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ERIE READER

February 3 - 16 / Vol. 6, No. 3. / ErieReader.com

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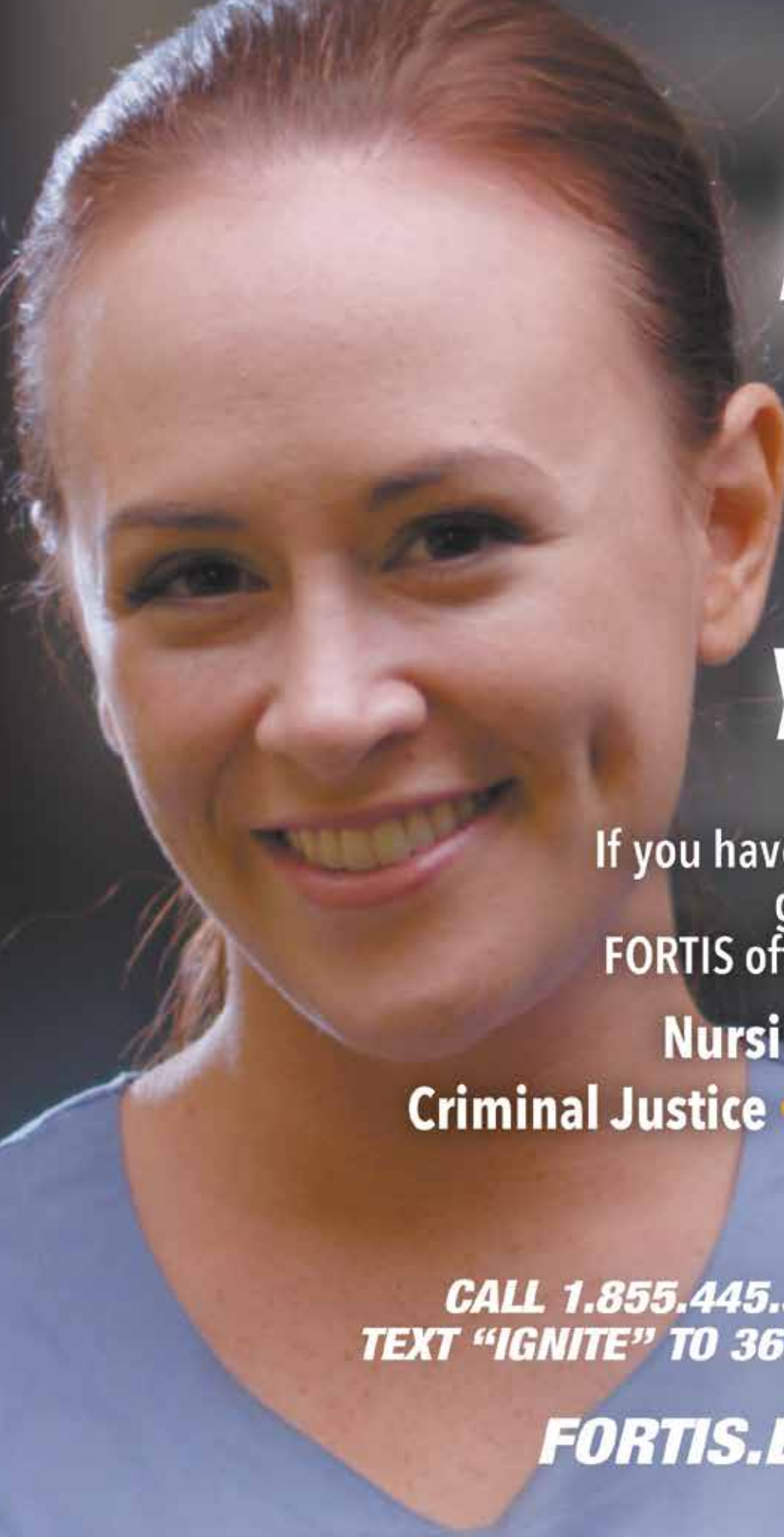
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the Flint water crisis*

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The Erie Reader is the only local voice for news, arts, and culture, and is Erie's only independent, alternative newspaper. Founded in 2010, the Reader has quickly become the region's award-winning source for arts coverage, a strong cultural compass, and a dynamic resource for news and opinion, welcoming perspectives from all viewpoints. With a dedication to long-form journalism and a commitment to provoking thoughtful discussion, the Reader tells the stories of the people and places making and shaping Erie, while highlighting the events and issues influencing life in northwestern Pennsylvania. The Erie Reader is published every other week and distributed at over 250 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 901, Erie, Pa, 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct inquiries to 814.314.9364 or contact@ErieReader.com.

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From the Editors

When poverty means pollution, equality is just a pipe dream.

There is not a terrorist organization on Earth that has yet to figure out how to poison 100,000 people every day for two years – and get away with it. That took a governor who subscribes to an American political ideology hell-bent on widening the income inequality gap and conducting various versions of voter and electoral suppression against people of color and the poor.

– Filmmaker Michael Moore, on his website

We're lucky.

As Ti Sumner writes in this issue, "The differences between a city-run water system in Flint and a water authority here in Erie are stark."

Sumner's point is enforced by John Presogna, Water Quality Manager of Erie Water Works, who told her, "We are part of the public health system. We don't really consider our product a utility."

Recognizing the need to prioritize human health is all too rare today, when shortsighted, corporate-minded leadership fails to see beyond the health of the bottom line.

"While conservatives often claim that experience as a corporate executive qualifies them for high office, the analogy fails when put into action," wrote Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director of Food & Water Watch, on Jan. 29. "Government works best when decisions are made in the public interest; cutting costs almost always means cutting corners, which is exactly what happened in Flint."

But while "The crisis in Flint is terrifying," explained *Truthout* reporter Mike Ludwig, "presidential candidates and the dominant media did little to acknowledge that the pattern of pollution in communities of color extends far beyond Michigan.

"Nationally," he added, "people of color are nearly twice as likely as white people to live within one mile of facilities that use and store chemicals so dangerous that facility operators must submit risk management plans to the government."

Ludwig also cites two 2015 University of Michigan studies "showing that low-income people and people of color don't end up living near hazardous waste sites and other polluters because housing is cheap. Instead, their communities are dis-

proportionately targeted by industries that follow 'the path of least resistance' when deciding where to build facilities."

And this trend has been verified in Pennsylvania.

In last May's *Scientific American*, Brian Bienkowski reported a Clark University study's findings that "Fracking wells in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region are disproportionately located in poor rural communities, which bear the brunt of associated pollution." The data justifies "concerns that poor people are more likely to deal with hydraulic fracturing in their community" and that "vulnerable populations will suffer the potential health impacts of air and water pollution associated with pulling gas from the ground."

It's no secret that poverty often equals powerlessness, even in a so-called land of opportunity like ours. But with water, we're talking about a resource on which all life depends.

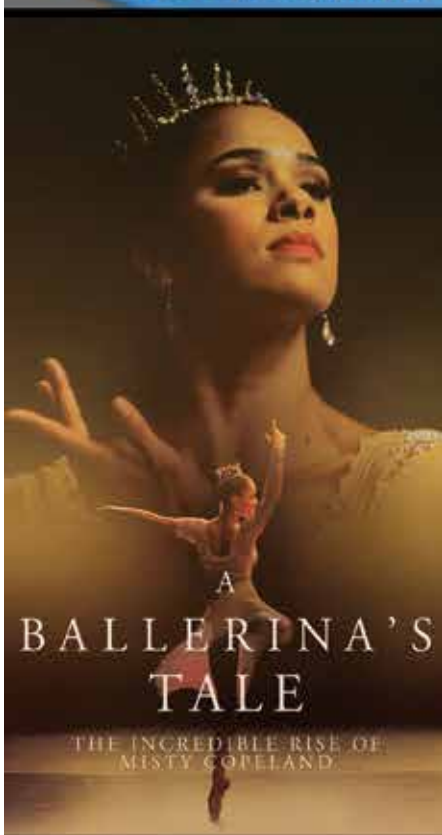
And as Ludwig explained, although the EPA "allow[s] communities to file complaints under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits recipients of federal funds – such as state environmental regulatory agencies – from discriminating based on race ... the EPA has rejected or dismissed the vast majority of complaints and has never formally found a violation of the Civil Rights Act, according to EPA data and a 2015 investigation by the Center for Public Integrity."

If we can't find the political will to keep water safe – for all – we can't even *pretend* to promote equality.

As a recent Natural Resources Defense Council report concluded, "An informed, involved public is a water utility's strongest ally in an effort to better protect its water supply."

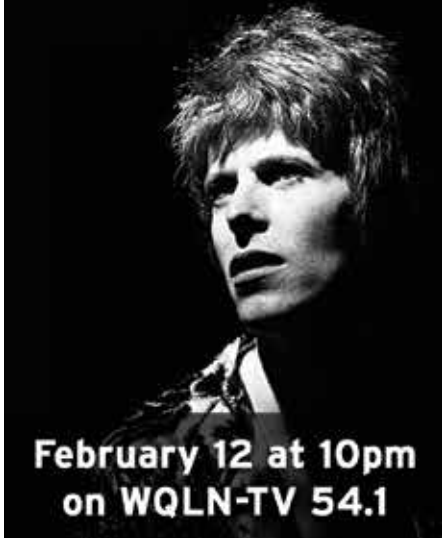
It's maddening that a water utility should need allies in defending clean water, and that those living in marginalized communities should have compromised access to it. So even in Erie, where water is deemed safe, we must remain vigilant citizen protectors of our most precious resource: our Great Lake.

We cannot allow clean air and water to be dismissed as the hyperbolic causes of histrionic environmentalists. They're matters of life and death. For all.



February 8 at 10pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

**DAVID
BOWIE**
[FIVE YEARS]



February 12 at 10pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

NEWS & OPINION

Just a Thought

The human cost of “progress.”



The annual single-point-in-time survey aims to gather information about homelessness, an issue too often hidden from public view. Photo by Bidgee on Wikimedia Commons.

By: **Katie Chriest**

Powaqqatsi is a 1988 film by Godfrey Reggio, in which scenes of human life in the southern hemisphere are depicted without narration, accompanied by an evocative score by Philip Glass. The film, part of Reggio's Quatsi trilogy, “juxtapos[es] images of ancient cultures with those of modern life” and “masterfully portrays the human cost of progress.”

Reggio defines *Powaqqatsi* as “A way of life that consumes another way in order to advance itself.” He adds that “The southern world is being consumed by the norms of progress and development.”

Powaqqatsi succeeds in doing what most of modern media so ardently helps us avoid: looking at the effects of our “conveniences” on those without access to them. In this film, we see the struggle on the laborers' faces, the strain of muscles against taut, sun-darkened skin.

But we needn't look so far afield.

Closer to home, the economic system we've created – the one many leaders cling to – creates so-called third world conditions for some in our own country. In Flint, the water turns poisonous. In agricultural regions of the U.S., farmworkers endure forced labor. In Erie,

people become homeless, or addicted, or otherwise alienated by a system that insists they do not fit. That would rather they hide than be healed.

Coincidentally, we re-watched the film on the same night as the annual one-day homeless count, described by Gerry Weiss in the *Erie Times-News* as “part of a nationwide count that tracks trends and documents the circumstances of the homeless. The goal of the annual single-point-in-time survey – which began nationwide in 1986 and has been conducted in Erie County since 1994 – is to collect information that could eventually help social workers assist and care for the homeless.”

Counts are critically important places to start. But to see – really see – we must go further (as many in our community already do).

In “The Other Americans,” an essay reprinted in last summer's *Utne Reader*, Monica Potts cautions us not to oversimplify the plight of low-income Americans with pity. “Pity has its uses, but it also has its limits, especially in writing about a population already so misrepresented, ignored, and disempowered.”

Instead, Potts says, “We shouldn't feel pity but a sense of citizenship, of kinship, that leads to empathy. Even Americans who don't identify themselves as

poor know how it feels to be broke, to need or want something they can't afford, or to be underpaid or lose a job. If not, they can imagine these feelings without too much of a stretch.”

That kinship is what “make[s] readers question their own assumptions about the country they live in,” Potts adds, a goal Reggio shared in *Powaqqatsi*.

Though he was accused of “romanticizing poverty and oppression and suffering,” Reggio explains that he “was trying to say that there are other [standards of living] that are different from ours,” and to question our tendency to assume those standards are inferior.

And so in the film, we also see dignity. Pride. The satisfaction of life lived with purpose, presence, and connection.

These are the scenes typically hidden from us. And if we fail to recognize dignity and shared humanity in the apparently different lives of those half a world away, we're bound to miss it in our own backyards, as well.

Powaqqatsi succeeds in doing what most of modern media so ardently helps us avoid: looking at the effects of our “conveniences” on those without access to them.

It's easy to dismiss those alienated by our current profit-over-people economy by generalizing, or blaming, or even pitying. Can we allow our hearts to break open enough to really feel the humanity of those whose lives are challenging to witness? Can we face the hard truth we encounter with every struggling soul: that if our system is only working for a few, then it's not working?

Katie Chriest can be contacted at katie@ErieReader.com.

Erie Needs the Energy to Turn Itself Around.

In addition to solar potential, we also have a lot of wind. Thus, we must have a lot of answers blowin' about in it.



BRAD TIRANA

By: Ben Speggen

In his December 2015 feature in the *Erie Reader* on DonJon ShipBuilding, Contributing Editor Jim Wertz notes something important to the future of energy – and manufacturing – in Erie.

