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ERIE READER

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The only local voice for news, arts, and culture.

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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. 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 300 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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Derailments, spills, and explosions beg the question: Are safety measures enough?

Spotlight on Erie 21

Here we are now. Entertain us.

CORRECTION: The March 2, 2016 cover art was laid out and designed by Nick Warren, not Brad Triana. Sorry for any confusion this may have caused.

From the Editors

It's time for our crude awakening.

I'll tell you right now there isn't a community out there that's prepared to have a train explosion in the middle of their downtown. Once it happens, it happens. You're not going to stop it, unless you take mitigation steps like, hey, let's build a pipeline instead of shipping this stuff through and around a quarter of the world's fresh drinking water supply. I'm in the business of managing risk. Putting this stuff in a virtual pipeline that moves is not a good way to manage risk. ... I can only imagine one of these trains going through downtown Erie at noon on a Tuesday. You know you're going to have a death toll, regardless of any amount of emergency planning and preparedness.

That's what Erie County Emergency Management Director Dale Robinson told writer Lisa Gensheimer when she contacted him regarding this issue's cover story about oil trains – often referred to, appropriately, as “bomb trains” – making their way through Erie County and downtown Erie daily.

One of the most high-profile crude oil derailments occurred on July 6, 2013, in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. The accident killed 47 people, destroyed the downtown, and spilled over 1.5 million gallons of crude oil – the same crude oil that travels through Erie every day.

After the disaster's immediate impacts, more long-term crises – like downstream drinking water bans and contaminated agricultural soil – have made a return to normal life impossible.

One can only imagine what might happen if a derailment happened here. Yes, the chances are slim. But is that a risk we can afford to take?

One can only imagine what might happen if a derailment happened here. Yes, the chances are slim. But is that a risk we can afford to take?

As Gensheimer writes, “Lac-Mégantic is the poster child for crude oil train disasters, but it's not alone. Since Lac-Mégantic, more than two dozen accidents and hundreds of so-called minor incidents involving crude oil occurred in the United States, according to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which is responsible for oversight.”

Before running this story, we at the *Reader* talked a lot about how best to present it. It's the sort of tale easy to dismiss as the exaggerated efforts of environmentalists trying to scare everybody into ending a powerful, polluting industry's reign.

But an exploding train doesn't care whether you're conservative or liberal, rich or poor. It doesn't care what color you are or how you worship. Whether you live near the tracks or just work near them during the week. Whether you're adult or school-aged, healthy or hospitalized.

It sounds elementary. We know.

But we also know that when it comes to safety protocols, the voices of those who stand to benefit economically from transporting crude oil by rail are – as usual – disproportionately louder; and that justifiable opposition from concerned citizens, taxpayers, and business and property owners from all walks of life gets silenced.

As Robinson summarized it to Gensheimer, “We're letting private industry and politicians who support them say, hey, yeah, we understand the risks, but because of profits and politics, we're going to throw that risk aside. And that's the criminal part of this whole thing that nobody wants to talk about.”

Let's start talking about it, Erie.

Just a Thought

Water brings life to Death Valley (and all of us).

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SHELDON PETERSON

By: Katie Chriest

I've just returned to Erie from a visit to the California desert, where Death Valley National Park is in the midst of a "super bloom" – a once-per-decade or so phenomenon that brings long-dormant wildflower seeds bursting to vibrant life.

Extracting metaphors from the desert is almost too easy, like painting by numbers or consulting a *Metaphors for Dummies* book. Plants grow in little communities, unabashedly dependent on one another for shelter and survival, and able to slow their growth in humbling lean years.

Most obvious both metaphorically and in reality, though, is how usable water creates the singular conditions for survival.

As we drove into Death Valley this time, rolling hills and roadside ditches that previously appeared barren were awash in wildflowers. From a distance, it looked as though a painter had highlighted the contours of hillsides with dandelion yellow, brighter in the fetch-

ing curves where two hills meet. Even flowerless hills glowed green in the desert sunlight.

Incidentally, the same autumn floods that created this super bloom washed out the road south of Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America, and made the eccentrically built Scotty's Castle unvisitable by tourists.

In short: What humans made was destroyed, what nature makes flourished.

Resilient as always, nature adapted. It didn't debate about what caused the flood, or who is to blame, or who should pay for it. It did not waste the extraordinary bounty of fresh water it was lucky enough to acquire, free and clear. Instead, nature reacted in the only way that makes sense, given the rarity of such a gift: it bloomed.

Blooms also abounded across the Mojave in Joshua Tree National Park, in breathtaking variety and color. Throughout the park, informational signs described the ways of Native American tribes who made their lives there for hundreds of years. In fact, the Joshua Tree area – deemed barren and

uninhabitable by early white surveyors – has actually supported human life for at least 5,000 years, according to the National Park Service.

So clearly, humans know how to adapt, too.

It's striking to realize that the human/nature dichotomy we've grown accustomed to is really a relatively recent construct. These tribes would undoubtedly not have understood how or why we humans could make sense of our existence as apart from nature, given the indisputable fact that we are completely dependent on the natural world – and especially water – for our survival.

They would have felt, presumably, that nature is thus not something for us to "save" if it aligns with our political beliefs to do so. We are nature.

Who would subscribe to political beliefs that encourage self-destruction?

On the day we returned to Erie, the air was thick with springtime fog. Fields held standing water, and creeks flowed fully.

The difference was striking.

In this obvious land of plenty, it's easy to become complacent about the abundance of fresh, clean water.

Resilient as always, nature adapted. It didn't debate about what caused the flood, or who is to blame, or who should pay for it. It did not waste the extraordinary bounty of fresh water it was lucky enough to acquire, free and clear. Instead, nature reacted in the only way that makes sense, given the rarity of such a gift: it bloomed.

But if we are to survive locally, we must do everything we can – even if that means adapting – to protect our own enormous gift: our Great Lake.

Without it, none of the collaboratives, or comprehensive plans, or development strategies, or creative entrepreneurship we value can bloom.

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

It's Time for Erie to Ban the Box

Ex-convicts deserve a fair chance at employment.



By: Ben Spегgen

Nearly five years ago, Philadelphia became the first Pennsylvania city to “ban the box” on March 31, 2011. Thus, Philadelphia joined the international campaign – led by civil rights advocates and groups representing ex-convicts – to legally restrict employers from requiring job-seeking applicants to reveal on job applications whether they have a criminal record.

Pittsburgh followed suit Dec. 17, 2012. Pennsylvania’s second-largest city passed two separate ban the box ordinances – one applying to city employees, the other to contractors.

Most recently, Lancaster, Pennsylvania banned the box in Sept. 2014 for city workers. Less than a week later, Lancaster City Council began urging other Lancaster employers to do the same.

With these three cities – along with Allegheny County, which passed its ban the box countywide initiative in Nov. 2014 – Pennsylvania ranks

In Nov. 2015, President Barack Obama called federal employers to remove the box from the early stages of the job application process.

among the 14 states in which at least one city or county has implemented a fair-chance policy aimed at creating a level playing field for ex-cons seeking employment. But the Keystone State stands out among its neighboring states in its ban the box progress.

According to the National Employment Law Project, 19 states have a state law or statewide fair-chance employment policy. Seventeen states have no such law. Of the states surrounding Pennsylvania, only West Virginia features no fair-chance policy; all others – Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio – have statewide policies.

The next closest state to Pennsylvania with laws or policies in only part of the state is Michigan, where four cities and two counties have passed such ordinances. Next is the crescent, starting in Indiana **[Cont. on page 7]**

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[Cont. from page 5] (one city) that runs southeast through Kentucky (one city) and Tennessee (one city, one county) and eastward to North Carolina (six total localities).

