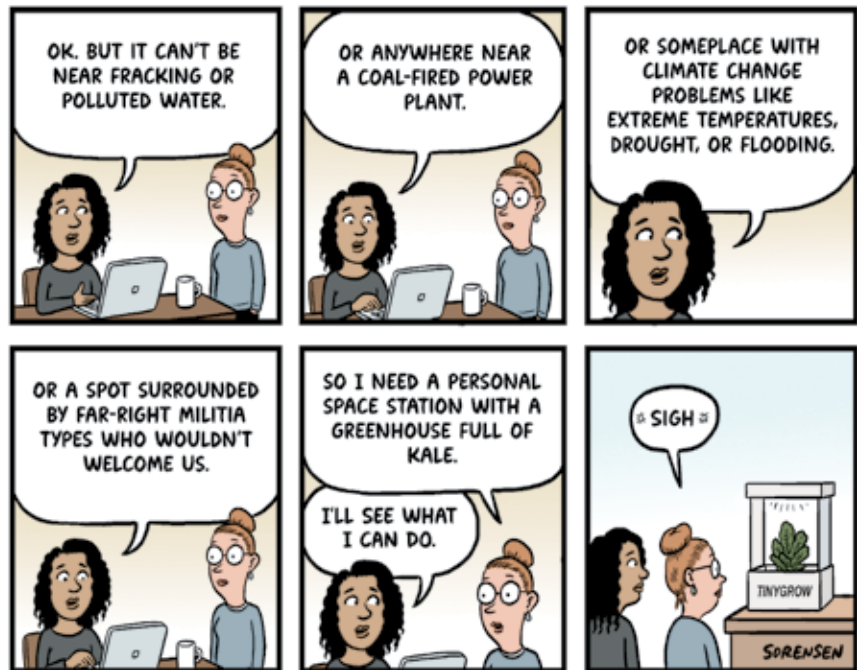
1. 1986-2001 Earth orbiter
4. Really bothered
9. Enliven
14. Suffix with labyrinth
15. Froths
16. QB protectors, collectively
17. 1990 Warrant hit
19. "Go ahead, \_\_\_ you!"
20. Hindu goddess of power
21. Canon SLR camera
22. Soccer score after the first goal
23. Oliver's lover in "Call Me by Your Name"
24. 2000 Sting hit
26. Film in which Streisand plays a yeshiva boy
28. \_\_\_ Haaland, Biden's Secretary of the Interior
29. Plop or plunk preceder
30. The "G" in a G&T
32. Apt name of one of the characters on the animated show "Bubble Guppies"
33. Chick tenders
34. 1967 Rolling Stones hit
37. FBI agent, informally
39. 1980s TV star whose haircut was inspired by Mandinka warriors
40. "A" in German 101?
41. River islet

## Down

1. Figure around which Pluto orbits?
2. Clinton said he didn't do it
3. Successfully lure
4. What one of the Olympic rings represents: Abbr.
5. Played (with)
6. "The Pit and the Pendulum" author, in brief
7. A little off
8. Mao \_\_\_-tung

9. End of a figurative journey
10. Church leader
11. One of 52 whites and 36 blacks
12. Still below the horizon
13. Utensils for potatoes
18. Tear gas weapon
22. Ultimatum words
25. Falco of "The Sopranos"
27. Women's \_\_\_
31. Mythological maidens
32. "Trust your \_\_\_"
33. With minimal effort
34. Like constitutional amendments
35. Destiny's Child, e.g.
36. Archaeologist's place
37. Dolce's partner in fashion
38. Entangled by
42. "Sure, if that's how you feel ..."
44. Loves to bits
45. Country bumpkins
46. Had trouble with, as icy roads
48. Tech giant that joined the Dow Jones Industrial Average in 2009
49. Heep of "David Copperfield"
50. Gregor of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis"
51. TV sports awards
57. Jiffy
58. Back muscle, informally

## The Dirty Food Dilemma



## Answers to last puzzle





# CALENDAR

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## Wed 4/03

**Trivia Night with Erie Roller Derby**  
@ 6pm / \$40  
The Brewerie at Union Station, 123 West 14th Street

## Thu 4/04

**Jim Lang RaceDay Certification**  
@ 7:45pm  
1 Peninsula Drive

## Fri 4/05

### Featured



**Mungion w/ Phunkademic at the King's Rook Club (21+)**  
@ 9pm / \$15  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