“DonJon purchases the majority of its raw materials from local vendors and appears to be committed to the Erie region,” Wertz wrote. “It has a long-term lease with the Port Authority and it’s contracted with the Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation (LEEDCo) to begin a geotechnical investigation of Lake Erie soils. It’s part of the process that is expected to lead to offshore wind turbines for energy generation.”

In those three sentences, there’s a lot to be happy about – if you care about the future of Erie and think that future has something to do with manufacturing and energy.

First, DonJon is buying locally, which stabilizes (two-thirds of money spent locally stays local) and grows (nearly half of the money spent locally recirculates in a local economy immediately) Erie’s economy.

Second, DonJon is remaining an anchor on Erie’s bayfront. Few better emblems of our industrial might and potential are so publicly featured than our claim to one of only two shipyards on the Great Lakes capable of servicing 1,000-foot ships (which means other really *big* things can be made and serviced there).

At DonJon, it’s the meeting of past and future in the present, an example of what has been and what could be. And at that convergence lies wind en-

ergy.

Ignore the *let’s-not-disturb-our-beautiful-lakeview-horizon-with-turbines* argument and explore the potential for wind energy in Erie the same way Buffalo is harnessing solar energy for progress: By manufacturing the things that manufacture it. Through its budding relationship with SolarCity, America’s largest solar power provider, which prior to opening a plant in Buffalo purchased *all* of its panels from China, Buffalo’s rebounding in a big way.

Buffalo’s investment has become the exciting new tinder for a once roaring fire nearly choked out by aged rust. But instead of wheezing quietly into that good 21st century night, Buffalo’s raging through a reinvention of nothing new: Manufacturing.

While Erie could learn from that, it can also learn from wind energy by looking towards Cleveland.

As reported by *The Plain Dealer’s* John Funk, Norwegian wind farm developer Fred.Olsen Renewables plans to construct a \$120 million pilot wind farm on Lake Erie. The largest independent power producer in the United Kingdom and fifth largest in Europe, Fred.Olsen has also partnered with LEEDCo.

Aesthetics of turbines on the horizon aside, we’ve technologically eclipsed the concerns of carrying canary in the coalmine when it comes to wind turbine safety and the region is moving forward whether Erie likes it or not. And if you still think that fossil fuels are the best answer to fueling the planet, you likely have more in common with the fossils than with those of us who want to have a future and place faith in renewables. And a bright part

Manufacturing renewable energy components here in Erie could greatly increase the city’s chances for a brighter, more sustainable future.

of that future can be happening here in Pennsylvania – and chiefly here in Erie.

According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), “Pennsylvania is a manufacturing leader for the wind energy industry. Many of the skills Pennsylvania workers possess easily transfer to wind energy manufacturing, providing thousands of new jobs and spurring billions in investment.” On a map of the state, AWEA dots our rectangular outline with both turbines and gears, signifying the production of energy and the production of the things that harness that energy. You can guess which Erie has.

Although the state currently only powers the equivalent of 329,000 homes with wind energy, it’s projected that by 2030 the state could power 1.6 million American homes. If we’re going to meet those numbers, we need to get busy building. And according to 2004 legislation, we have to.

The Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (AEPS) mandates electricity suppliers supply “18 percent of their sales from alternative energy sources by 2021.” Those 329,000 Pennsylvanian homes powered in 2014 results in a paltry 1.62 percent from wind, but when it comes to renewables, wind alone has accounted for more than 80 percent of requirements set through 2011. That is, wind is working, but it could be – and needs to be – working better.

So while we can prolong the debate over whether we want turbines dotting our precious strip of lakefront, we can’t afford to delay the inevitable: Wind is on the rise and so is the need to manufacture turbines. And Erie can play a big part in this.

And if we care about our rebound, we’ll need (more) energy. One of the answers, as it turns out, is blowin’ in the wind. And it’s time we do more than just enjoy the breeze; it’s time we make the breeze work for us.

Ben Speggen can be contacted at bSpeggen@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpeggen.

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News of the Weird

From creative costuming to killer commutes, here's what's weirdest this week.

By: Chuck Shepherd

Newest Fashionistas

In January, the upscale Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana introduced stylish hijabs and abayas aimed at Muslim women unafraid to call attention to themselves as they exercise their obliged modesty. D&G's marketing effort even accessorized models' headscarves and cloaks with stilettos and oversized, gaudily framed sunglasses. It was clear from the suggested retail prices that D&G would be pitching the line mainly in the wealthy Persian Gulf countries like United Arab Emirates. [The Atlantic, 1-7-2016]

Unclear on the Concept

Awkward Signals in New Jersey: (1) The government watchdog MuckRock requested records on the cause of death of a dolphin in New Jersey's South River last year (to investigate larger dangers to the animal), but in January 2016 the state's Department of Agriculture initially declined to release them — citing "medical privacy" (usually requested, for autopsies, by "the deceased's family"). (2) At the same time, Maria Vaccarella is facing a \$500 fine in Howell, New Jersey, for violating a state law because she illegally rendered "care" to two apparently orphaned baby squirrels when their mother abandoned them. She was due in court as News of

the Weird went to press. [MuckRock.com, 1-11-2016] [WPVI-TV (Philadelphia), 1-16-2016]

Questionable Judgments

The director of senior services for Cranston, Rhode Island, resigned in January after a mayor's press-conference went badly. To publicize a snow-removal program that would benefit seniors unable to shovel for themselves, the director (needing a proper example of a beneficiary of the program) instructed a middle-aged male subordinate to (unconvincingly) don a wig and dress and stand beside the mayor during the announcement. [WJAR-TV (Providence), 1-13-2016]

Cultural Diversity

Weird Japan, Again: (1) Among the sites Japan has submitted for 2017 United Nations World Heritage status is the island of Okinoshima, home of a sacred shrine with which Shinto gods have been "protecting" fishermen as long ago as the fourth century. (The island is so sacred that females have never been allowed on it — judged either too delicate to make the trip or menstrually unclean). (2) A current Tokyo craze, reported an Australian Broadcasting correspondent, involves "stressed out" professionals and office workers publicly outfitted in colorful, full-body lycra suits ("zentai") in a rebellion against the nation's

multifying conformity. Said one, "I'm a different person wearing this. I can be friendly to anyone." [Daily Telegraph (London), 1-13-2016] [Australian Broadcasting Corp. News, 1-10-2016]

Suspicious Confirmed

Crescent City, California, drug dealer James Banuelos pleaded guilty in January in exchange for a lighter sentence (three years in prison), thus avoiding for police the airing of an embarrassing hidden-camera video of the raid showing arresting officers stealing the dealer's money and valuables. "Multiple" officers were shown laughing and helping themselves, and a gold chain belonging to Banuelos wound up for sale a few days later on Craigslist. As part of the plea agreement, the prosecutor agreed to give all Banuelos' stuff back to him. [Del Norte Triplicate (Crescent City), 1-11-2016, 1-14-2016]

The United Nations announced at year-end that the book most often checked out last year at its in-house Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York was the nearly 500-page "Immunity of Heads of State and State Officials for International Crimes." The list of borrowers was not revealed. (In general, the book concludes, current heads of state have immunity but not past ones.) [Newsweek, 1-7-2016]

Wait, What?

New Age Medical Care: Surgeons treating 4-month-old Teegan Lexcen (born with only one lung and a critically deformed heart) had given up on her, but doctors at Nicklaus Children's Hospital in Miami jury-rigged a surgical tool that

saved the infant's life. In a delicate seven-hour procedure, using an iPhone app and \$20 Google Cardboard box virtual-reality viewers, doctors guided themselves through Teegan's chest based on two-dimensional body scans that the app had converted to 3-D. (Old-style 3-D images, they said, were too grainy for precision surgery.) [WFOR-TV (Miami), 12-22-2015]

Too Much Information: In January, the British sex toy company Hot Octopuss, trying for a spurt of publicity in New York City, unveiled a re-configured pay phone booth at 5th Avenue and 28th Street in Manhattan that offered a seat, a laptop, a Wi-Fi connection, and a "privacy curtain" to help people (mostly men, one imagines) relieve stress "on both your mind and body." A company rep claimed that about 100 men "used" the booth its first day, but what the men actually did there is "private." [ArsTechnica.com, 1-18-2016]

The Continuing Crisis

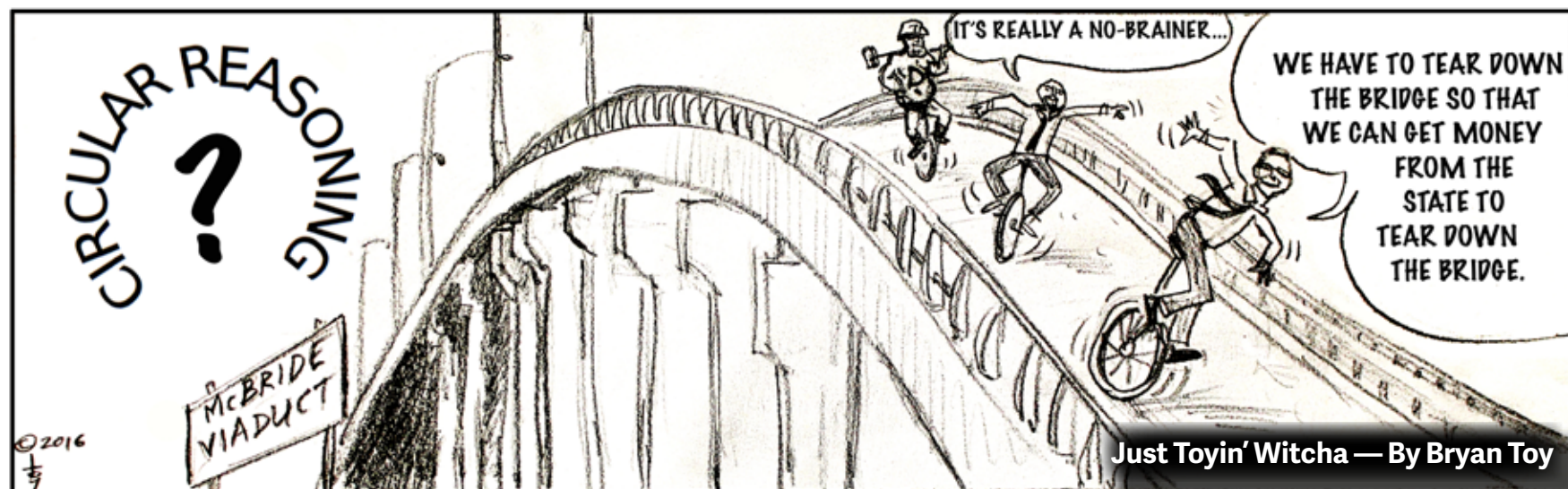
Think Your Commute Was Bad? (1) The main road linking the port city of Mombasa, Kenya, to Nairobi and beyond (to landlocked Uganda) was blocked in mid-November by damage from heavy rains, leading to a 30-mile-long stream of stopped vehicles, stranding more than 1,500 trucks. (2) In October at the end of China's traditional, annual week-long getaway, new traffic checkpoints for the notorious G4 Beijing-Hong Kong-Macau Expressway reduced the previous 50 lanes of traffic (yes, that's "fifty") to 20. Videos from a TV net-

work's drone showed a breathtaking traffic jam-cum-parking lot that quickly inspired delight, or compassion, all around the Internet (bit.ly/1je9mG6). [BBC News, 11-19-2015] [CityLab.com, 10-8-2015]

Police chiefs of six small Ohio towns recently demanded an investigation of Sandusky County Sheriff Kyle Overmyer after, comparing notes, they learned that Overmyer had approached each one claiming to be helpfully "collecting" for "disposal" their departments' confiscated drugs — on behalf of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. (DEA, reportedly, knew nothing of this.) The Ohio attorney general is investigating. [Court-house News Service, 1-12-2016]

Least Competent Criminals

Jason Hayes, 17, was arrested in a Philadelphia suburb in January when he arrived for a scheduled appointment with a robbery victim from the night before. According to police, Hayes had attempted to shake down a woman in her home, but was still dissatisfied with the money she had on hand. Fearful, she agreed to bring more the next day if they met at a local shopping mall, and he agreed (promising to wear the same clothes so she would recognize him). She, of course, called police. (2) Dusty Ingram, 38, being searched by jailhouse guards in Crestview, Florida, in January, said she had prescriptions for everything — but then said she thought they were in her purse and professed not to know how they got into that plastic bag in her genitals. [Philly.com, 1-21-2016]



Just Toyin' Witcha — By Bryan Toy

Erie At Large

UnifiedErie call-ins deserve a voice.



By: Jim Wertz

The room was full, standing room only, in fact, and racially diverse. The crowd filled Erie City Council chambers on Jan. 31 to better understand the methods driving the plan to reduce violence across Erie County and, in particular, in the City of Erie. The program was organized by UnifiedErie, which began in 2010 as the Erie Unified Youth Violence Reduction Initiative. Its mission of violence reduction remains unchanged, even though its name and approach to violence reduction have evolved.

UnifiedErie's "public health" approach to fighting violence is mystifying to some. That concept leaves people asking what gunplay and disease have in common. Violence in the 21st century is no different, in many ways, than influenza in the last century or typhoid in the century before. It's got an origin – a patient zero, if you will – an active culture for transmission, and careless or unsuspecting carriers, most of whom are not willing to admit that they're part of a larger problem, an impending epidemic.