For Erie, banning the box could happen on three levels: state, city, or county. Erie shouldn't wait, however, for Pennsylvania to take action. Rather, Erie City Council should follow the leads of Lancaster, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh by introducing city-wide policy. And Erie County Council should heed Allegheny County's 2014 decision to ban the box countywide.

Why?

Locally, it would – through law – address a proposal Bishop Dwayne Brock issued in early February 2016 during an open-to-the-public meeting hosted by the African American Concerned Clergy of Erie in response to Unified Erie. In short, during his speech, Brock called for employers to hire at least two convicted felons. Instead of hiring felons and making a big deal about that – are we to host media conferences? to cut ribbons? to award medals? – why not remove the barriers encumbering those looking to rebuild their lives after serving their sentences? That speaks most directly to fairness.

Make no mistake: Asking job applicants up front whether they have a criminal record affects the hiring process. And make no additional mistake: Banning the box does not remove a background check in the hiring process. And make no further mistake: Banning the box has national momentum.

In Nov. 2015, President Barack Obama called federal employers to remove the box from the early stages of the job application process. "If the disclosure of a criminal record happens later in a job application process," Obama said, "you're more likely to be hired." Obama went on to note how when employers see the checked box, they're less likely to advance applicants in the process – regardless of qualifications. But without a box to color such judgment, employers are more likely to call in applicants based on credentials pertaining to the job. Meeting face-to-face, the President added, gives applicants a chance to explain their history better.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Institute of Justice, 60 percent of those

released from prison cannot secure employment within a year of their sentence ending. Of those who do, 40 percent receive less income than their colleagues without records. The Bureau of Justice Statistics also reveals that as many as 100 million Americans have a criminal record now – which results from mass incarceration.

In the 1860s, Irish immigrants responded to the racial prejudices and barriers to employment they faced at the time by singing. Songs like "No Irish Need Apply" became the unity cry in response to signs plastered about London, reading: "Help Wanted: No Irish Need Apply."

Today, those signs are boxes on job applications aimed at ex-cons who

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are reentering society in states and cities with no fair-chance ordinances. They have already served sentences fit to their crimes. Encumbrance to employment should not be the sentence served after the one handed down by the legal system.

Erie City Council and Erie County Council both have the ability to outright ban the box, thereby making the employment-seeking process fair to all applicants. It's time the Erieities start singing the "Ban the Box" tune to see whether Erie City or Erie County Councils are willing to listen; or more boldly, to sing along.

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

The Presque Isle Lighthouse

An inspirational symbol of Erie's tenacity



The Presque Isle Lighthouse is shown here in a watercolor painting by James Mann of Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, who created this painting after a trip to Presque Isle while gathering inspiration for his ArtFarm website, jamesmannartfarm.com.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: James McQuiston

The City of Erie, with its architecture, history, and, of course, Lake Erie, has provided a lot of inspirational fodder for artists and writers. One edifice in this city has long served as a subject for photographers, illustrators, and painters, and has provided thousands of words for articles, books, diaries, and tour maps.

With all of this to its credit, this edifice has also managed to literally guide people and, in many cases, save lives. For 143 years, it has been defying the darkness of night, the storms of the seas, the hard-to-reach skies, and the hardships of the years that have rolled by.

We're talking, of course, about the Presque Isle Lighthouse, shown here in a watercolor painting by James Mann of Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, who created this painting after a trip to Presque Isle while gathering inspiration for his ArtFarm website, jamesmannartfarm.com.

Constructed in 1873, this beacon of safety and source of inspiration, found as part of many illustrations, paintings, signs, logos, stationery, and more, has stood pretty much as it was when first built, except for an increase in the tower height back in 1896. It has become a symbol of the stalwart na-

ture and undying spirit of Erie itself.

Still operated as a working lighthouse by the U.S. Coast Guard, the grounds and building have been leased for a period of 35 years by the Presque Isle Light Station Cor-

poration, a non-profit set up with three goals in mind.

First, the light station will be restored to a historical point dating from 1901 to 1927. This era was chosen as the oldest period where there were substantial photos and a few paintings available to document how it would have looked at the time. One reason there were so many images – in addition to this being a time when photography became easily available to the common person – is that, in the last few years of this period, a road actually ran in front of the lighthouse, between the station and the beach. Traffic was considerable and people stopped constantly to photograph, paint, and illustrate the wonder in front of where they were parked.

Some historic restoration will begin in the spring of 2016, with oversight being provided by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). Plans call for the replacement of the current metal chain-link fence with a historically accurate wooden fence. Also, the oil shed will be repainted to its original red brick color. The tower will receive some minor repair work in accordance with the historic goals set forth by the board of directors.

Second, the board is set on keeping the lighthouse **[Cont. on page 10]**

News of the Weird

Order in the court! But please: no pajamas.

By: **Chuck Shepherd**

Take That, Portland!

Seattle's ambitious Office of Arts & Culture has allocated \$10,000 this year to pay a poet or writer to create a work while present on the city's Fremont Bridge drawbridge. The office's deputy director told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in January that the city wants to encourage "public art" and that the grant will oblige the recipient to create a work of prose or poetry from the bridge's northwest tower, to help the people of Seattle understand the function of art in the city. (The artist will not be "in residence," for the tower has no running water.) [Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1-14-2016]

The Continuing Crisis

The dominant-submissive lifestyle soared to higher-brow status in February when The New York Times reported on the recent marriage of the celebrated composer of "moody, queasy" works (and compulsive dominant) Georg Friedrich Haas to Mollena Williams, who blogs introspectively about her

own kinky bondage as "The Perverted Negress." Friedrich had introduced himself to her on a dating site with the note, "I would like to tame you," and credits her acceptance for his improved productivity -- because, he said, "I am not (any longer) disturbed by unfulfilled thoughts." Although Williams-Haas is a black woman submitting to a white man, she explained that, "To say I can't play my personal psychodrama out just because I'm black, that's racist." [New York Times, 2-24-2016]

New World Order

Exasperated, Columbia County (Pennsylvania) District Judge Craig Long felt the need to post a sign outside his courtroom in January informing visitors that they should not wear pajamas to court. However, even Judge Long acknowledged that his admonition was not enforceable and that he was merely trying to encourage minimal standards. [WNEP-TV (Moosic, Pa.), 1-29-2016]

- "Microaggression": In its brand-new communications stylebook this

year for city workers, San Diego officials noted that the city's then-upcoming Presidents' Day announcements should, to be bias-free and inoffensive, never refer to America's "Founding Fathers" -- even though they were all males -- but only to "founders." [Pacific Justice Institute press release, 2-8-2016]

Bright Ideas

The roadside billboard giant Clear Channel Outdoor Americas announced in February that it would soon be recording the cellphone locations of drivers who pass the company's signs in 11 cities in order to give advertisers more information on how to pitch products to people with those particular travel patterns and behaviors. Clear Channel asserts that no individual identifications would be sought, but privacy advocates fret about potential abuses, and even a Clear Channel executive acknowledged that the program "does sound a bit creepy." (On the other hand, as Clear Channel pointed out to The New York Times, cellphone users' locations and char-

acteristics are already being extensively monitored by advertisers.) [New York Times, 2-28-2016]

"Medical" marijuana will take on a new meaning soon if the Food and Drug Administration approves Foria Relief cannabis vaginal suppositories for relieving menstrual pain (from the California company Foria). Currently, the product is available only in California and Colorado, at \$44 for a four-pack. The company claims the inserts are targeted to the pelvic nerve endings, but International Business Times, citing a gynecologist-blogger, noted that the only studies on the efficacy of Foria Relief were done on the uteruses of rats. [International Business Times UK, 2-2-2016]