## Sat 4/06

**Run for Parkinsons**  
@ 8am / \$200-\$200  
1 Peninsula Dr, Rotary Pavilion

**Erie Reptile Expo April 6th 2024**  
@ 10am / \$6  
JPT Event Center, 2319 West 38th Street. pghrep tileshow@gmail.com

**Pale Blue Pod-Eclipsing Stars Edition**  
@ 5:30pm / \$5-\$15  
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

## Sun 4/07

**MoonGLOW Mile**  
@ 8pm / \$20  
Heard Park, 40 North Lake Street SR-89, North East

## Mon 4/08

**Erie BPN Solar Eclipse 5k**  
@ 5am / \$40  
932 W Erie Plaza Dr

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**Eclipse Viewing Party**  
@ 2pm / Free  
Griswold Park, 150 West 14th Street

### Featured



**Eclipse Viewing AFTER PARTY @ FEED**  
@ 4:30pm / \$5-\$15  
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street



## Tue 4/09

**The DNA of Eclipsing Stars: Lunch Break with Alex LoneSav Staley, Dr. Moiya McTier, FEED and EA&C**  
@ 11:30am / \$5-\$15  
FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State Street

## Fri 4/12

**HADES AND THE ONE YEAR WINTER (STAGED READING)**  
@ 7:30pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

## Sat 4/13

**Miles for Missions**  
@ 9am / \$25  
1501 W 6th St

**DELICATES THE MUSICAL (STAGED READING)**  
@ 4pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

### Featured



**MIDST OF PARADISE (FULLY PRODUCED)**  
@ 7:30pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210



## Sun 4/14

**SHORTS**  
@ 2pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

## Thu 4/18

**Brantley Gilbert w/ Struggle Jennings**  
@ 7pm  
Erie Insurance Arena

**HADES AND THE ONE YEAR WINTER (STAGED READING)**  
@ 7:30pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

## Sat 4/20

**PUPPETRY WORKSHOP WITH ANGELA HOWELL**  
@ 10am / \$20  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**SHORTS**  
@ 7:30pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**WWE SATURDAY NIGHT'S MAIN EVENT**  
@ 7:30pm  
Erie Insurance Arena

## Sun 4/21

**Dash to Donate 5k run/walk**  
@ 8:30am / \$25  
301 Peninsula Dr, Erie, PA 16505, (near Beach No. 1 Runners Club Pavilion), Millcreek

## Thu 4/25

### Featured



**Reena Calm at Room 33 for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 7pm / \$15  
Room 33, 1033 State Street



**MIDST OF PARADISE (FULLY PRODUCED)**  
@ 7:30pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

## Fri 4/26

**Calamari's Comedy Showcase for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 5:30pm / \$10  
Calamari's Squid Row, 1317 State Street

**Derek Sheen at 10/20 Collective for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 7:30pm / \$20  
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street

**Jimkata w/ TimeMind at the King's Rook Club**

@ 9pm / \$20  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street

**Monster Monster for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 11pm / \$10  
Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road

## Sat 4/27

**PLAYWRITING WORKSHOP WITH CHARLOTTE STOWE**  
@ 10am / \$20  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**6th Annual Love, Light & Healing Psychic Fair**  
@ 10am / \$5-\$70  
Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center, 7794 Peach Street

**SHORTS**  
@ 4pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**Black Monk's Comedy Showcase for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 5pm / Free  
Black Monk Brewery, 3721 West 12th Street

**DELICATES THE MUSICAL (STAGED READING)**  
@ 7:30pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**Sean Patton at the Erie Playhouse for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 8pm / \$20-\$25  
Erie Playhouse, 13 West 10th Street

## Sun 4/28

**ERC 2.2 or 4.4 Tutu Race**  
@ 9am / \$15-\$15  
1 Peninsula Dr

**PANEL DISCUSSION**  
@ 10am / Free  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**Brunch Comedy Showcase at The Zone for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 11am / \$30  
The Zone Dance Club, 133 West 18th Street

**HADES AND THE ONE YEAR WINTER (STAGED READING)**  
@ 2pm / \$17  
Dramashop, 1001 State Street, suite 210

**Tattoo Comedy Showcase for Flagship City Comedy Festival**  
@ 3pm / \$10  
Andromeda Studios, 3735 West Lake Road

## Tue 4/30

**Godsmack**  
@ 8pm  
Warner Theatre - PA

## Wed 5/01

**EARS 5k Bun Run**  
@ 12am / \$20-\$25  
May 1st - May 18th  
Harborcreek Community Park Field, 5850 Firman Rd

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