The public health approach is data driven, so results are cumulative and longitudinal. This leads some cynics to question the validity of the meth-

od and the reliability of its results. But given time and, of course, reliable data, the results yield information that ultimately leads to the resolution of the problem.

That data collection has been ongoing for nearly five years and UnifiedErie is implementing a new and, to some, controversial phase of the program. It's branded the "call-in" and it's a treatment that utilizes extant data to identify chronic offenders and invite them to meet with community services, law enforcement, and prosecutors. The offenders face a Hobson's choice: embrace support networks that keep them running within the bounds of the law or face the maximum penalty as a consequence of their actions.

Think of the call-in in the same vein as a 12-step program. Chronic behavior leads to an attempted intervention by loved ones. Chronic offenders can accept the offer or continue down a path that ends with an inevitable worst-case scenario. If offenders accept, they are offered resources to help keep them on the path to civic responsibility; they are asked to believe in something greater than themselves – children, family, God in whatever form that takes; and they are encouraged and assisted to change the routines and behaviors that led them to offend in the first place.

"Trust is huge," said Marcus Atkinson, who directs the Downtown YMCA Teen Center and hosts programs on WQLN television and radio. Trust is the nexus between those in need of help and those willing to offer a second chance.

The biggest impediment to trust, in this scenario, are those who undermine the options presented to offenders. Sometimes it's family – parents, siblings or other relatives – who see cooperation with any authority as an affront to the false promise of crime. Sometimes it's others in the community who make excuses or offer no substantive alternatives to those presented by the official voices behind the call-in.

At the moment, the chief opponent to call-ins in Erie is Bishop Dwane Brock, who leads the Victory Christian Center on Erie's east side. Brock has long led his flock and mediated violence within his community. But in this case, his position is simply wrong.

His opposition is predicated upon the conviction of Katrina House, who received a mandatory minimum sentence of two years for carrying out multiple identity thefts of low-income and homeless people. Brock compares the prosecution of House, who is black, with the conviction of David Earls, a white man who embezzled nearly \$170,000 when he was the business manager of the St. Peter Cathedral School.

House was charged with aggravated assault, which prompted the mandatory minimum. Earls plead guilty to a third-degree felony, which carried no mandatory minimum. House is heading to prison while Earls is free on probation.

Brock's objections are clear and not unfounded. He sees House as representative of a justice system that unfairly impacts minorities and the poor. He's not wrong.

But Brock has overlooked the fact that the cases of House and Earls are dissimilar, a fact that one would guess has not eluded Erie County District Attorney Jack Daneri and Assistant U.S. Attorney Marshall Piccinini. Both are heavily involved in the call-ins and Piccinini prosecuted the House case.

However, by attempting to thwart UnifiedErie's call-in strategy as a means of bringing House's case to the court

of public opinion, Brock is creating a straw man that ultimately undermines the powerful progress UnifiedErie stands to make in a community which Brock, himself, claims to serve and support.

To follow through on the 12-step analogy, Brock's public stand against UnifiedErie is effectively enabling – and dare I say emboldening – the violence on Erie's east side.

Brock's voice could loudly lend itself to the call-in cause. Instead, his opposition is polarizing for a community that often defers to its clergy for guidance and to engender the trust that Atkinson spoke about so passionately before the crowd at Erie City Hall. Brock is challenging an initiative that has been effective in communities much more violent, stratified, and hopeless than Erie to forward a political agenda that

Brock's objections are clear and not unfounded. He sees House as representative of a justice system that unfairly impacts minorities and the poor. He's not wrong.

would be better argued to the legislators who established the legal practice of mandatory minimum sentences.

There is no doubt that Erie's violence problem is profound when compared to the region's past. But the evidence-based course set upon by UnifiedErie is one very significant part of resolving this crisis.

That's why it became ever more unfortunate that as the UnifiedErie leadership team made its case for a public health approach and, in particular, the call-in strategy, Bishop Brock wasn't there to hear it.

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

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Harrisburg Happenings

Happy New Year to all. May 2016 bring positivity in all aspects of life.



By: Sean Wiley

I am taking a liberty here to deviate from the recent, and somewhat mundane, report from our State Capitol as the following topic has been rattling around in the deepest corners of my mind for quite some time. I appreciate the lenience of each reader.

When first meeting someone, one often used to be cautioned to never mention religion or politics unless the goal was to quickly derail the conversation. One was also cautioned to be on one's best behavior and not to be overly confrontational in general conversation.

Fast-forward to the modern world and enter into electronic and social media. All of those cautions seem to disappear when common human compassion is replaced with faceless bullying.

Negativity via electronic and social media has become an epidemic in the political climate; long gone are the days of agreeing to disagree in a respectful manner. Freedom of speech has turned to anonymous mud-slinging littered with spiteful personal attacks. How is it acceptable for a presidential candidate to berate another based upon a perceived lack of personal beauty, or to mock a physical handicap? Should the divisions in our country consent us to providing bad examples for our youth?

Smack in the middle of the Commonwealth budget impasse was an undercurrent in our community of barbed frustration fueled by the quasi-ano-

nymity of electronic and social media, commented, posted, and shared from the refuge of a keyboard. There is little thought given to fact, context, or reason; moreover, the seemingly accepted mob mentality that wrecks public discourse prevails. Empathy as a foreign concept is played out on a grand, electronic scale. Decisions made are immediately discounted, painted with a cynical brush, ripped apart, and endlessly ground in the dirt by a boot that is tied with name-calling and innuendo perpetuation.

Why? Because people want to hate government.

The heart of a policy discussion is to present both sides of the issue, engage in informed debate, and attempt a resolution. In today's world, that process is peppered with footnotes and hearsay that are detached from the issue at hand, devoid of the necessary contextual information, and instead focused on disdain.

The broad cynicism of government can be appreciated and understood, as much of it has been earned by those who, by their willing actions, have tarnished the oath taken. But to immediately write off all elected officials as lining their pockets, or making decisions that better themselves instead of the greater good, or not caring about their constituency, is simply not accurate or reasonable. We all know that accuracy or reason rarely fuel social media posts; and that nameless slander isn't a useful assessment of public figures,

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but an obstruction to finding actual solutions.

As adults exhibit social misbehaviors openly and candidly via electronic and social media in general, many of our nation's youth follow suit at alarming rates. Those attacks then often translate to in-person confrontations for our children who must attempt to thrive in toxic environments. There is no longer any solace found in a home environment as hate can permeate even the best home security system, worming its way into every home with Internet access. Young people have taken their own lives after endlessly suffering online bullying and only then is the reaction shock, outrage, and a vow of vigilant change. The slow

Negativity via electronic and social media has become an epidemic in the political climate; long gone are the days of agreeing to disagree in a respectful manner. Freedom of speech has turned to anonymous mud-slinging littered with spiteful personal attacks.

burn and the simmer beneath the surface are unacknowledged; only the boil-over is.

Democracy in the modern world has many faces. Accepting the face of malevolence condemns us all to an endless simmer beneath the surface, and the subsequent shock and awe lacks substantive meaning.

So if the way that one "meets" another in contemporary society is over a broadband cable, the basic tenets of respect and consideration must also transmit across the wire. John Wayne never intended for cowboys to carry a keyboard, and our children shouldn't be sentenced to a life lacking empathy.

Senator Sean D. Wiley can be contacted at SenatorWiley@pasenate.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @SenatorWiley.

Pennsylvania Continues to Lead on America's Clean Power Plan

Obstructionist attempts to delay action are denied in court.



WIKINGHT94

By: Gretchen Dahlkemper

The effort to reduce carbon pollution and improve public health and our environment has won an important victory. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals recently denied a stay of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan being sought by big industry polluters and their allies. Yet again, the courts have affirmed that the Clean Power Plan is based on a strong legal foundation and rejected obstructionist attempts to delay progress. Legal challenges from opponents will likely continue, but the momentum toward a cleaner, healthier environment and stronger economy is undeniable and has never been more powerful.

The Clean Power Plan sets the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from existing power plants. It is a historic opportunity to reduce climate change and harmful air pollution as well as invest in the people and technologies that will produce cleaner sources of energy and increase energy efficiency. A broad constituency both across the nation and here in Pennsylvania has spoken out during comment periods and public hearings to express their support for the plan. The time for delay is over.

The EPA recognizes that each state has its own unique energy mix and that flexibility is necessary to meet the Clean Power Plan carbon reduction targets. To that end, the agency has given each state the authority and autonomy to develop its own plan.

One would think that all the nation's governors would appreciate this deference to state's rights and take charge to develop a plan that works best for their citizens. Instead, some governors joined polluters in the lawsuit to stay the Clean Power Plan.

The good news is that while this won't be the end of court challenges from polluters and their allies, they can't stop states such as Pennsylvania from being proactive. Gov. Wolf and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Quigley recognize that while the task has its challenges, climate change is already changing Pennsylvania in ways that harm our health and economy and that the work is worth the end result. Pennsylvanians should be glad that Gov. Wolf is in fact among a small group of governors who are acting as national leaders by developing a strong and timely state plan.

Under the Wolf administration, Pennsylvania's DEP has been proactively developing its own Clean Power Plan. Pa. DEP held a substantial public comment period including 14 listening sessions across the state, where a majority of Pennsylvanians voiced their support for this important action. This mirrors the national trends, as two-thirds of Americans endorse climate action. The agency will hold additional hearings to obtain public feedback once the draft plan is released later this year and Secretary Quigley has committed to submitting Pennsylvania's state Clean Power Plan

to the EPA by a September 2016 deadline.

Delaying the implementation of the Clean Power Plan is not simply a court battle. Kicking the can down the road and stalling carbon cleanup efforts has real impacts on our health and environment. Those who suffer from asthma and other respiratory illnesses suffer when carbon pollution exacerbates the formation of ozone, a powerful lung irritant. Children, and especially children with asthma, are particularly vulnerable to ozone and other dangerous air pollutants. Delays to the Clean Power Plan mean delays in their relief from asthma attacks, hospital visits, and missed days at school.

Forward-thinking utilities and businesses are no longer waiting to take action. They see the trend toward cleaner and more efficient energy

Delaying the implementation of the Clean Power Plan is not simply a court battle. Kicking the can down the road and stalling carbon cleanup efforts has real impacts on our health and environment.

technologies and are making the investments today in safer and more sustainable options. Customers are driving the demand for power from wind, solar, hydro, and other sources that do not endanger public health. Efficiency measures can also provide tremendous potential for cutting carbon pollution. Clean energy is good for both our health and our economy.

Multiple court decisions have upheld Clean Air Act pollution limits such as those contained in the Clean Power Plan. The appeals court decision is yet another signal for lagging states to get moving on their own plans to reduce carbon emissions and for those like Pennsylvania, which are leading the way, to continue on the right track.

Gretchen Dahlkemper, National Field Director for Moms Clean Air Force, can be contacted at gdahlkemper@momscleanairforce.org.

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U Frame It's Beautifying Business Model



BRAD TRIANA

This welcoming shop has put its neighborhood in the right frame of mind for decades.

By: Brianna Lyle

Matt Lebowitz and Linda Trohoske greet me as I walk into U Frame It for the first time. Linda is busy cutting matting in the back on a table stacked with pieces of frames and rulers. She's the only employee – other than Lebowitz and his wife Phyllis Mashyna who are co-owners – and has been working at U Frame It since 1997. I ask what her position is and she grins, scrunching her shoulders while looking at Lebowitz; she doesn't really have a title. "Are you sort of like a manager?" I ask. They both laugh a bit. The consensus is that she's kind of like a manager but doesn't want to be called one (perhaps in fear that it sounds too formal).

This scene is exactly how you'd expect a mom-and-pop shop to

be run, and it's happening right here in Erie, nestled in a west side neighborhood (that Lebowitz refers to as the "western gateway to downtown Erie") on the corner of Liberty and West 8th streets.

It's the sense of community and pride for Erie that the owners exude, and the laissez-faire ambience of the shop itself, that make U Frame It so welcoming. They're a neighborhood business. And they love what they do, where they do it.

The origin of U Frame It started in the early 70s, when Mashyna's family (originally from Erie) went on a trip to Colorado to visit her sister who was living there at the time. Her sister thought her father, Mike, would enjoy a matting/framing store in town, as he often framed photos in their basement and also enjoyed

woodworking.

Mike enjoyed the experience so much that he decided to go into the framing business (after years of business and accounting jobs). In 1975, U Frame It set up shop in Erie as a do-it-yourself matting/framing company.

In May of 1988, Mike passed away. Ginger, her mother, contacted Mashyna, now living in San Francisco where she met and married Lebowitz (a New York City transplant), to see if they'd be interested in moving to Erie to take over the business. The duo decided to leave San Francisco – where Lebowitz had been working as a photography developer – and move to Erie later that year.

A decade later in 1998, they began renovations on the shop at its current location, adding on another section to the building.

When they stripped the building of its exterior, they discovered black tile underneath dating back to the early 1930s, when it was a Weiblen Pharmacy/soda shop.

The renovations went so well that in 1999, Downtown Erie Partnership awarded U Frame It with a preservation award. Now, the business is receiving a Greater Erie Award from Preservation Erie this April.

Lebowitz is excited to see the progress Erie has made on preserving historic buildings, such as the Boston Store and Renaissance Centre. That is, it's better late than never. "Erie has been advancing ... It doesn't have to be Cleveland or New York. It's here and it's what we know," he concludes. Not that he thinks we should settle on Erie's present socioeconomic conditions;

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Lebowitz wants to see Erie become a bigger force of culture and business, too, and insists that it can happen if we stop grumbling about it and do something. “He’s one of the biggest ambassadors of Erie and he’s from New York City,” says Mashyna.