Not the Usual Suspects

A then-married couple, both graduates of elite California law schools, were convicted of felonies and went to jail briefly two years ago for a criminal scheme inexplicably tawdry -- and in February 2016 lost a resultant civil lawsuit for \$5.7 million to the

scheme's victim. A woman at their child's school had referred to the lawyers' son as "slow," enraging Kent Easter (University of California at Berkeley) and then-wife, Jill (UCLA), who retaliated by planting drugs and paraphernalia in Kelli Peters' car and then, a man identified via circumstantial evidence as Kent (with an accent as if from India), called in a DUI tip to police, resulting in Peters' arrest. According to Peters, neither perpetrator has ever expressed remorse, and although Kent admitted to "stupidity," he now complains that Peters does not deserve her windfall (like a "Powerball winner," he said). [Orange County Register, 2-6-2016]

The online-pornography colossus Pornhub's charity fundraising promotion during February benefited the Moclips Cetological Society ("Save the Whales") in honor of World Whale Day on Feb. 13. Its news release celebrated whales' sexuality -- that they, like humans, do not limit their horniness to procreation. The company said it would, from Feb. 8 to Feb. 29, donate a penny for every

2,000 videos played on its ubiquitous free websites. (That offer might appear modest, but a Seattle Post-Intelligencer reporter noted, over the first two days, the world's porn consumers had played 532 million videos -- earning the charity \$2,660.) [Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 2-10-2016]

Can't Possibly Be True

Vicky Leyton, 72, announced her retirement recently in Benidorm, Spain, over health concerns, but the lady's 30-year run in her one-of-a-kind, "Sticky Vicky" magic show can hardly be forgotten by the 6 million fans who have witnessed it. Trained as a ballerina but emulating magicians who pull rabbits out of top hats, Vicky extracted an impressive array of items, also -- from the body cavity that is occasionally the subject of News of the Weird stories. One review in Spain's El Pais newspaper described a typical inventory: fluffy flags, flowers, ping-pong balls, sausages, eggs, a string of razor blades, a bottle and a light bulb (that was aglow!). [The Local (Madrid), 2-22-2016]



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NEWS & VIEWS

[Cont. from page 7] tower open for tours for as many days as possible in 2016, stretching from Memorial Day through Labor Day. In 2015, the tower was open for only 30 days and yet had over 5,300 visitors, most of them climbing the 78 stairs to the top for a previously unavailable view of Lake Erie. Each group consisted of just 10 climbers and so this made for some long days for volunteers.

The goal, going forward, is to keep the light station open five days a week. This will undoubtedly double or possibly even triple the number of visitors. In addition, the board is looking at ways to open the light station for private and public events.

Third, in order to meet modern safety requirements and provide additional convenience to lighthouse visitors, the board will implement several improvements in the spring of 2016. These will include public restrooms being provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Also on the docket for spring will be the construction of an Operation Center, which will house an office, gift shop, and staging area for the tours. Finally, there will be the addition of safety lighting, benches, and new sidewalks.

In order to achieve these three goals,

the Presque Isle Light Station is open to memberships, donations, and especially volunteers. More about these opportunities can be found at presqueislelighthouse.org.

In the end, this project is estimated to cost around \$2 million, and it is almost

The board is set on keeping the lighthouse tower open for tours for as many days as possible in the 2016 season. In 2015, the tower was open for only 30 days and yet had over 5,300 visitors, most of them climbing the 78 stairs to the top for a previously unavailable view of Lake Erie.

certain that this important effort will ensure the future of the Presque Isle Lighthouse as a major source of inspiration for all who witness its beauty and grandeur.

James McQuiston is a local historian, author and musician who has spent 45 years in the publishing field, with several books and articles to his credit. Now retired, he is volunteering his time and expertise as a board member for the Presque Isle Light Station.

THE WRITER MOLLY IVINS SAID A PERSON CAN'T GET ELECTED PRESIDENT WITHOUT HAVING SOME ELVIS. SAD, BUT POSSIBLY TRUE! HOW DO THE CURRENT CANDIDATES STACK UP?

		ELVIS SCORE
BERNIE SANDERS	GYRATES ELBOWS INSTEAD OF PELVIS, BUT DOES INSPIRE ELVIS-LIKE FANDOM	1/2 ELVIS
HILLARY CLINTON	SQUINT REALLY HARD, AND YOU CAN ALMOST SEE ELVIS IN HER HAIR	1/4 ELVIS
MARCO RUBIO	TOTAL ABSENCE OF ALL ELVIS	0 ELVIS
TED CRUZ	TINGE OF SINISTER SOUTHERN PREACHER	2 EVIL ELVI
DONALD TRUMP	LIKE SLOPPY, LATE-PERIOD ELVIS WHO HAS LOST ALL SELF-CONTROL, EXCEPT WORSE	3 BLOATED DRUG-ADDLED ELVI

DOES THE KIND OF ELVIS MATTER? STAY TUNED THROUGH NOVEMBER TO FIND OUT!

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Plovers in Paradise

Migrating south in search of bird royalty

By: Mary Birdsong

We are slowly motoring in a skiff along the eastern side of Ambergris Caye in the Berry Islands of the Bahamas. The water is turquoise, the sand is soft and white. The temperature is in the low 80s. It is January 31. Yes, I am very, very lucky.

With me are Walker Golder, the Deputy Director of Audubon North Carolina, and Sarah Sargent, Program Manager for Bird Conservation at Audubon Pennsylvania. We are here to find the elusive piping plover, a bird that breeds across the northern U.S. and Canada, but wings south for the winter, to Florida or the Bahamas – a magnificent journey for a bird weighing about two ounces.

They are elusive because their existence is threatened; as of 2012, the aggregate number of all the piping plovers existing in the world was roughly 8,000 birds. Which is why, to better understand plovers' condition, an international cen-

sus is conducted every five years to find and count plovers on their wintering grounds.

Golder, Sargent, and I are part of a group of hundreds of scientists, birders, and volunteers spread out across the Bahamas in search of this remarkable bird. The team not only counts plovers, it also evaluates the habitat and looks for evidence of intrusions – such as invasive species and human development – threatening the slim slivers of beach they call home for six months.

Piping plovers are classified as shorebirds, meaning they spend most of their time near the water to feed, rest, and breed. They are small and chunky, about six and one-half inches long, and are mostly white and a sandy gray with

Shawn Collins took this photo of a piping plover at Conneaut Harbor, Ohio, in 2014. Recently, writer Mary Birdsong discovered that she and her colleagues had observed the very same bird in the Bahamas this past winter.



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The Great Lakes population of plovers, which we track at Presque Isle State Park, is the most critically endangered of the three distinct North American groups. The birds summering on the Atlantic coast and in the Great Plains account for most of the 8,000 birds mentioned above. The Great Lakes population accounts for a mere 3.6 percent of that total. So, besides our search for all piping plovers, Sargent and I are hoping to find some Great Lakes plovers.

As we close in on the southern tip of Ambergris, a small group of birds skitters along the shore. We disembark and slowly make our way towards the group of birds roosting on the beach. As we near them, it becomes apparent hundreds of shorebirds are roosting, including what looks like a healthy flock of piping plovers. Pay dirt.

After three hours of standing bent over our spotting scopes, we have counted and recounted every bird species on the beach, and have recorded on paper and with photographs every piping plover we can find with identifying bands on their legs. We have found 211 plovers, six of them banded. Most exciting for us is finding two birds that hail from the Great Lakes population.