Mashyna and Lebowitz stay involved in the Erie community at large. They’re involved in Our West Bayfront, an initiative started by Gannon University, with a mission to “enhance

It’s the sense of community and pride for Erie that the owners exude, and the laissez-faire ambience of the shop itself, that make U Frame It so welcoming. They’re a neighborhood business. And they love what they do, where they do it.

the quality of life in Erie’s West Bayfront neighborhoods by promoting civic involvement, thoughtful development, historical preservation, and neighborhood pride.” Despite

the popular belief that this part of town is “bad,” it’s actually more vital than most believe. “Just because it doesn’t have a Starbucks doesn’t mean it isn’t a great neighborhood,” says Lebowitz.

Mashyna is also involved with an initiative called Bay City Gardeners, a group of Erieites that come together over the love of gardening. They put on a regular garden walk through Erie properties that are later open to the public for a small price. “We care about the city,” says Mashyna. “We’re investing in the city. We’re trying to make it a better place.”

In addition to their more concrete ways of revitalizing Erie, they’re also interested in the social dynamics of Erie and its people. Lebowitz hosts a monthly social gathering event called Hoppy Hour with Uncle Dulachan at his favorite local pub and brewery, Lavery Brewing Company.

The idea for a community happy hour began on Lebowitz’s birthday in 2012, before Lavery officially opened a pub and there were only “growler hours” where people could take their growlers to fill up and then leave. Having done this many times with his friends (and then scurrying off



BRAD TRIANA

to someone’s basement to play pool, or to an Otters game) he thought it would be nice to stay in the parking lot to celebrate his birthday, instead of leaving for a dinner reservation (where he was going to order the duck). He decided to use the money he’d spend at the restaurant and buy everyone a pizza.

“That in a nutshell is how I feel about how to do life,” he says.

Once Lavery Brewing Company’s pub officially opened, Lebowitz began inviting groups of people on Facebook to meet and chat. Anyone is

welcome, and others are encouraged to invite whomever they’d like, as well. “It’s about meeting new people ... and having great conversation and beer,” he says. (By the way, if you’re wondering, he thinks Lavery’s Dulachan is the “best beer on the planet.”)

It’s the community of people that Lebowitz and Mashyna have helped to form that makes U Frame It a unique business. They look forward to meeting their new and repeat customers and take pride in the work they’ve done. “We run into people sometimes who say ‘Oh, you should see all the things I have in my house framed by you,’” says Mashyna. “We hope we give a great experience to every customer.”

Making Erie a great place to live is certainly a priority for this couple. But that can’t happen unless people are self-aware, explains Lebowitz. “This year’s mantra is ‘pay attention’ ... everything starts with gratitude ... if you pay attention to what’s going on, you have a lot to be grateful for and you can then create change you want to see. You can’t start

out lacking and then feel you can do anything else.”

The next Hoppy Hour with Uncle Dulachan is Feb. 19 at Lavery Brewing Company. Find Matt Lebowitz on Facebook for more details.

Bay City Gardeners is a community organization that hosts annual garden tours. For more information or to participate, check their Facebook page.

The mission of Preservation Erie is to promote, preserve, and enhance the distinctive character of greater Erie through community-based planning, design, and historic preservation.

Downtown Erie Partnership is a non-profit designed to revitalize the Erie downtown by improving its image, business climate, physical environment, and design.

Our West Bayfront’s mission is to enhance the quality of life in Erie’s West Bayfront neighborhoods by promoting civic involvement, thoughtful development, historical preservation, and neighborhood pride.

Brianna Lyle can be contacted at blyle@ErieReader.com.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Opposite: Phyllis Mashyna and Matt Lebowitz, owners of U Frame It since 1988, have become tireless advocates for Erie’s beautification and celebration. Above and left: The art of framing, both in process and as finished product.



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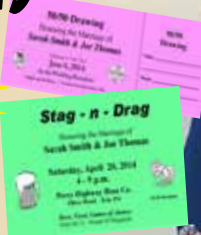
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The 411 on Dating in the 814

Ideas for even the most jaded daters, just in time for Valentine's Day.

By: Matt Swanseger

The great thing about being single is that you can do it all by yourself.

"After all I've done for people, I'm done with people."

Fair enough. Chances are, though, there's another quasi-misanthrope out there for you – he or she's just waiting for the right person to restore his or her faith in humanity.

That person may not be as far away

Erie was slotted 20th in Amazon's most recent ranking of "The Twenty Most Romantic Cities in America." The ranking is based on per capita sales of "romantic" or "sexy" products for populations of 100,000 or more.

as you think – in fact, Erie was slotted 20th in Amazon's most recent ranking of "The Twenty Most Romantic Cities in America." The ranking is based on per capita sales of "romantic" or "sexy" products for populations of 100,000 or more. Although that represents a slip from 2014's spot (19th), I have no doubt we'll be on the rise again once this definitive guide to dating in the 814 makes the rounds.

For Starters

If you've gotten a date within the past year, take solace – you're at least more passable than the 2016 Pennsylvania state budget. Longer than that? By now, you might describe your relationship status as "Beach 6 seagull" – you'll take whatever you can get.

While I don't recommend settling for just anyone, you may benefit from "stepping up your game," so to speak. These regionally-themed pickup lines should both accelerate the screening process and resonate with the alluring Erieite you deserve:

Virtually Foolproof Pickup Line: Are you the 12th Street Get Go? Because my breath was stolen from the get-go.

Faintly Realistic Rebuff: In that case, I'd better call the cops.

VFPL: Are you Peach Street traffic between West 38th and I-90? Because I'd wait in line at least 50 minutes for them digits.

FRR: Are you Brewster Street between East 11th and 12th? Because your chances went south in less than one.

VFPL: Are you an all-day Ride-A-Rama at Waldameer? Because I feel like I'm about to faint.

FRR: And I feel like I'm about to puke. Alternatively, you could simply say hello and introduce yourself or have a mutual friend/acquaintance set you up. Hey, whatever works.

So let's imagine, whether it was reluctantly or eagerly, that he or she consents to be seen with you in public! Now you must negotiate where that place might be, and what you will do there.

Take a Gander at that Tall Drink of Porter



What: Beer and board games
Where: Lavery Brewing Company, 128 W. 12th St.

When: T-W 5-10 p.m., R 4-11 p.m., F 4 p.m.-midnight, Sa. 2 p.m.-midnight (tours at 4 p.m.)

Why: Invite tonight's company inside for a round of *Dora the Explorer* Chutes and Ladders and you may soon be exploring other options. Pull it off the shelf at the Lavery brewpub while enjoying a pint of award-winning ale or lager, however, and who knows – this may be the one to start a Family Game Night with in the future.

Also Try: The Brewerrie at Union Station, Erie Ale Works or any participat-

ing brewery on the Lake Erie Ale Trail (lakeeriealetrail.com)

You're Projecting a Bit of a Grapey Vibe



What: Wine tasting and history at Erie County's oldest commercial winery

Where: South Shore Wine Cellars, 1120 Freeport Rd., North East

When: M-F noon-5:30 p.m., Sa. 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Su. noon-4:30 p.m.

Why: Wine has been made at South Shore since the Civil War Era. (Rumor has it those of that vintage hid escaped

Wine's properties as a social lubricant have been well-documented, so take it easy or your date might be asking you to stick a cork in it.

slaves from the Confederate South – talk about a pro-Union workforce!) Wine's properties as a social lubricant have been well-documented, so take it easy or your date might be asking you to stick a cork in it.

Also Try: Johnson Estate Winery, Mazza Chautauqua Cellar/Five & 20 Spirits and Brewery, and more at lakeeriewinecountry.org

Creating a Masterpiece



What: Replicate a painting with a local artist while sipping your favorite cocktail (BYOB).

Where: Cocktails and Color Studio, Millcreek Square Plaza, 5624 Peach St.

When: See cocktailsandcolor.com/

Both Erie winters and the dating scene have a tendency to linger in the grayscale; it's refreshing to swap the palette once a while.

events for times and to reserve your seats

Why: You may or may not ever get to draw her like one of your French girls, but you can still paint an enduring portrait of your evening together at the Cocktails and Color Studio. Both Erie winters and the dating scene have a tendency to linger in the grayscale; it's refreshing to swap the palette once a while.

Also Try: Claytopia (pottery), Erie Art Museum

Nori a Thing Compares to You

What: Sushi and other delicacies with a Latin/Asian twist

Where: 1201 Kitchen, 1201 State St.

When: M-R 5-9 p.m., Sa.-Su. 5-10 p.m.

Why: Although Bertrand's Bistro and Latino's sit ahead of it on tripadvisor.com's "Best Romantic Restaurants in Erie," 1201 Kitchen's trendy menu (updated seasonally) and spacious/con-



STACEY

temporary setting are more suitable for an initial rendezvous.

Also Try: Sushi and Asian Cuisine (BYOB), sushi class with Lone Shark Seafood + 1000 Beers (Thursdays, call 866.1573 or 315.0195 to reserve a spot, \$38/person includes all supplies and two drinks), eriefinedining.com/information to apply for a Preferred Restaurants of Erie & Chautauqua dinner club membership (i.e., bogo meals at 26 participating eateries, valid for two visits each = 52 potential date nights. Or “first date nights” – but that would imply you’re either incredibly unfortunate or appallingly sleazy).

The Show has Only Just Begun



What: Any of the shows or concerts listed in our “Spotlight on Erie” section. Where/When: See event listings for

Avoid a hostage situation; liberate yourselves from awkward silence with any of the myriad entertainment opportunities around town.

associated times and venues.

Why: Dinner was rich and satisfying, but conversation up until this point has been as substantive as porridge at a gulag prison. Avoid a hostage situa-

tion; liberate yourselves from awkward silence with any of the myriad entertainment opportunities around town.

Also Try: eriereader.com/calendar

Sporting a Good Look

What: Attend an Erie Otters (OHL) or BayHawks (NBA D-League) game.



ANDY DENIAL

Where: Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St.

When: Varies, typically between 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Why: Because you Otter be there (you don’t have to, but you otter – it’s not compulsott’ry). Or maybe because it’s a howl of a good time (and if you don’t believe me, go to howl). So go ahead, BayHawk yourself out (with another effective way to rebound from stilted interaction elsewhere).

Also Try: Erie Express (Premier Amateur Football League), Erie Commo-dores FC (National Premier Soccer League)

Making a Splash



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

What: Frolicking at Pennsylvania’s largest indoor waterpark and resort.

Where: Splash Lagoon, 8091 Peach St. When: Su.-Sa. 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

Why: It’s “where summer never ends.” Maintained at a constant 84 degrees year-round, Splash Lagoon boasts seven water slides, a rope course, a wave pool, the Aqua Tumbler (if you’ve ever wondered what it’s like to sit inside a washing machine but were too afraid to try), and the Tiki Tree House jungle gym. I am somewhat biased against it because I lifeguarded there as a teenager (“why are the stairs wet?”), but for the uninitiated, it can provide hours of unadulterated fun. You will have to wear an appropriate swimsuit, though, so not recommended for those with body image issues (e.g., “I’m too muscular to even hold my arms to my sides, much less an inner tube.”)

Also Try: Waldameer and Water World (when actual summer begins), Family First Sports Park, Playport

Breaking the Ice (Figuratively)



BRIAN GRAHAM

What: Take a stroll on a frozen Presque Isle Bay.

Where: On ice 5 inches thick or more (check for ice that is solid, clear, and blue); less if your date hasn’t been go-

Walking across a frozen blue expanse knowing there is nothing but green algae and yellow perch underfoot can make for an exhilarating or even surreal (dare I say memorable?) experience.

ing well (“No, I insist ... you first.”)

When: Sunup to sundown

Why: It’s safe; trust me. Seriously, though, walking across a frozen blue expanse knowing there is nothing but green algae and yellow perch under-

foot can make for an exhilarating or even surreal (dare I say memorable?) experience. Presque Isle is a tremendous resource; do not hesitate to utilize it to your (whether “your” is singular- or plural-possessive) advantage.

Also Try: Hiking, cross-country skiing, biking, rollerblading, canoeing, kayaking, jet-skiing, water-skiing, picnicking as weather and your class status permit. JMC Ice Arena/Mercyhurst Ice Center (ice-skating), Peek N’ Peak/Mt. Pleasant/Holiday Valley (skiing).

Now, Don’t Shoot This Down Right Away ...



VALERIE VINOJOSA

What: Trap and skeet shooting at Bay City Gun Club

Where: 11667 PA-Rte 97, Waterford

When: Open to the public Tuesdays 5:30 p.m.-10 p.m., Saturdays noon-10 p.m., starting in April.

Why: Because it’s your Second Amendment Right, damn it. Blast clay pigeons from the sky and ask yourself

Blast clay pigeons from the sky and ask yourself why Cupid can’t be this skilled a marksman.

why Cupid can’t be this skilled a marksman (sorry, Bay City’s trap and skeet machines aren’t designed to launch your mangled pottery from that Claytopia date you went on with your snooty Valentine two months ago).

Also Try: Bob’s Gun & Indoor Range (Edinboro)

Well, that’s all we have space for today. Looking for something else? You’re on your own.

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mwsanseger@eriereader.com. You can follow him on Twitter @SwazzySwagga or read his blog at squanderoza.com.