Two doesn't seem like many, but finding a Great Lakes plover is always exciting since we see so few of them here at Presque Isle. From April to June each year I have a part-time job with Audubon Pennsylvania as a shorebird monitor at the park. This means a daily walk from the lighthouse to Gull Point – designated as critical habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – looking for plovers stopping by to feed or looking for a place to nest. We often see five or fewer each year.

In 1986 when the plover was first listed as endangered, the Great Lakes population had only 17 known pairs – 34 birds total. Once nesting throughout the Great Lakes, including at Gull Point at Presque Isle until the 1950s, the remaining 34 birds were only living in a small area of northwest Michigan.

In 2015, after much effort on the part of conservationists, the plovers reached a new high of 75 nesting pairs. They have also re-expanded their range to the shores of all the Great Lakes, except Erie. Those 75 parents fledged 128 chicks and seven more chicks were raised by hand after their nests or parents were compromised.

At the end of last summer, then, there

were about 285 Great Lakes piping plovers in the entire world.

Those of us who follow the modest comeback of piping plovers are cautiously hopeful that Lake Erie will once again host a pair or more. Work over the past few years to eliminate invasive plant species at Gull Point has improved the habitat there. Last June, one piping plover (I named him Blue Boy) stayed for about two weeks. Alas, no female ever showed up to join him.

Blue Boy is just one small bird, but he represents the entire, albeit small, population to me. When we saw some of his fellow Great Lakes plovers in the Bahamas, I got a first-hand look at the marvelous journey these birds make every year. The Great Lakes birds we saw on Ambergris flew more than 1,400 miles from northwest Michigan. The birds going to Florida only fly 100 miles fewer.

In the Bahamas, I felt a little bit more the dangers and risks these birds take to act out their ingrained instinct. The surrounding ocean felt bigger, vulnerability whistled in the constant ocean wind. Home felt farther away.

While standing there watching in the Bahamas, I felt as if I migrated with them; felt a little bit more the dangers and risks they take to act out their ingrained instinct. The surrounding ocean felt bigger, vulnerability whistled in the constant ocean wind. Home felt farther away.

This is a good and humble thing for a human to feel.

And that feeling reframed for me the importance of Gull Point yet again. Although small – Gull Point comprises just 67 of the 3,112 acres of the park – it is the only place in Pennsylvania where the habitat is appropriate for piping plovers to nest. It should be a point of pride for all of us to host these rare birds and we should do all we can to welcome them here.

In other words: Yes, we are very, very lucky.

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

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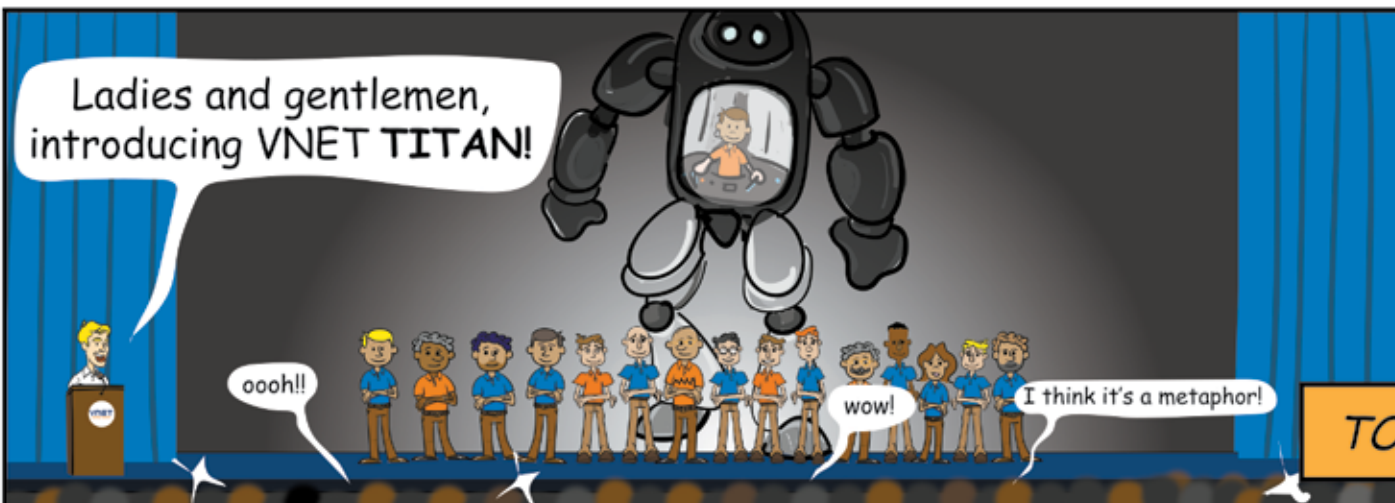
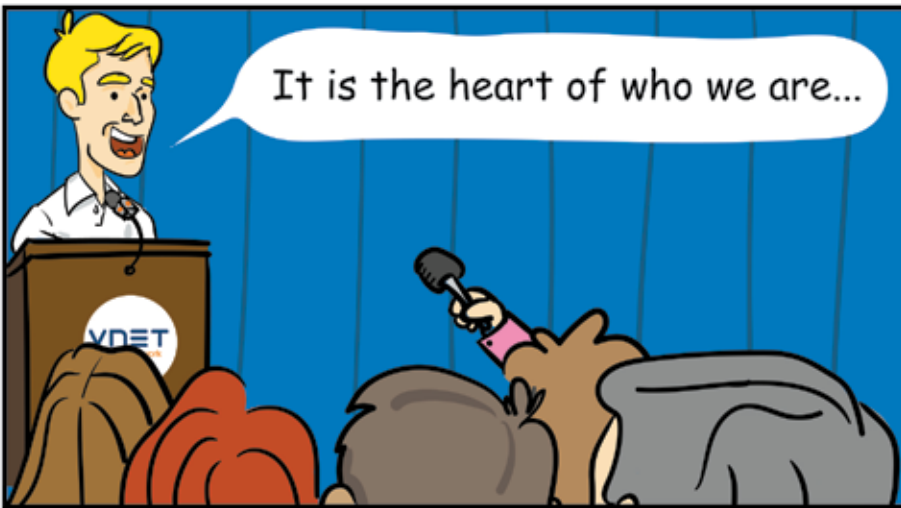
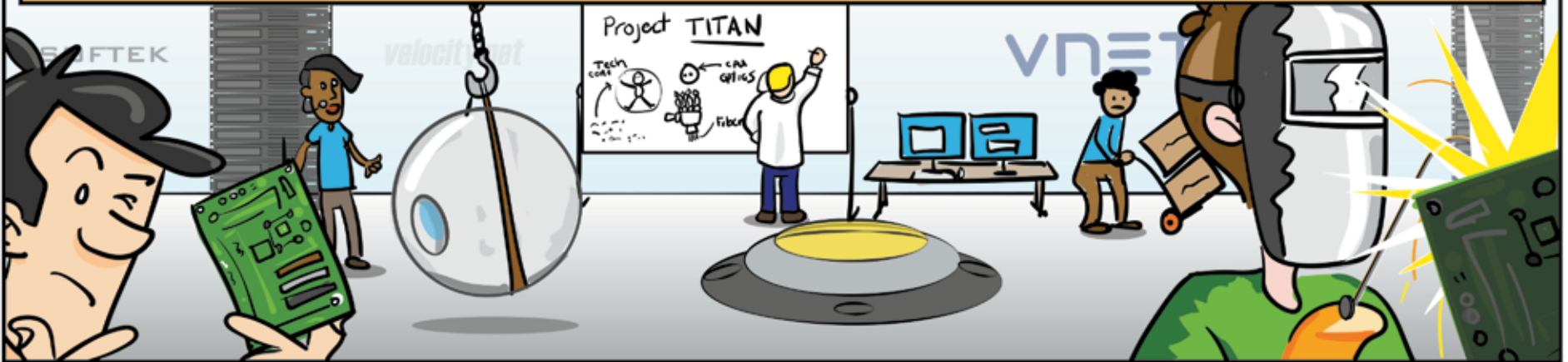
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TO BE CONTINUED...

Presque Isle Skating and Event Center

The future looks bright for this revamped Millcreek icon.



RYAN SMITH

By: Ryan Smith

At any given weekend session, Presque Isle Skating and Event Center sees somewhere around 100 to 150 people walking through its door to go rollerskating on its floor.

That's according to rink co-owners Shannon and Steve Monney. And, whether they've come for an open-skating session, a birthday party, a family gathering, or one of the other events the rink routinely plays host to, it seems that just "about every other person who walks through the door tells us how they grew up here," Shannon said recently. "We hear things like that all the time."

Things, she said, like "This is where I had my first kiss."

"This is where I met my first girlfriend."

And more memories. Sweet memories. On wheels.

"It seems like it's a very iconic

building," added Shannon, who, with Steve, has co-owned and operated the business since late 2011 along with partners Israel and Nagliz Rivera.

She's right. The rink – falling into disrepair before the two couples bought, restored, re-named and re-opened the facility – has been a fixture on Erie's west side since 1949, according to the Monneys; first as Westlake Skating and, more recently, as Evans Skateland West.

"A lot of people look at it as a nostalgic place," said Texas-native Shannon, 38. "I myself spent my childhood growing up around a skating rink."

So, she gets it, and so do her partners. And that understanding – the understanding that a skating rink, for the people who love the place, seems to be so much more than a big room with a smooth wooden floor – comes

through in the fun, funky, bright-color-splashed atmosphere of the place.

I mean, I felt like a kid again the moment I first walked in. (That is, a kid – now a man in his mid-30s – who also grew up rollerskating in his own hometown.)

The rink – falling into disrepair before the two couples bought, restored, re-named and re-opened the facility – has been a fixture on Erie's west side since 1949, according to the Monneys; first as Westlake Skating and, more recently, as Evans Skateland West.

Good work there, everyone.

Since they've been at it, they've "really been trying to fix it up and make it better [than before]" said

Shannon.

Along with continuing renovations, that's meant "paint, and paint, and paint," said Steve. "And clean, and clean, and clean, and clean."

Again, that's good, worthwhile kind of work.

Their purchase of the skating rink on West Lake Road, however, was almost an endeavor into something else – something decidedly less fun-filled, less bright-colored, less on-wheels. At first, the Monneys said, they weren't exactly sure what they were going to do with the facility. But opening a dog kenneling business there was actually the first big idea that stuck.

It wasn't long, though, before they started hearing the calls to keep it a skating rink, to keep it open to the public, and to try to make it better than it had ended up before they came to it.

BUSINESS



RYAN SMITH

All of that encouragement “made us realize how much of a customer base is [already] here,” said Shannon. “I thought it was a little crazy,” she added. “But at the same time, I thought it would be good.”

So, they committed to it. And knowing they’d be learning as they rolled, they immediately (as in, the same day they closed on the purchase) opened the doors to the skating public.

Along with being home to various group events, as well as the regular host venue to the Eerie Roller Girls roller derby team’s home bouts, the rink is continually striving to really highlight that family-friendly appeal.

“We said, ‘Let’s make a go at it,’” said Steve. After all, “this [place] is an Eerie legacy.”

To make it work, the rink’s owners said they quickly learned to rely on the advice and expertise of longstanding (er, long-skating) staff members like Sherry Covatto, who’s worked at the rink for upwards of 20 years.

“This is my fun job,” said Covatto as she readied for a recent party shift. “It’s great exercise, and it’s so fun to watch all the families and kids come in.

“It’s a big family [here],” she added. “They’ve done a beautiful job.”

Family really is plainly evident at

Above and opposite: The understanding that a skating rink is so much more than a big room with a smooth wooden floor comes through in the fun, funky, bright color-splashed atmosphere of the place and everything in it. Even the skates, themselves.

Presque Isle Skating. Brayden, the Monney’s just-turned-two-year-old, for one, is a regular fixture at the rink – and he already loves to skate.

“He’s been here since he was about three weeks old,” said Shannon.

At one point when he was that wee, she said, they even had to play the rink’s music playlist – what he was most accustomed to hearing – at home to soothe him to sleep.

Man, that’s a lucky kid, I thought.

Along with being home to various group events, as well as the regular host venue to the Eerie Roller Girls roller derby team’s home bouts, the rink is continually striving to really highlight that family-friendly appeal, the Monneys said.

Opening the business as their own “was [recognized] as an opportunity,” said Steve, “and something we saw we could make better.”

That willingness to take a chance on something new and exciting, to commit to preserving (and bettering) something old and, for many, heart-held, is certainly a respectable business endeavor.

Roll on, Presque Isle Skating.

Ryan Smith can be contacted at rSmith@EerieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @RyanSmithPlens.

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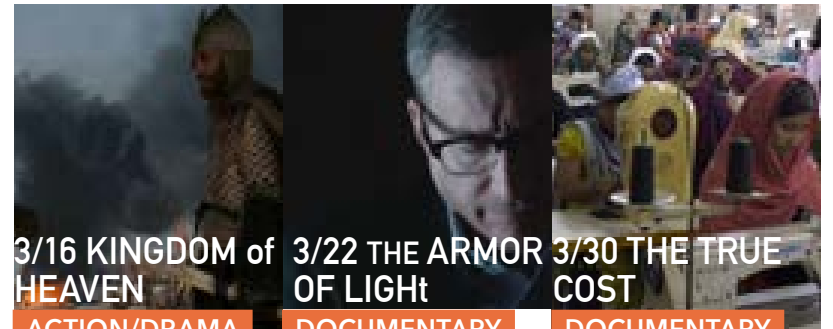
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Bomb Trains: Pipelines on Wheels

Derailments, spills, and explosions beg the question: Are safety measures enough?



This photo, taken by retired engineer and Erie activist Sam Miller, shows just how easy it is for bomb trains to pass through densely populated areas unnoticed. But local and state officials, including Erie County's emergency management director, say the rapid growth in crude oil train traffic is a recipe for disaster.

continue under highways and over bridges into the densely populated city of Erie, before moving through Harborcreek and North East and on into New York state toward Buffalo.

Mobilia says he's not too worried about a derailment or spill. He says cargo trains carrying hazardous materials such as chlorine, hydrochloric acid, and ethanol have been rolling through Erie County for years, with no major incidents to speak of. The Association of American Railroads claims 99 percent of hazardous material shipments reach their destinations safely.

Low probability, high impact

That's what the people of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, thought before July 6, 2013, when an unattended freight train carrying 74 tankers of American Bakken crude ran off the rails and exploded, obliterating half of its downtown. Forty-seven people died and scores more were badly burned and injured. The bill for damages and loss of life in the half-mile blast zone is \$430 million and climbing, and that doesn't include the long-term effects on air, land, and water. Last month Canadian scientists reported an unprecedented spike in fish deformities, which they attributed to the spill of 26,000 gallons of crude oil into the Chaudiere River. Of 900 fish collected, 47 percent had lesions and infections.