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FOX & HOUND	\$3.50	BUD LIGHT SMALL DRAFT	
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MARTY'S	\$2.00	BUD LIGHT	16oz. DRAFT
ODIS 12	\$2.00	BUD LIGHT	16oz. DRAFT
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SANDBAR	\$2.00	BUD LIGHT	16oz. DRAFT
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UGLY TUNA TAVERN	BUD LIGHT PITCHERS COMBO	

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COLONY PUB & GRILLE	\$2.50	BUD LIGHT	12oz. BOTTLES
DAN'S RT. 8 BOARDWALK	\$2.25	BUD LIGHT	12oz. BOTTLES
PARK TAVERN	\$2.00	BUD LIGHT	12oz. BOTTLES

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TREEHOUSE TAVERN	\$2.25	BUD LIGHT	16oz. ALUMINUM
21 HAMPTON	\$2.00	BUD LIGHT	16oz. ALUMINUM



Spotlight on Erie

February 3 – 16, 2016

Friday, Feb. 5

Simply Because Performs as Part of the Erie Ale House Acoustic Series



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hosted by stalwart Erie musician and local scene supporter Doug Phillips, the ongoing Erie Ale House Acoustics series has been featuring a good-and-hefty assortment of Gem City-area artists on the first and third Fridays of each month.

That musical train will keep a-rollin' on with the series' Feb. 5 installment,

It's sure to be a harmonious feast for fans of Simply Because, as well as a songful treat for the many who are into Kellogg's solo work.

which marks the return of Simply Because – the duo of Amanda Nadine and 2015 Rock Erie Music Award-nominated Tony Kellogg – to local live performance.

Having previously crafted their own brew of country, folk, blues, and and pop between 2009 and 2012, "Amanda and I are very glad to be working together again," says Kellogg (another stalwart Erie artist), "and [we're] looking forward to performing" as part of Erie Ale House Acoustics.

It's sure to be a harmonious feast for fans of Simply Because, as well as a songful treat for the many who are into Kellogg's solo work as well as his work with a host of local bands such as Sonny's Fugitives and Basket Eddy.

Showcasing some of Erie's best musical talents, Ale House Acoustics – in this installment, and its others – is a series of events fans of live local music should mark on their calendars. – Ryan Smith

10 p.m. // 1033 State St. // [facebook.com/ErieAleHouse](https://www.facebook.com/ErieAleHouse)

Friday, Feb. 5

Nice Work If You Can Get It Brings 20s Charm to Erie Playhouse

Hot socks! The 1920's have returned! (At least on the floorboards of a local landmark theatre.)

Erie Playhouse is presenting *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, a 2012 retro-nouveau musical that's threaded together tighter than a flapper's dress.

"We decided to produce *Nice Work* as it is a mix of classic and new," said producing director Richard Davis via email. "A very funny new book by Joe DiPietro, which won the Tony award for best book, and the classic music of George and Ira Gershwin. We felt this was a show that would appeal to our audience."

Nice Work is based on the 1927 Gershwin musical *Oh, Kay!* and revamped by DiPietro. To know your onions before you get there, *Nice Work* tells of bootlegger dame Billie Bendix, who meets Jimmy Winter, a playboy egg with loads of mazuma who's soon to marry a bearcat of a modern hooper, Eileen Evergreen.

Assuming that Jimmy and Eileen have taken a powder, Billie decides it'd be the cat's pajamas for her gang to hide their giggle water in the basement of Jimmy's swanky Long Island joint. But when Jimmy, his frau-to-be Eileen, and her Bluenose prohibitionist family show up at the mansion for the sockadollager event, rather than 23 skidoo,

"A very funny new book by Joe DiPietro, which won the Tony award for best book, and the classic music of George and Ira Gershwin. We felt this was a show that would appeal to our audience."

Billie and her Johnson-brother cohorts pose as slaveys, causing hijinks galore.

But don't worry; in the end, all'll be jake.

Beyond the pageantry, beautiful costumes, scenery, and outstanding performances that are expected of a

Playhouse production, Davis pledges a pleasurable pain for attendees: "They also can expect to have their sides hurt from laughing," he said, "as this is a very funny show."

So get on the trolley and see *Nice Work*.

After all, it promises to be the bee's knees. – Gregory Greenleaf-Knepp

7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays, Feb. 5-21 // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // erieplayhouse.org or 454.2852

Saturday, Feb. 6

It's "About Time" for Sean-Patrick and The Newgrass Revolution to Play Kings Rook Club



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"This shaggy gaggle of hardworking fellows will have you smiling and singing along before you know it."

Reader music writer Nick Warren put it well when wrote that about Erie roots/rock/bluegrass renegades Sean-Patrick and the Newgrass Revolution. He was referring to *About Time*, the recent LP that made Warren's short list as one of the top three albums from Erie artists in 2015, but the same sure as hell holds true when the band is in its live – its best – form.

That's the cut Sean-Patrick and the gang will be in on Feb. 6, when they hit the Kings Rook Club's stage for a free (to 21+ members and guests) Saturday night show.

What Sean-Patrick and the Newgrass Revolution brings when they come out to play in Erie and the surrounding area, they say, is always "something soulful and real, something sad and true ... something to help you enjoy your day."

It's also something that everyone can, and should, find easy to get down to.

That's something – er, those are some things – alright. – Ryan Smith

10 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // [facebook.com/kingsrookclub](https://www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub)

Wednesday, Feb. 10

Room Tells an Intimate Story of Abduction, Escape, and Resilience.



Lenny Abrahamson's 2015 film *Room* is many things at once – a horror movie, a family drama, an examination of sexual abuse, and the survival tale of a "wild child" who grows up outside the confines of civilization. Its unique combination of elements makes for an engrossing experience, even when the occasionally overloaded narrative dulls its impact.

The story is a gruesome one: A 17-year-old girl (Golden Globe winner Brie Larson) is abducted by a sexual predator and held captive for seven years in a shed behind his house. During that time, she is raped repeatedly, gets pregnant, and raises a son who has never set foot outside of their room (hence the title). To maintain a sense of normalcy for the boy, she concocts an innovative mixture of fact and fiction about his tiny universe and how it operates.

Room is also a story of escape, adjustment, trauma, and healing. About half of its runtime occurs after they make their exit, as they process years of abuse. When the film focuses on the intimacy between mother and child, it's especially rewarding. Larson's complex performance makes the story resonate despite its more implausible plot points.

Though *Room* is careful to avoid movie-of-the-week sensationalism, I can't help but wonder what it might feel like with a less tabloid-friendly premise. Its strongest moments are, in a sense, its most familiar ones – such as a mother's efforts to shield her kid from atrocities, or a grandfather's struggle to accept a child of rape. By contrast, when the focus turns toward the news media's handling of their abduction, I'm reminded that I'm watching a movie, rather than hearing from two survivors of extreme abuse.

CALENDAR

Room is fascinating and certainly worth seeing, but in a world where the vast majority of rapes occur between intimate partners, family members, and acquaintances, its tale of villainous abduction feels like a needless contrivance. — Dan Schank

Doors at 6 p.m., Film at 7 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. // erieartmuseum.org/events/film.html

Thursday, Feb. 11

Fireworks Ensemble Sets Off at the Erie Art Museum



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

If you're looking for a run-of-the-mill show, keep looking. The Fireworks Ensemble is anything but ordinary. Like their namesake, the band is awe-inspiring, expansive, and yes, even

a little patriotic. This amplified modern chamber group will be playing selections from its recent recording, *American Tapestry*. The album, released in October, stitches together a patchwork of our nation's distinct genres. From Navajo folk to Appalachian bluegrass, the band weaves together a beautiful illustration of the American experience.

"I listen to everything" is a hyperbole thrown around far too often. In the case of this band however, it's believable. The six-piece group features a bass, cello, guitar, percussion, violin, and keyboards. They've amassed quite a slew of intriguing selections, ranging from New Order to Frank Zappa. Classical influences abound as well. Half of their second album was devoted to *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (a.k.a. *The Would-Be Noble*), a Molière comédie-ballet composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully. In addition to all of the above, they've done cartoon themes, Dolly Parton tunes, and cuts from *West Side Story*. There's something for everyone, with expert musicianship aplenty. — Nick Warren

7 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.) // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. // www.erieartmuseum.org // Free Admission, suggested donation \$20 per person

Thursday, Feb. 11

The Miserable Mrs. Head Premieres at PACA



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Three women wait for a delayed bus on Christmas Eve.

Leave it to the writer who made a hugely popular play out of a bad haircut to follow up with another deceptively mundane premise.

Playwright Richard Boler's last effort, *The Bad Haircut*, was hailed by Ben Speggen as "An intellect's delight ... grappling with the notion of humanity's disconnectedness through religion, philosophy, psychology, medicine, materialism, and spiritualism while using comedy as the vehicle to drive through the myriad challenges and issues we face in contemporary culture."

Boler says his new one-act comedy, *The Miserable Mrs. Head*, addresses a similar subject. "But I wanted to do more of a heartfelt take instead of an intellectual take," he explains.

To Boler, humor is a "celebration of human fallibility — the key word is celebration. It's not biting satire which makes people feel less of themselves."

The play is directed by Mark Tanenbaum, with Cheryl Horton-Jong, Camille Jones, Betsy Butoryak, and John Stockhausen. It takes place on Christmas Eve, because Boler "creatively always felt deeply connected to Christmas," and "felt that there was something melancholy and romantic about Christmas Eve."

Though this is not a musical, like *Haircut*, *Mrs. Head* contains original music by Boler, who describes himself as "kind of an idiot savant when it comes to songwriting, with the accent on 'idiot.'"

"Music touches something deeply human in us," he reasons, "and if the songs can do that in the context of the play, that's the whole point. The two songs in the play are not incidental. They are the emotional heart of the play; the point at which the three actresses feel sad together and feel their humanity together."

Boler surmises that "We live in this

MUSIC

Dave VanAmburg & Friends

Feb. 4, 11 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Maxi's Restaurant, 2800 W. 8th St. jazzerie.com.

Colony House Band

Feb. 4, 11 — 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Colony Pub & Grille, 2670 W. 8th St. jazzerie.com.

Inna Faliks

Feb. 5 — noon to 1 p.m.
WQLN, 8425 Peach St. wqln.org.

First Friday Concert

Feb. 5 — 12:15 to 12:45 p.m.
Dr. William P. Alexander Music Center Recital Hall, 110 Kiltie Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Friday Night Jazz

Feb. 5, 12 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

The Elektra Kings

Feb. 5 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921

Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Saturday Night Latin, Blues and More

Feb. 6, 13 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Crazy for Gershwin

Feb. 6 — 8 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. eriephil.org.

Sean Patrick & The Newgrass Revolution

Feb. 6 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Sunday Fireside Music Series

Feb. 7, 14 — 1 to 4 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main Rd. arundelcellars.com.

Meadville Jazz Jam

Feb. 7 — 2 to 6 p.m.
Meadville Market House, 910 Market St. jazzerie.com.

The Legacy of

Harry T. Burleigh

Feb. 8 — 7:30 p.m.
Cathedral of St. Paul, 134 W. 7th St. gannon.edu.

Shrove Tuesday Celebration

Feb. 9 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran Church, 2216 Peach St. gencitybands.org.

Blasco Senior Days: Classical Trumpet Recital

Feb. 11 — 1 to 2 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

Fireworks Ensemble

Feb. 11 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Baritone Edward Pleasant, Harry T. Burleigh & scholar Jean Snyder

Feb. 12 — noon to 1 p.m.
WQLN, 8425 Peach St. wqln.org.

Aqueous: Smackdab & Band of Peace

Feb. 12 — 5 p.m.
Peek'n Peak Resort, 1405 Olde Rd. pknpk.com.

Basement Transmissions Acoustic Showcase

Feb. 12 — 5:30 to 9 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.

Jason LeVasseur

Feb. 12, 13 — 8 p.m.
Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. jasonlevasseur.com.

Oakkao & Wave Trails

Feb. 12 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Deep River: The Music of Harry T. Burleigh and Antonin Dvorak

Feb. 13 — 7:30 p.m.

Cathedral Prep Auditorium, 250 W. 10th St. gannon.edu.

Vibe & Direct

Feb. 13 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Ethnic Heritage Ensemble

Feb. 15 — noon to 1 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Oh, Sleeper with Rival Choir and Special Guests

Feb. 15 — 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com/beardedbabyproductions.

DANCE

LifeWorks Erie Valentine's Day Luncheon & Dance

Feb. 12 — 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Black Heart Ball

Feb. 12 — 7 p.m.
Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. eriealeworks.com.

FOOD & DRINK

Wine Dinner Series: Wines from around the World

Feb. 4 — 6:30 p.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main St. cork1794.com.

Heart Health Veg-Out

Feb. 5 — 6 to 8 p.m.
Whole Foods Cooperative, 1341 W. 26th St. theerievegsociety.org.

Ales for Sails

Feb. 5 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Bayfront Maritime Center, 40 Holland St. bayfrontcenter.org.

Voodoo Brewery Event at U Pick 6 Public House

Feb. 5 — 8 to 10 p.m.
U Pick 6 Public House, 4575 W. Ridge Rd. facebook.com/Voodoo-Brewery-305706522795288.

Skate or Die Fest

CALENDAR

kind of sneakily dehumanized age. People are feeling stressed and distracted and overwhelmed and busy. We have progressed our way into an existence that we haven't been able to adjust to. To be sad about that is to be human."

And so, we watch three women wait for a bus and see ourselves. And as

To Boler, humor is a "celebration of human fallibility – the key word is celebration. It's not biting satire which makes people feel less of themselves."

he did with *Haircut*, Boler hopes that through that connection, "people won't feel so lonely anymore."

"These three are women who are for various reasons trying to find their way to sadness," Boler says. "That's the first step to healing."

And laughter is, of course, the best medicine. – Katie Christ

Feb. 11 - 20, Thursday, Friday, Saturday // Doors, 7:30 p.m., Curtain, 8 p.m. // \$10, BYOB with ID // 1505 State St., 2nd floor // 434.0687 or facebook.com/paca1505

Friday, Feb. 12

Black Coffee Preview



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A local theatre company will soon be serving up an antidote for Erie's cold winter blahs: *Black Coffee*.

All An Act Theatre (A3) will be presenting the 1930 Agatha Christie play that promises all the expected-unexpected thrills from the Queen of Crime.

When a scientist's powerful new explosive is stolen and its inventor done in, Belgian detective Hercule Poirot and his aide-de-camp, Captain Hastings, need to solve this double whodunit.

"Aside from the mounting sense of intrigue, red herrings, unusual characters, and plot twists, they will see a new interpretation of Poirot," said David W.

Feb. 6 — 6 p.m.
Corry VFW, 1151 Mead Ave. eriealeworks.com.

'Souper' Bowl Sunday

Feb. 7 — 1 to 3 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main Rd. arundelcellars.com.

Fat Tuesday at the Cork

Feb. 9 — 11 a.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main St. cork1794.com.

Mardi Gras - Fat Tuesday

Feb. 9 — noon to 3:30 p.m.
The Brewerrie at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

Voodoo Brewery Event at U Pick 6 Harbor House

Feb. 9 — 7 to 9 p.m.
U Pick 6 Public House, 4454 Buffalo Rd. facebook.com/Voodoo-Brewery-305706522795288.

Wine & Chocolate Weekend

Feb. 12 — 5 p.m. & Feb. 13, 14 — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Various Locations, lakeeriewinecountry.org.

5th Annual 2016 Winemaking Seminar

Feb. 13 — 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Luther Memorial Church, 225 W. 10th St. piwine.com.

Corks, Brews & BBQ

Feb. 13 — noon to 3:30 p.m.
Rainbow Gardens at Waldameer Park, 3100 W. Lake Rd. performanceandeventmgt.com.

FILM

D-Day: Normandy 1944 Movie

Feb. 3, 4 — 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. & 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trecpi.org.

Deepsea Challenge

Feb. 3, 4 — noon & 4 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula

Dr. trecpi.org.

Tiny Giants

Feb. 3, 4 — 2 p.m. & 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trecpi.org.

Met Opera: Turandot Encore

Feb. 3 — 6:30 p.m.
Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

Blazing Saddles

Feb. 3 — 2 & 7 p.m.
Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

Attack of the Eye Creatures (1965)

Feb. 4 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

What we do in the Shadows

Feb. 4 — 8:30 p.m.
Edinboro University, 405 Scotland Rd. facebook.com/edinborofilmseries.

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Valentines Day Event

Saturday & Sunday - February 14-15

Specials: Dinner for two - Include Appetizer, and a Sharable Dessert

Crab Cake Dinner w/sw. pot fries and coleslaw	\$25.00
Shrimp Ravioli in Sherry Sauce with Salad	\$25.00
Chicken Pesto Pasta with Salad	\$23.00
Chicken fingers and Fries, with coleslaw	\$16.00
Two Signature Grilles with Fries and coleslaw	\$23.00

Dessert and Coffee only: \$6.50

(Sharable Cheese cake/Cheese cake Chimi with ice cream and Bourbon Sauce/ Triple Chocolate Cake with Ice cream/Gluten Free Lava Cake with ice cream)

While Supplies Last. Reservations recommended, but not required.

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 UPSTAIRS LOUNGE *Bootleggers Bible Club*

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SAT 02/06
 SEAN PATRICK & THE NEWGRASS REVOLUTION [FREE]

FRI 02/12
 OAKKAO + WAVE TRAILS [FREE]

SAT 02/13
 VIBE & DIRECT [FREE]

FRI 02/19
 BASTARD BEARDED IRISHMEN [DOWNSTAIRS]
 + BOOTLEGGERS BIBLE CLUB [UPSTAIRS]

SAT 02/20
 SMACKDAB [FREE]

FRI 02/26
 AFTER FUNK [FREE]

SAT 02/27
 FALLING HOLLYWOOD [FREE]

FRI 03/18
 START MAKING SENSE:
 TALKING HEADS TRIBUTE
 + HMFO: HALL & OATES TRIBUTE [DOWNSTAIRS]

SAT 04/30
 JIMKATA + STERO NEST [DOWNSTAIRS]
 + GNOSIS [UPSTAIRS]

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3. South Shore Wine Co 1120 Freeport Rd. North East, PA 16428
4. Mazza Wine Shop 2006 W 8th St. Erie, PA 16505
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Mitchell, *Coffee's* director, via email. "J.D. Mizikowski brings his own unique interpretation to the role, while keeping some of the more classic elements of the character."

When a scientist's powerful new explosive is stolen and its inventor done in, Belgian detective Hercule Poirot and his aide-de-camp, Captain Hastings, need to solve this double whodunit.

And while Mizikowski's interpretation may be different, A3's dedication to performing Christie's works has become a tradition.

"We did our first Agatha Christie in 2011 with *The Unexpected Guest*, which hadn't been done in Erie in a while, and it was a huge success for us," explained Mitchell. "Since then, it has become an annual event. February is now unofficially our 'Mystery Month.'"

Black Coffee is also A3's contribution to Fringe Fest Erie 2016, an annual

event that raises money to send Gannon theatre students to Scotland to attend Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the world's largest outdoor arts festival.

"What better way to broaden the horizons of young, budding actors and actresses than to send them to the largest arts festival in the world to see and experience theatre from all over the globe?" Mitchell posited. – Gregory Greenleaf-Knepp

7:30 p.m. Fridays & Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays // Feb. 12 - March 6 // 652 W. 17th St. // 450.8553 or 449.6554, allanact.net

Monday, Feb. 15

Ethnic Heritage Ensemble Returns for a Special Black History Month Mid-day Art Break

The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble have a special connection to the Erie Art Museum. Since 1996, they've played there almost every single year. Throughout this 20-year history, they've converted many a fan. If you're still wondering why, now's your chance to find out. Though the "ensemble" may be few when it comes to personnel, the amount of musicianship is nearly infinite. The Chicago trio plays a captivating blend of Jazz and African

roots music. The group was founded in 1973 by percussionist Kahil El'Zabar. After joining the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, they began touring the world. El'Zabar was also the leader of Ritual Trio, who recorded with the likes of Pharoah Sanders and Archie Shepp. Trombonist Craig Harris will sit in as well. Harris played with Sun Ra in the late 1970s,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

and has been influential in the avant garde scene ever since. Baritone Saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett will round out the group. A founding member of the World Saxophone Quartet, Bluiett adds extraordinary chops to the enormously experienced trio. Expect the band



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

to combine traditional jazz storytelling with exciting, experimental sound explorations. Every performance is a unique experience unto itself.

The concert will serve as a special Mid-day Art Break, usually reserved for outdoor events in the summertime. The Ensemble will take the stage at noon, in the museum's multi-purpose room. The group is known for its heartfelt love of African music, so it's perfectly fitting that the event falls so close to Valentine's Day, as well as being a special Black History Month event. The performance is free, but donations are encouraged. This is a fantastic opportunity to see world-class musicians doing what they do best. – Nick Warren

Noon - 1 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. // Free Admission, donations encouraged

Camera (1929) and Enthusiasm (1931)

Feb. 5 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Bolshoi Ballet - Taming of the Shrew

Feb. 6 — 12:55 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

To Catch a Thief (1955)

Feb. 7, 10 — 2 p.m. & Feb. 10 — 7 p.m.
Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

Room

Feb. 10 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Bridal Party Massacre (2011) and The Pyx (1973)

Feb. 11 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Gone with the Wind (1939)

Feb. 13 — 6 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Pretty in Pink 30th Anniversary

Feb. 14, 17 — 2 & 7 p.m.
Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

TED '16: Dream "Opening Night" Live

Feb. 15 — 8 p.m.
Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

VISUAL ARTS

Colorama

Ongoing through Feb. 7 — 9 a.m.
Cummings Art Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Kids as Curators

Ongoing through March 13
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

The Fluidity of Gender

Ongoing through March 13
Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St. sites.allegheny.edu.

Assembled Visions

Ongoing through Mar. 26
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Plenty

Ongoing through May 7
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Art of the Comic Book

Ongoing through May. 22
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Dark Garden

Ongoing through Jan 8, 2017
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

National Juried Printmaking Invitational

Feb. 3 through Feb. 26 (Reception Feb. 4 — 5 to 7 p.m.)
Bruce Gallery, 219 Meadville

St. brucegallery.info.

Ryan Groney

Feb. 5 through Mar. 1 (Reception Feb. 6 — 2 to 4 p.m.)
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Second Sundays

Feb. 14 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Juried Student Art Show

Feb. 15 through Mar. 13 — 9 a.m. (Reception Feb. 18 — 7 to 9 p.m.)
Cummings Art Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

THEATRE

Shrek Jr.

Feb. 5, 6, 7 — 7 p.m. & Feb. 7 — 2 p.m.
Harding School Auditorium, 820 Lincoln Ave.

Nice Work If You Can Get It

Feb. 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20 — 7:30 p.m. & Feb. 14, 21 — 2 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Catch Me If You Can

Feb. 5, 12, 26 & Mar. 4 — 7 p.m. & Feb. 6, 13, 27 & Mar. 5 — 5:30 p.m.
Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

An Apartment with Grayson

Feb. 8, 9 — 8 p.m.
Zurn 101, 143 W. 7th St. gannon.edu.

42nd Street

Feb. 11 — 7:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

The Miserable Mrs. Head

Feb. 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20 — 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. facebook.com/paca1505.

Agatha Christie's

Black Coffee

Feb. 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27 & Mar. 4, 5 — 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. & Feb. 14, 21, 28 & Mar. 6 — 3 to 5 p.m.
All an Act Theatre, 652 W. 17th St. allanact.net.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites

Feb. 13 — 11 a.m. & 4 p.m.
Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Lazarus Laughed

Feb. 17, 18, 19, 20 — 8 p.m. & Feb. 21 — 2 p.m.
Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

COMMUNITY

Great Lakes Shipwreck Exhibition Featuring Lake Erie's Maritime Heritage

Ongoing through Apr. 25 — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Spring Season 2016 **The Bruce**

National Juried Printmaking Invitational

2.3 - 2.26
reception 5-7 pm 2.4

Annual Gmitter Scholarship Exhibition

3.14 - 4.1
reception 5-7pm 3.16

New Voices New Visions

Biannual D10 High school Art Invitational

4.6 - 4 - 22
reception 5 - 7pm 4.6

The Creatives are Getting Restless

Edinboro Art Department Student Show

4.27 - 5.6
reception 5-7pm 4.27

The Bruce Gallery at Doucette Hall
Edinboro University
Edinboro, Pa 16444

www.brucegallery.info
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CALENDAR

Erie BayHawks vs. Delaware

Feb. 3 — 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Minecraft Free Play

Feb. 3, 10, 17 — 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Box of Light Studios, 419 State St. boxoflight.org.

Outside the Window: Ducks

Feb. 4 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Auto Show

Feb. 4 — noon to 8 p.m. & Feb 5, 6 — 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. & Feb 7 — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

American Short Stories

Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25 — 4 to 6 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Assessing the Erie County Civic Leadership Program and the Presque Isle Connector

Feb. 4 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Technology Classes with Gannon OT Students

Feb. 5 — 10 to 11:30 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Inna Faliks Master Class

Feb. 5 — 4 to 6 p.m.
Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. eriephil.org.

Animation Free Play

Feb. 5, 12 — 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Box of Light Studios, 419 State St. boxoflight.org.

Erie BayHawks vs. Grand Rapids

Feb. 5 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Beach Glass Drilling

Valentine Style

Feb. 6 — 9 a.m. to noon
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Connect Vendor & Community Event

Feb. 6 — 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Girard Alliance Church, 229 Rice Ave. girardalliancechurch.com.

Deadly Medicine: The Science of Eugenics

Feb. 6 — 10 a.m.
McCord Memorial Library, 32 W. Main St. mccordlibrary.org.

9th Annual Multicultural Asia Day

Feb. 6 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Experience Children's Museum, 420 French St. erieapaa.org.

Winter Bird Feeding & Bird Walk

Feb. 6 — 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Queen of Hearts Luncheon and Bingo Party

Feb. 6 — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Woman's Club of Erie, 259 W. 6th St. eriewomansclub.com.

Recycled Art Class for Kids

Feb. 6 — 12:30 to 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Donnie Baker

Feb. 6 — 6:40 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Erie BayHawks vs. Sioux Falls

Feb. 6 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

2016 PA Nordic Championships

Feb. 7 — 9 a.m.
Wilderness Lodge, 13448 Weeks Valley Rd. pacsa.org.

Lake Erie

Shipwrecks and Maritime Tales

Feb. 7 — 3 to 4:30 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Vibrant Life Series

Feb. 8 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Five O'Clock Arts Hour

Feb. 8 — 5 to 7 p.m.
Box of Light Studios, 419 State St. erieartsandculture.org.