Lac-Mégantic is the poster child for crude oil train disasters, but it's not alone. Since Lac-Mégantic, more than two dozen accidents and hundreds of so-called minor incidents involving crude oil occurred in the United States, according to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which is responsible for oversight.

Among them are disasters in Caselton, North Dakota, Lynchburg, Virginia, Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, Pickens County, Alabama, Alma, Wisconsin, Galena, Illinois, and Mount Carbon, West Virginia. A single weekend last November saw two back-to-back de-

By: Lisa Gensheimer

Nick Mobilia is spraying peaches when out of nowhere come two military helicopters heading straight toward him, buzzing low over the railroad tracks that slice through his 250-acre fruit farm in North East.

Armed men in uniform lean out as the train rushes past orchards and vineyards and quickly disappears from view. He suspects they're escorting some kind of sensitive cargo, like nuclear material or secret weapons.

"You don't want to know what's in those trains!" says Mobilia.

He was only half kidding.

Like many businesses in Erie County, Mobilia's Arrowhead Wine Cellars and Farm Market are only a stone's throw from the CSX and Norfolk Southern lines that transport volatile crude oil to East Coast refineries. A neighboring manufacturer, Cost Effective Coatings, is even closer, about 20 feet from the

tracks.

The shipment of crude by rail has spiked 5,000 percent since 2008 when oil companies stepped up their fracking in North Dakota's Bakken oil fields. Almost 75 percent goes by rail, according to the Energy Information Administration, because East Coast refineries lack pipelines to transport crude.

As many as 35 crude oil trains snaked through Erie County each week when oil production was at its peak last May, each 100-car unit train (a train carrying a single commodity to one destination) loaded with as much as 3 million gallons of combustible fuel. The pace has slowed for the moment as plunging oil prices put the brakes on production and sidelined thousands of railroad tank cars. Some oil companies have gone bankrupt.

No one knows what the topsy turvy market will bring in 2016, but the U.S. Geological Survey estimates the Bakken region contains 7.4 billion barrels

of undiscovered, "technically recoverable oil," and that only represents a fraction of the possible 900 billion barrels that could come out of the ground with enhanced technology already in development. Clearly, oil trains are here to stay if the industry has anything to say about it and Americans continue to rely on fossil fuel.

Local and state officials, including Erie County's emergency management director, say the rapid growth in crude oil train traffic is a recipe for disaster. Aging infrastructure, outdated DOT-111 tank cars that were not designed to carry crude, and the volatile gases released from crude oil are sparking concerns about federal safety standards, inspections, and what communities like Erie can do to minimize the risk.

Every day the long chains of black tank cars slip into Pennsylvania at East Springfield, hugging close to Lake Erie before rumbling past farms, schools, and suburban neighborhoods. They

SAM MILLER

railments in Wisconsin.

Most incidents fly under the radar, but the fiery crash in Mount Carbon made national news when a CSX train hauling nearly 3 million gallons of Bakken crude derailed during a snowstorm on Feb. 16, 2015. Twenty-seven of the train's 100 cars left the tracks, spilling oil that burned for days. The accident forced the evacuation of more than 1,000 people and shut down two water treatment plants. The governor of West Virginia declared a state of emergency after oil contaminated the Kanawha River, which supplies drinking water to several downstream counties.

After its investigation, the FRA said the Mount Carbon derailment could have been prevented. A broken rail was missed by CSX, and its contractor, Sperry Rail Services, on two separate inspections in the months leading up to the accident.

CSX spokesman Rob Doolittle says that even before the investigation was complete CSX began working in collaboration with the FRA to develop additional inspection processes that will enable the company and its contrac-

tors to quickly and accurately identify rail flaws. CSX is also working to mitigate the environmental damage.

It comes as no surprise that 2015 was the costliest year on record year for crude oil train disasters – it was also the busiest year for rail shipments from the Bakken oil region, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, though volume began to decline in November and December.

New rules

The surge in accidents was a wakeup call.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), by emergency order, required railroads to notify state emergency response agencies of any large movement of Bakken crude through counties in their states.

The DOT an- **[Cont. on page 32]**

A bird's-eye view of the 2013 explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. Last month Canadian scientists reported an unprecedented spike in fish deformities, which they attributed to the spill of 26,000 gallons of crude oil into the Chaudiere River. Of 900 fish collected, 47 percent had lesions and infections.



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Spotlight on Erie

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WOW is Wow: Women of Word Celebrates its Sixth Year with Choices, and a Few “Man-Made” Words



It's once again time to twist your mind around a new kind of poetry staging. In its sixth year and part of Edinboro University's Women's History Month activities, *Women of Word* will bring its distinctive brand of presentation to the Diebold Center on March 17, with *Choices*. Rather than reading one poem at a time, *Women* pairs thematically similar poems, weaving them into poetic conversations that create dramatic relationships between thoughts, setting up the listener for unexpected jolts and perhaps uncomfortable revelations.

Women never shies away from strong subjects and controversy. In fact, it runs to them. This year's themes are no exception. Look for scenes on change, terrorism, guns, abortion, gender, and religion: topics sizzling (or smoldering?) in communities everywhere.

Women never shies away from strong subjects and controversy. In fact, it runs to them. This year's themes are no exception. Look for scenes on change, terrorism, guns, abortion, gender, and religion: topics sizzling (or smoldering?) in communities everywhere. According to director, producer, and participating poet, Thasia Anne, “*Women* uses poetry to tackle and bring awareness to some of the world's most unpleasant subjects.”

Veteran poets Heidi Blakeslee, Darryl M. Brown, Amy Doty-Prior, Joan Papalia-Eisert, Cookee, Luchetta Manus, Marisa Moks-Unger, Alexis Rene, and Marge Wonner return to present their work and welcome newcomers Sharreif Kareem Lentz, Safia Kassir,

and Shaun Taylor, who is an assistant professor in the Music and Theatre Department.

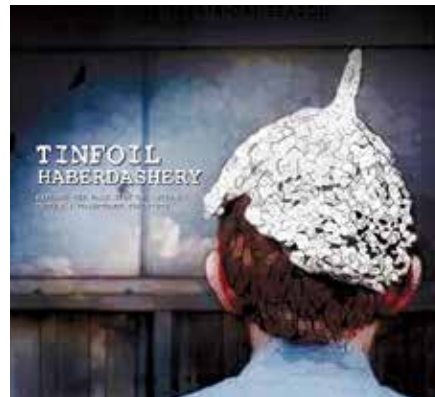
Complementing (if not heightening) the power of the poetry will be music by Paul Eisert and Jack Wonner, and interpretive dance by Sara Foster.

The sixth *Women of Word* promises to be a powerful and dramatic event. These performers will deliver. – Mary Birdsong

6 p.m. // 219 Meadville St., Edinboro // Free admission // Meet and greet after the performance

Thursday, March 17

Tinfoil Haberdashery Dramatizes Conspiracy Theories at PACA



It's a story actually ripped from the headlines: In June 2014, Las Vegas police officers Igor Soldo and Alyn Beck were gunned down by assailants. The gunmen's battle cry? “The revolution is happening.”

The husband and wife behind the shooting – which spread to a nearby

Walmart – were Jerard and Amanda Miller, Tea Party members who had also joined in on the Bundy Ranch standoff earlier that year. The shooting caused a social media firestorm, fueling the flames of anti-government conspiracy theories.

It's those conspiracy theories (did the shooting happen, or was it a “false flag” planted by the “liberal media”?) that serve as inspiration for *Tinfoil Haberdashery*, a darkly comedic play from Erie's own Ernest Hemmings, being staged at PACA this weekend and next.