Planetarium Show: "World at Night"

Feb. 8 — 6 p.m.
Cooper Science Center, 230 Scotland Rd. edinboro.edu/planetarium.

Practical Suggestions for Surviving in the (Mis) Information Age

Feb. 8 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Great Books: Happiness and Discontent

Feb. 9, 16, 23 & Mar. 1, 8 — 1 to 2:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Great Books: Counterparts

Feb. 9, 16, 23 & Mar. 1, 8 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

County Council Meeting

Feb. 9 — 7 p.m.
Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. 6th St. eriecountypa.gov.

JFK on Being a Catholic President

Feb. 9 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Erie Otters vs. London

Feb. 10 — 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809

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Savages

Adore Life
Matador



There's an album every once in a while that you really get excited about. *Adore Life* is one of those albums. I quickly became a



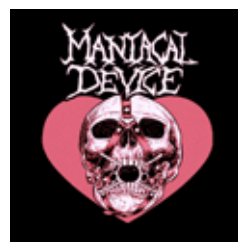
rabid fan of Savages, a proselytizer even. The sophomore record from this London four-piece finds the band honing in tighter and establishing their sound perfectly. 2013's *Silence Yourself* was a lot to live up to, but *Adore Life* succeeds. This record is more balanced than the debut. There are fewer frantic explosions and more unwavering chemical burns thrown at you. Their decidedly post-punk sound may remind you that it's time to listen to more Siouxsie and the Banshees or Joy Division, but that's only going to be good for you right? The guitars are thick, sounding like metal scraping against concrete at full volume, while the bass buzzes along deeply, and the drums sink into your skin with hypnotic acumen. Singer Jehnny Beth's vocals cast a feverish, introspective rallying cry over it all. These four women are building something powerful, intriguing, and anything but adorable. Monochromatic and monolithic, nearly every one of the 10 tracks is an energizingly poetic wall of sound. — Nick Warren

Maniacal Device

Love Skull
Eerie Records



Brutal, fast, and maybe a little evil, that's the Maniacal Device way. Fronted by Eerie punk veteran "Morbid" Rob Burke



(the Go-Go Rays, the Trashed, Sound City Saints, etc.), the band blasts out 10 songs in just under 15 minutes. Members of Slam Corps (three-fifths of them, actually), and Mala Sangre fill out rest of the band. Fans of Crossover Thrash will love Maniacal Device (the crossover is between Thrash Metal and Hardcore Punk, by the way). Imagine the frantic chugs of D.R.I. and Municipal Waste, with the slurred screams of Poison Idea and Negative Approach. Despite being rooted in well-worn sounds, *Love Skull* feels fresh. The recording is thick and tough, much more polished than any previous tracks the band had available. Songs combine darkly violent themes with sometimes light-hearted jokes. Often, the language Burke uses evokes a more sinister premise that what's going on thematically. "Hog Splitter," for example, colorfully chronicles life working in a meat plant. Maniacal Device might not be everyone, and that doesn't bother the band one bit. — Nick Warren

Daughter

Not To Disappear
4AD



Somber Echoes waft throughout *Not To Disappear*. Vocalist Elena Tonra uses her whisper to vividly create moods



both dark and grandiose. This album finds guitarist Igor Haefeli abandoning any folksy pluckings in favor of swelling, effects-laden rushes. Each part works collectively as the band moves together as one ethereal form. Anyone taken by the London trio's debut 2013 album *If You Leave* won't be disappointed. The overall effect is still haunting, and this album is still a great entry point for the band. Generally the album lingers at a soft, slow tempo, save for the Metric-sounding "No Care" (and the latter half of "Fosso"). Fans of Beach House or Bat For Lashes will feel safely at home in the midst of these songs. The lyrics show the singer grappling with isolation and loss. "It's sort of a study of loneliness from the inside out," Tonra detailed in an interview on *The Line of Best Fit*. "You just feel like you're not there, like you're invisible." The context provided, *Not To Disappear* starts to become visible. — Nick Warren

Anderson .Paak

Malibu

Steel Wool / OBE / Art Club / EMPIRE



Anderson .Paak soulfully blends hip hop and R&B into a wonderful story. The titular setting of the album is *Malibu*. Dot-



ted throughout the album are snippets of documentaries and movies, all about surfing. "The Bird" starts off softly with a personal coming-of-age story. Echoing, tinny piano mixes with muted trumpets. The album slowly ramps up as Paak begins speaking more romantically, sometimes addressing his love interest. Analog scratches paint some of the tracks before giving way to funkier, infectious grooves like "Am I Wrong." Instruments both live and sampled have a warm vibrato warble, as if finding an old, warped record. Even the most aggressive verses have a subdued feel. Guests like Schoolboy Q, the Game, and Talib Kweli all abide by the same principle guiding the whole album. Despite some low points like "Silicon Valley," there are plenty of peaks like "Celebrate." Paak became better known last year, appearing six times on last summer's Dr. Dre album, *Compton*. Setting his GPS an hour or so northwest, *Malibu* takes the listener on a smooth drive past rolling waves. — Nick Warren

French St. erieevents.com.

The Greenest Building

Feb. 10 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

RV & Motorcycle Show

Feb. 11 — 2 to 8 p.m. & Feb. 12 — noon to 8 p.m. & Feb. 13 — 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. & Feb. 14 — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

Teacher Workshop: Pennsylvania Songbirds

Feb. 11 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Rocky LaPorte

Feb. 11 — 7 p.m. & Feb. 12, 13 — 6:40 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Fasching Lights by the Ways and Means Committee

Feb. 11 — 7 p.m.
Erie Maennerchor Club, 1607 State St. gcsoc.org.

An Unlikely Trio: Washington, Lincoln & the Jesuits on Leadership

Feb. 11 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Sarah Backstorm Women's Hockey Tournament

Feb. 12, 13, 14 — noon to 8 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Harry Potter Social Night

Feb. 12 — 5:30 to 8 p.m.
Box of Light Studios, 419 State St. boxoflight.org.

Reborn: Journey's from the Abyss

Feb. 13 — 10 a.m.
McCord Memorial Library, 32 W. Main St. mccordlibrary.org.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb. 13 — 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Exploring the Border (Music and Words)

Feb. 13 — 7 p.m.
Avalon Hotel, 16 W. 10th St. chuckjoy.com.

Erie Otters vs. Kitchener

Feb. 13 — 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

11 Annual Winterfest

Feb. 14 — noon to 4 p.m.
Frontier Park, 1501 W 6th St. leaferie.org.

Knock Out Homelessness Boxing Match

Feb. 16 — 6 to 11 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

Who Really Runs America?

Feb. 16 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Volunteer Meeting

Feb. 17 — 7 to 8 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, 7180 Perry Hwy. theerievegssociety.org.

Syria: Shifting Alliances and Instability in the Middle East

Feb. 17 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Erie BayHawks vs. Maine

Feb. 17 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

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Arts

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2.13

The Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia Presents: The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites
Three beloved stories brought to life with colorful black-light puppetry

3.4

Wellington International Ukulele Orchestra
High-octane ukulele from New Zealand's hottest music/comedy ensemble

3.10

Avi Avital
Grammy-nominated mandolin virtuoso skilled in classical, jazz and folk

3.30

Dorrance Dance
Rhythmic fusion of tap and modern dance from MacArthur Genius Grant winner Michelle Dorrance

4.7

Matuto
Scorching Brazilian folk meets swampy bluegrass of the American South

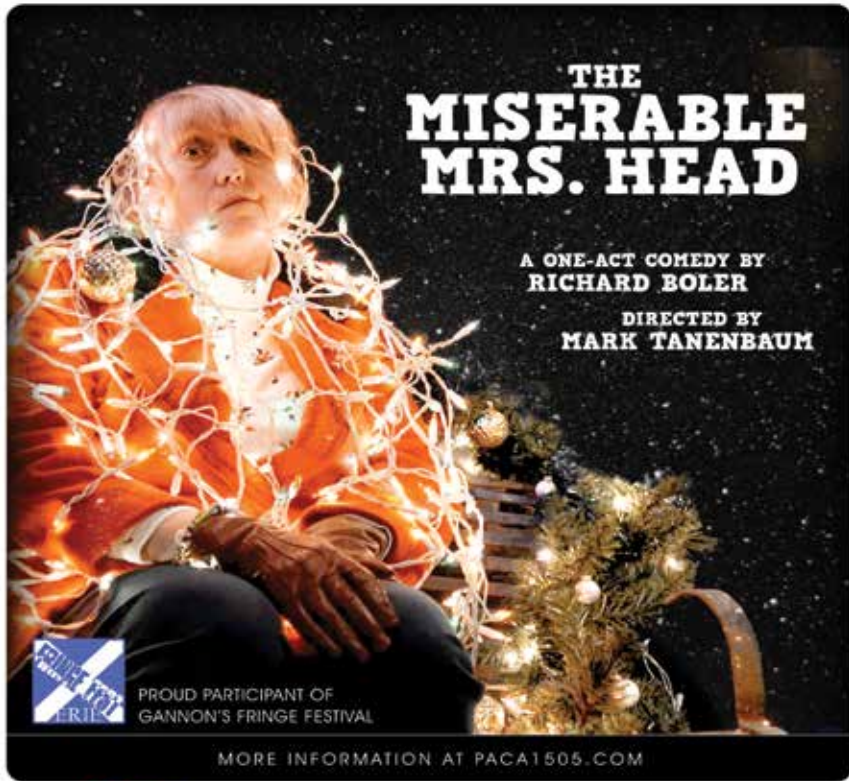
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Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom
Quicksilver contemporary jazz from powerhouse drummer Allison Miller and her sparkling supporting cast

Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture
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PACA'S 2016 THEATRICAL SEASON



THE MISERABLE MRS. HEAD

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DIRECTED BY MARK TANENBAUM



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CALENDAR

Civil Rights Leader Benjamin Jealous Discusses Issues of Race at Penn State Behrend



J. ZHANG

Rosenberg Foundation, a California-based nonprofit that provides grant funding for social justice initiatives. As the former director of the U.S. Human Rights Program at Amnesty International, he focused on issues like racial profiling and abuses in our prisons. But we're not done – he's also a Rhodes scholar, a venture capitalist, a graduate of Columbia and Oxford, and (currently) a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress.

Jealous stepped down as CEO of the

Jealous' track record of collaboration, service, and practical achievements regarding racial and social justice is uniquely inspiring.

For a man in his early forties, Benjamin Jealous has tallied enough accomplishments for a half dozen lifetimes.

When he became the CEO of the NAACP in 2008, he was only 35 – the youngest leader in the group's history. During his tenure, the organization expanded its impact through a new focus on issues like early childhood education, marriage equality, and health care. Under his leadership, the NAACP also forged surprising partnerships with conservatives like Newt Gingrich and Grover Norquist on criminal justice reform issues. In 2012, Jealous became an important voice of protest in the wake of Trayvon Martin's death, helping to produce reforms to the police department of Sanford, Fla. He also oversaw financial successes during this time. According to *USA Today*, the donor base for the NAACP grew by more than 100,000 people during his tenure, and economic prosperity ensued.

Prior to his work with the NAACP, Jealous served as president of the

NAACP in 2013 and is now a senior partner at Kapor Capital, an Oakland-based firm that provides start-up funding to entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds. He also serves as the Board Chairman of the Southern Elections Fund, which works to diversify political leadership and increase voting rights in our southern states.

Jealous' track record of collaboration, service, and practical achievements regarding racial and social justice is uniquely inspiring. If his resume leaves you a bit dizzy, imagine the pool of knowledge he'll pull from when he comes to Penn State Behrend on Feb. 15 to discuss issues of race. – Dan Schank

Feb. 15 // 7:30 p.m. in the McGarvey Commons // Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, Reed Union Building // psu.edu/student-life/student-activities-1/announcements-and-events/speaker-series



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The Toxicity of Inaction

Creating disaster is easier than you might think.



DARWIN BELL

By: Ti Sumner

“Hurricane Katrina epitomizes governmental failure,” wrote William Shughart, PhD and professor of economics at the University of Mississippi, in 2006. Shughart outlined bureaucratic myopia and inertia as two of the most fundamental reasons for the preparedness and response failures of those with means to assist the people in need at the time of the disaster.

Ten years later, the timeline and unfolding of the water crisis in Flint shows eerily similar construction to the New Orleans disaster. Both towns are home to many people living in low socioeconomic status and both were led by elected officials with narrow vision and a system based on inaction. The immediate, obvious difference between the two situations is that the hurricane was a natural disaster of very large proportion. Continuous, battering wind speeds topped out well over a hundred mph for tens of hours while pounding rain raised water levels as high as a rooftop.

The Flint water crisis arrived in a

much quieter way. Nobody told city residents to attach filtration systems to their kitchen faucets before brown water dripped into sinks and bathtubs. Nobody gave an evacuation warning, and certainly nobody gave notice of impending mass-poisoning.

In a Jan. 18 interview with the *National Journal*, Governor Rick Snyder of Michigan admitted that the Flint water crisis represented his “Katrina” when he stated, “I didn’t follow all the Katrina steps and all the issues ... [but the Flint water crisis is] clearly a negative on what we’ve accomplished since I’ve been governor.”

Unaware of his Shughart echo, Snyder went on to say, “[The Flint disaster] shows that there were multiple failures at multiple levels.” How true.

Neither disaster can be explained by simple means or in a small space. Links, however, between the makings of the disasters are quite prominent.