Lead singer and guitarist Jon Braun is as masterful an actor as he is a musician – he absolutely nails the role of (Heads frontman) David Byrne. His high-strung delivery, twitchy choreography, bugged-out facial expressions, and overall manic energy lend an au-

thenticity to his performances few could hope to rival. Fellow band members Jon Fadem (lead guitar/backing vocals), Bill Melcher (bass), Jesse Braun (drums), Steve Brunette (percussion/backing vocals), Brad Murray (keys), and Kathleen Weber (backing vocals)

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8 p.m. March 17-19, 24-26 // PACA, 1505 State St. 2nd Floor // Tickets \$10

Friday, March 18

Start Making Sense, the Talking Heads Tribute, and HmfO, the Hall & Oates Tribute ‘Stay up Late’ at the Kings Rook Club



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10 p.m. // Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub // \$10

Friday, March 18

Basement Transmissions' Punk Floor Show Delivers a Range of Punk Styles



This month's installment of Basement Transmissions' Punk Floor Show series falls the day after St. Patrick's Day, so get into the spirit and con-



6 p.m. // 145 W. 11th St. // \$5, all ages // facebook.com/events

Saturday, March 19



Eric Brewer & Friends End their "Saxless" Stretch at the Kings Rook Club

Eric Brewer & Friends are wonderful chaps. These fantastic fellows, who play in several different bands, also happen to be some of the most talented musicians in town. If you haven't seen at least one of them playing out live, you truly need to get out more. Brewer is arguably the best guitarist in the region. His playing has a natural fluidity, mixed with the occasional lightning-fast lick. A prolific sideman,

he's able to fit in perfectly playing a myriad of styles with a befuddling degree of authenticity. As a bandleader, Brewer has zeroed in on just the right platform, blending a modern mix of jam, fusion, and danceable rock and roll. Fans of Phish or Dave Matthews Band will have an immediate affinity

Brewer is arguably the best guitarist in the region. His playing has a natural fluidity, mixed with the occasional lightning-fast lick. A prolific sideman, he's able to fit in perfectly playing a myriad of styles with a befuddling degree of authenticity.

for the band. Even the most cynical indie rocker will be won over, however, by their infectious musicianship. Lately though, they've been living a relatively saxless lifestyle. Saturday at the Kings Rook Club will mark the return of tenor saxophone player, Joe Cieslak. Two years ago marked his last official show with the band, at the Oasis Pub. Relocating to North Carolina, he would

occasionally pop back up to town for a set or two. He's back in town once again though, and the music scene has a reason to be grateful. Cieslak's dexterous versatility brought a unique element to the band. Concerning his upcoming homecoming, he noted that he's "Just glad to be back playing with my mates again full time. Looking forward to seeing all the kids dancing. Playing for them brings me great joy. It'll be the first time I have played at the Rook, so that'll be a blast, too. Expect all the madness you love from us!" Be sure to get there earlier, to see the new, spacey, reggae sounds of Inward Focus, as they start off the night. – Nick Warren

10 p.m. - 2 a.m. // Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. // Free Admission with Member ID

Thursday, March 24

Laugh/Riot Presents Pirandello's Milestone, Six Characters in Search of an Author

Laugh/Riot Performing Arts Company, resident theater of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, is staging playwright Luigi Pirandello's Six

MUSIC

Rani Arbo and Daisy Mayhem "American Spiritual"

Mar. 16 — 7:30 p.m.
Louis C. Cole Auditorium, 205 Meadville St. edinboro.edu.

Kennedy's Kitchen

Mar. 17 — noon to 1 p.m.
Bruno's Cafe, 4701 College Dr. psbehrend.psu.edu.

Star Wars Back Room St. Patty's Show

Mar. 17 — 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.

Dave VanAmburg & Friends

Mar. 17, 24 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Maxi's Restaurant, 2800 W. 8th St. jazzerie.com.

Colony House Band

Mar. 17, 24 — 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Colony Pub & Grille, 2670 W. 8th St. jazzerie.com.

Cathie Ryan

Mar. 18 — noon to 1 p.m.
WQLN Studios, 8425 Peach St. wqln.org.

Punk Floor Show

Mar. 18 — 6 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. facebook.com/basement.transmissions.

Junction PA

Mar. 18 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Friday Night Jazz

Mar. 18, 25 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

The MF Jones Band

Mar. 18 — 8 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Start Making Sense and HmFO

Mar. 18 — 9 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

The Hangover Band

Mar. 18 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Saturday Night Latin, Blues & More

Mar. 19 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com.

Tiger Maple String Band

Mar. 19 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

The Joseph Sisters

Mar. 19 — 8 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Celtic Celebration

Mar. 19 — 8 to 10 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. eriephil.org.

Leader of Men

Mar. 19 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Eric Brewer & Friends

and Inward Focus

Mar. 19 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Open Mic with SaS Acoustics

Mar. 20 — 1 to 4 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main Rd. arundelcellars.com.

Wooster Chorus 2016 Spring Tour

Mar. 21 — 7:30p.m.
Temple Anshe Hesed, 930 Liberty St. wooster.edu.

Commandment 11

Mar. 22 — 5:30 p.m.
Salvation Army Adult Rehab Center, 1209 Sassafras St. commandment11.com.

Scott Silvis

Mar. 24 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

Presque Isle Saxophone Quartet

Mar. 25 — noon to 1 p.m.
WQLN Studios, 8425

[Peach St. wqln.org](https://Peach.St.wqln.org).

Sean Patrick McGraw

Mar. 25 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22043 US Hwy 6 & 19 sleepingchainsaw.com.

The Giligan's

Mar. 25 — 8 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Rivers, Jess Royer and Nick Warren

Mar. 25 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Geek Army

Mar. 26 — 8 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs & Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Intrepid Travelers

Mar. 26 — 10 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Old School

Mar. 26 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Edinboro University Chamber Players Concert

Mar. 28 — 7 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. events.edinboro.edu.

Faculty Recital Series: Diane Kalinowski, soprano

Mar. 29 — 8 p.m.
Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

DANCE

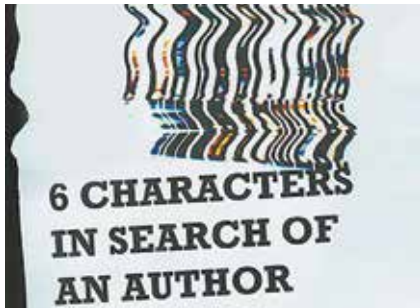
Beyond Words V

Mar. 18 — 4:30 p.m. & Mar. 19, 20 — 2 p.m. & Mar. 19 — 7 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

A Night of Broadway Musicals Dance

Mar. 19 — 7 to 11 p.m.
Realife, 3902 W. 38th St. facebook.com/Stardust-Ballroom-Dance-Club-of-Erie-597514403606573.

CALENDAR



morality, and existence are tackled in this quest for conclusion, according to LRPAC's website.

A mutant play at the time of its 1921 debut, *Six Characters* fits no defined categories until Theatre of the Absurd was coined in 1960. It no doubt eventually assisted in earning Pirandello a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1934.

Characters in Search of an Author, a landmark play that questions – and attempts to answer – the essence of Truth in art.

"This play is recognized as one of the foundational pieces of the absurdist art movement, so it has a lot of historical significance. Beyond that, the play raises questions about the concept of truth in art and what constitutes reality," said LRPAC artistic director, Rob Connick.

When a theater group is rehearsing for a play, six people unexpectedly visit the set explaining that they are looking for an author. As the story progresses, you learn that these six people claim to be characters from an unfinished story who need to perform so their story can be completed. As the show goes on, questions about art,

A mutant play at the time of its 1921 debut, *Six Characters* fit no defined categories until Theatre of the Absurd was coined in 1960. It no doubt eventually assisted in garnering Pirandello a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1934.