Any disaster, small or large, may be preceded by a few main failures in addition to multiple, smaller tributary failures. Inertia and myopia played large roles in exacerbating the Hurricane Katrina and Flint water crisis

disasters, with a few other factors contributing along the way.

Inertia is the resistance of a physical object to change its state of motion. At any point before Katrina hit, city or state officials could have lessened the degree of the storm’s impact by listening to warnings and altering their state of preparedness for a major storm. Years earlier, an independent study had shown the probable effects a Category 3 or above hurricane would have on the area. Even as the storm neared, officials at all levels could have taken a more proactive approach, shutting the city down and ordering an earlier evacuation, giving residents sufficient time to depart. Likewise, Flint city and state officials could have listened to residents sooner. Emails within the governor’s employee network show awareness of citizen complaints about foul water odor, color, and taste; and odd household illnesses as early as February, 2015.

The Flint River is Flint’s equivalent to New Orleans’ levees. In both cases, city and state officials chose financial savings over the foresight of public safety and protection. Louisiana state officials knew the levees had sunk below

a level capable of protecting the area from a storm surge, and Michigan state officials knew the Flint River was dirty. Both cases showed fiscal restraint, but from a nearsighted point of view, acknowledging only the immediate savings without taking note of the long-term threat to health and life.

In Flint’s case, an emergency manager (EM), Darnell Earley, made the decision to switch the water supply source. Gov. Snyder had appointed Earley to the position of EM to find cost-cutting ways to run the city. Prior to the switch, the city had decided to merge with the Karegnondi water authority, but that merge is not set to take effect until the water lines to Lake Huron are completed the end of 2016. In some ways, Earley was just doing his job when he chose the Flint River over Detroit’s Lake Huron water. But Earley was not a water expert. He based his decision solely on finances, not on the benefit to the people.

Water authorities tend to run more efficiently and effectively than city-governed water departments because the authority is responsible for its own budget, planning, hiring and firing, maintenance, and upgrades. Erie Water Works, which became an authority in 1992, directly receives funds from water bills. Administrators with a vested interest in the well-being of the system then reallocate money to necessary improvements.

“We are part of the public health system,” said John Presogna, Water Quality Manager of Erie Water Works (EWW). “We don’t really consider our product a utility. When we install a water pipe, we test every stage of the process to make sure it’s safe for use before we run water through the new pipe. No other utility does that.”

“We are the only ‘utility’ that has its product consumed,” added Paul Vojtek, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer. “Things we have done – upgrades we have made in the last 20 or so years have made us a first class water system.”

As self-proclaimed “water geeks,” Presogna and Vojtek talked for more than an hour about the water filtration process, Erie’s water system infrastructure, and the state-of-the-art Wasielewski plant on Sommerheim

Drive set to begin full operation in April, 2016. Since initiating infrastructure upgrades throughout the system

Water authorities tend to run more efficiently and effectively than city-governed water departments. Erie Water Works, which became an authority in 1992, directly receives funds from water bills. Administrators with a vested interest in the well-being of the system then reallocate money to necessary improvements.

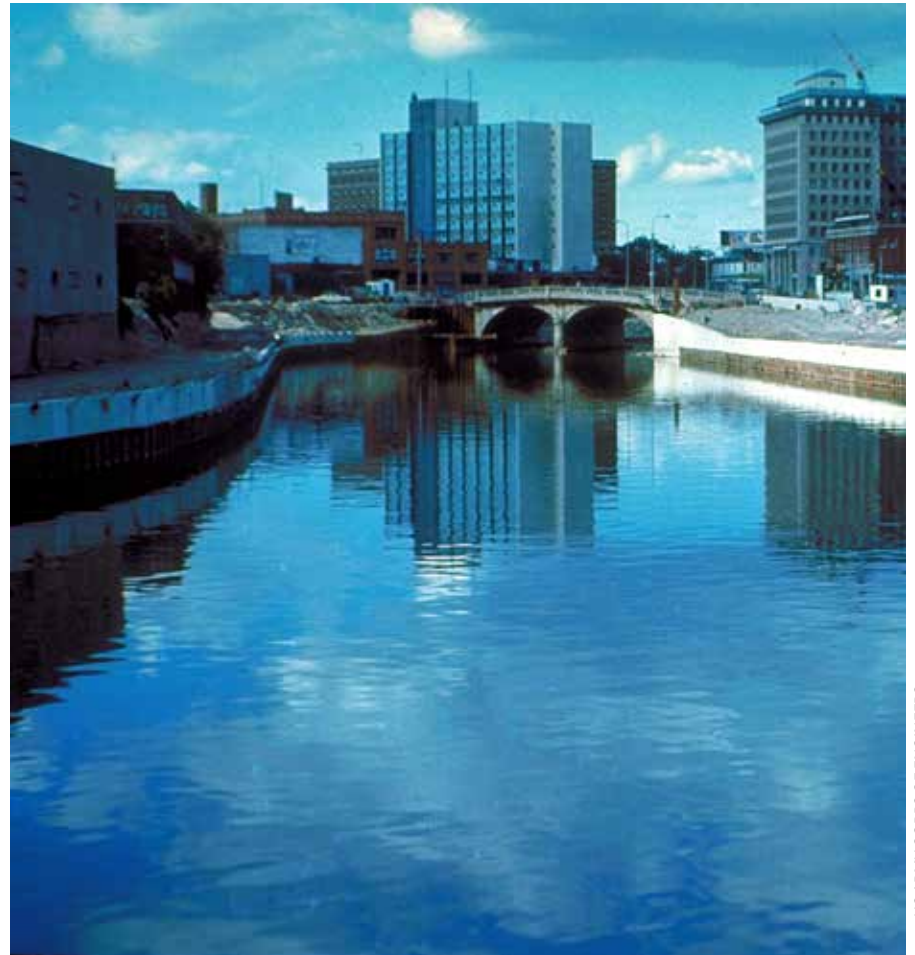
decades ago, EWW has invested nearly \$260 million. Improvements include both hardware and software updates, such as the Geographic Information System, a database-map configuration that analyzes and applies input infor-

mation to the current water infrastructure and prioritizes areas of concern on a digital map. It is the same system emergency responders use during disaster response and recovery missions.

Flint's decision to use the local water authority is a move that will save the city money and eventually provide residents with cleaner water via a more modern system. In the meantime, Flint's water system continues to operate inefficiently. As first reported by Mlive.com, an online news source for the state of Michigan, the Flint water system is so antiquated that all information about city household plumbing is kept on 45,000 hand-written index cards in a file cabinet.

"Outdated water infrastructure is common," said Nate Drag, Watershed Project Coordinator at the Alliance for the Great Lakes. "Updates are expensive and the plumbing with old houses often contains lead. Cities clean the

The Flint River is Flint's equivalent to New Orleans' levees. In both cases, city and state officials chose financial savings over the foresight of public safety and protection. Michigan state officials knew the Flint River was dirty.



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water but then send it to homes in old pipes. ... nobody wants to spend the kind of money [required for updates].”

Indeed. The question is this: is the aging of water piping systems across America – a fact that borders on gross negligence in some cases – a result of nearsighted leadership, insufficient funding, or lack of properly informed residents to push the issues? All three factors likely played a part in Flint. The differences between a city-run water system in Flint and a water authority here in Erie are stark.

“We use all this technology because we take a lot of pride in the quality of our water,” continued Vojtek. “It’s reliable and it’s safe.”

The same could not be said about the product in Flint. Upon hearing of water quality complaints from residents, Flint city officials instructed residents to fill bottles for lead testing, but to run the faucet for several minutes before obtaining samples for the lab. Since more lead leaches into the water

Everything that goes down the house drain or storm drain ends up in the lake. Sweep the driveway, don’t hose it down, and don’t over-fertilize. If you put something on your lawn or garden to grow a plant, that same something will grow toxic algae in the lake.

system over time, still water resting in direct contact with lead pipes contains more lead.

EWV uses a method called the first-draw sample. Once every three years, they send bottles to 50 homes with the highest risk of lead contamination. These are mostly homes that were built before 1930.

“We tell customers: when you wake up in the morning, before you do anything – before you flush the toilet or brush your teeth, go down and fill up the bottle with the first water from your faucet,” Presogna said. “We want to test the water that has been sitting in someone’s pipes all night.”

“We want the worst case numbers to know if there is a problem,” explained Vojtek. “When we install our updates

around the city, we only use lead-free pipes. But during certain periods, homes were built with lead pipes in their plumbing. Sometimes the lead pipe is very short, but it’s enough to leach lead into the drinking water. Every water test will reveal a trace of lead or other inorganic compounds, but since we started treating the water with orthophosphate in the mid-90s, we have never had an average lead reading above the EPA’s minimum allowable level.”

For lead pipes, orthophosphate is the Pepto-Bismol protective coating, and for Flint residents, it was the protection missing from their Flint River water supply.

“Orthophosphate bonds to bare metal, preventing direct contact between water and the pipes. When a phosphate coating is present, lead and copper will not leach into resident’s drinking water,” Presogna explained.

Due to its toxicity to humans and its presence in the Flint city water system, lead is the big topic right now, but it is not the only contaminant of concern.

“It is important that we keep our water supplies as clean as possible,” Drag said. “Everything that goes down the house drain or storm drain ends up in the lake. Sweep the driveway, don’t hose it down, and don’t over-fertilize,” were a few of Drag’s suggestions for keeping Lake Erie cleaner. “If you put something on your lawn or garden to grow a plant, that same something will grow toxic algae in the lake.”

Drag’s final suggestion is to encourage action in our elected officials regarding disaster prevention.

“It’s important for senators and Congress to know that we want to improve in these areas,” Drag said. “It’s not cheap and it helps if they know that we care.”

As new information is revealed daily about the Flint water crisis, the Erie area is reminded of things to be thankful for and things to be mindful about. If we don’t want to follow the ways of the aforementioned inert and myopic leaders, we should be willing to ask government to spend money in non-sexy ways to improve safety and revitalize communities.

Do something big or do something little, but don’t just stay the course. Don’t feed the algae.

Ti Sumner can be contacted at TiSumner@ErieReader.com.

Geeked Out

A Good Snowman is Hard to Build.



By: John Lindvay

A *Good Snowman is Hard to Build* is a puzzle game about, well, building snowmen. It is deceptively simple and wonderfully appropriate for the mid-winter blues.

A Good Snowman is a Sokoban-style puzzle game. While many of you might not have heard of the term Sokoban before, it is very likely you’ve played a Sokoban puzzle game. Sokoban means “warehouse keeper,” and it refers to a style of 2D puzzle games where players must push blocks to find the exit or solution to the puzzle. Some of the earliest games you might have played probably involved pushing blocks around.

I love this particular interpretation of puzzle games a lot. It makes the simple gameplay of pushing balls around into this delightful experience of constructing a snowman. In *A Good Snowman* there are three differently sized balls that are used to build a snowman. You must roll them in order, largest to smallest, to construct the snowman. After doing so, the familiar trappings of a snowman are then popped on and we can see the name of our new friend. Click on the completed snowman and our lumbering character gives it a hug.

Yes, a hug. I told you this game was delightful.

The puzzles escalate in difficulty, but not in a way that will leave you frustrated. At first you are rolling the balls around on clear ground, but later on you must roll through snow which increases the size, adding another layer of planning to the mix. Alan Hazelden, the game’s creator, has been making puzzle games like

this for a long time and I have loved every one of the games I’ve played of his, but *A Good Snowman* is his best work yet. The learning curve and solutions feel natural and just at your fingertips.

The game is lush and full of wonderful interactions with the various objects your character discovers in this wintry garden. You can sit on a park bench and the map will zoom out, giving you the lay of the land. See a tree give it a kick! It has a toylike quality in that all objects can be tapped and we are given a reaction.

A Good Snowman has become a treat I return to in the winter to remind me of those cold winter nights back in Erie. I often like to think of games not just as pieces of media we consume, but as confidants: friends and companions. Why else would we keep the cases on shelves long after we finish playing, other than to look at them longingly to remember the fun times we had together. *A Good Snowman* is similar to a good friend, who challenged you but always found a way to help keep you motivated. A good friend also doesn’t block you or force you to struggle. A good friend knows when to give you space and let you wander.

The game was originally released last February on PC/MAC/Linux, and just last December it was released on iOS and Android. So while it might be a bit blustery outside, it’s always a pleasure to cozy up to a nice puzzle game to help pass the time.

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

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BRAD TRIANA

Patrick Catalde's Art is a Delicate Balance

It's tempting to impart all sorts of symbolic meaning on Patrick Catalde's work. To imply that by balancing rocks, he's showing us the beauty of balance in life. That by working with ice — one of nature's most transient materials — he's teaching us the great lesson of impermanence: everything changes, nothing lasts — and what is here now is worthy of our full attention.

In working so spontaneously and elementally, Catalde continues a concept perhaps most famously represented by Andy Goldsworthy, internationally known for his work both with and within the natural world. Goldsworthy reminds us, "We often forget that WE ARE NATURE. Nature is not something separate from

us. So when we say that we have lost our connection to nature, we've lost our connection to ourselves."

But Catalde, who shares images of his creations with over 700 followers on Facebook as Rockface Treestack, posts accompanying "status updates" that defy highbrow descriptions. He writes, "some are simplistic and, dare I say, elegant in their defiance ... and some are more not like that" and "turns out ice is more willing a participant than I had previously imagined ... who'd a thunk it?"

Catalde might just want us to take a look and lighten up, already. And maybe that's the best lesson of all. — Katie Chriest

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