This landmark play has also spawned an opera, a *Twilight Zone* takeoff, and an Italian graphic novel riff.

A surreal live experience, *Six Characters* provides patrons with an opportunity that only live theater can provide.

"Seeing a performance live brings the audience into that world. With TV or

Rhythm in the Night

Mar. 19 — 8 p.m.

Struther's Library Theatre, 302 W. 3rd Ave. strutherslibrarytheatre.com.

Dorrance Dance

Mar. 30 — 7:30 p.m.

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

FOOD & DRINK

St. Patrick's Day Boxed Lunch Sale

Mar. 17 — 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Fish Fry Fundraiser

Mar. 18 — 4 to 7 p.m.

Gannon University's The Knight Club, 162 W. 4th St. gannon.edu.

"Get the Scoop on Scams" Dinner

Mar. 18 — 6 to 9 p.m.

Woman's Club of Erie, 259 W. 6th St. eriewomansclub.com.

Sips, Suds & Songs

Mar. 18, 25 — 7 to 11 p.m.

The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main St. cork1794.com.

North East Uncorked: The Vintner's Revenge

Mar. 19 — 2 & 6 p.m.

North East Chamber of Commerce, 44 W. Main St. nechamber.org.

The Delicate Balance of Flavors

Mar. 22 — 2 to 3:30 p.m.

Lavender Rabbit, 3330 W. 26th St. lifeworkserie.org.

2016 Erie County Diabetes Association Luncheon

Mar. 23 — 11:45 a.m.

to 12:45 p.m.
Bel-Aire Clarion Hotel & Conference Center, 2100 W. 8th St. facebook.com/Erie-County-Diabetes-Association-108445229309.

Barrel Room Collection IV Release Party

Mar. 26 — 11 a.m.

Voodoo Brewery, 215 Arch St. facebook.com/Voodoo-Brewery-305706522795288.

Pasta in a Hurry with Scott Schillinger

Mar. 28 — 5:30 to 9 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

FILM

Robots Movie

Ongoing through Mar. 31

— 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. & 3 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trecpi.org.

D-Day: Normandy 1944 Movie

Ongoing through Mar.

31 — noon & 4 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trecpi.org.

Tiny Giants

Ongoing through Mar.

31 — 2 p.m. & 5 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trecpi.org.

The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly

Mar. 16 — 2 & 7 p.m.

Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

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film, there's an aesthetic distance that allows the audience to choose when and how much they want to be invested," said Connick.

"Onstage, however, even if you look away, the action is still happening only a few feet away. The result is an experience that can't be created in any other medium." – Gregory Greenleaf-Knepp

7:30 p.m. March 24, 25, 26, 31, and April 1 and 2; 2:30 p.m. April 3 // Edinboro University's Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 219 Meadville St., Edinboro // 323.1147 or laughrioterie@gmail.com

Friday, March 25



Rivers Float into the Kings Rook Club, with Jess Royer and Nick Warren Opening

In a sea of string-driven indie folk, the Carlisle, Pennsylvania-based Rivers are very much floating their own boat.

Churning together a textured mix of Americana, folk, pop, funk, blues, and whatever other genres they feel exuding from their instruments, the all-acoustic trio takes the listener, thankfully, to some new-sounding son-

ic territory.

They've been busy touring and playing at concert venues, bars, open-air markets, street-corners and elsewhere around the region for quite some time, and Rivers' sound will flow at a free show at Kings Rook Club on Friday, March 25.

"Whether playing in or out on the streets, this group changes it up and throws it down with surprising song and sound," said a reviewer last year in *the Burg*, a Harrisburg area magazine.

Again, thanks for that, fellas. As "indie folk" becomes more and more of a generic label (and, in some – well, many – cases, kind of a generic sound), it's always good to hear new artists that go at their own flow.

Rivers will be joined for the evening by special guest openers Jess Royer and Nick Warren, two Erie-based musicians also most definitely worth checking out. – Ryan Smith

10 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub

Tuesday, March 29

Dear President Obama with Filmmaker Jon Bowermaster Screens at EUP

Filmmaker/writer/adventurer Jon Bowermaster's *Dear President Obama, The Clean Energy Revolution is Now* is meant to clearly sound – and, with ground-solid facts at its core, clearly support – the loudening call to our nation's leaders for fossil fuels to



be left where many feel they belong: inside the earth.

The just-wrapped-up documentary – which premieres March 18 at the 24th Annual Environmental Film Festival in Washington, D.C. – takes a cross-country, 20-state-wide look at fossil fuel drilling (an industry prevalent and powerful in Pennsylvania), highlighting some of its disastrous environmental impacts, stories of those affected, and the fallouts from what have become undelivered promises of economic booms.

Narrated by Mark Ruffalo, and featuring more than 120 interviews with people on the ground as well as bona fide scientists, economists, health professionals, geologists, and concerned whistle-blowers, *Dear President Obama* also offers up discussions and possibilities for clean-energy solutions that could allow the U.S. to see its way to a future where our energy needs don't rely on dirty old fossil fuel extraction process-

es, according to the filmmakers.

Like we stated in a recent issue of the *Reader*, a Clark University study covered in last May's *Scientific American* found that hydraulic fracturing (fracking) wells in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region are "disproportionately located in poor rural communities, which bear the brunt of associated pollution ... [justifying] 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."

That said, a lot of people feel – and we agree – that discussions about clean energy solutions need to be had more often here in northwestern Pennsylvania, and the conversation will be open to everyone when the film premieres locally on Tuesday, March 29 at Edinboro University.

Bowermaster – a six-time grantee of the National Geographic Expeditions Council and one of the National Geographic Society's "Ocean Heroes" – will be on hand to discuss his work and the film, as well, lending an important voice to an important talk about the recent past, the present, and the future.

The event – free and open to the public – is sponsored by EUP's Provost's Initiative Fund in association with the Edinboro University Academic Festival. – Ryan Smith

7 p.m. // Edinboro University main campus, Frank G. Pogue Student Center // edinboro.edu/events

Kingdom of Heaven (2005)

Mar. 16 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

The Poor Little Rich Girl (1917)

Mar. 17 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

The Hunting Ground

Mar. 17 — 8:30 p.m.
Edinboro University, 405 Scotland Rd. facebook.com/edinborofilmseries.

Labyrinth (1987)

Mar. 19 — 6 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

The Ten Commandments (1956)

Mar. 20, 23 — 2 & 7 p.m.

Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

The Armor of Light

Mar. 23 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Creature From the Haunted Sea (1961)

Mar. 24 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Food Chains (2014)

Mar. 26 — 8 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 Westlake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Raiders of the Lost Ark

Mar. 27 — 2 p.m.
Cinemark's Tinseltown, 1910 Rotunda Dr. cinemark.com.

Nip, Tuck and Click

Mar. 28 — 6 p.m.
Compton Hall, 201 E. Normal St. events.edinboro.edu.

Dear President Obama with filmmaker Jon Bowermaster

Mar. 29 — 7 p.m.
Edinboro University, 405 Scotland Rd. dearpresidentobama.com.

The True Cost

Mar. 30 — 7 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

VISUAL ARTS

Drawing and Painting Club Exhibition

Ongoing through Mar. 19 — 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Bates Gallery, 215 Glasgow Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

First Class

Ongoing through Mar. 20

Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Assembled Visions

Ongoing through Mar. 30
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Annual Gmitter Scholarship Exhibition

Ongoing through Apr. 1 (Reception Mar. 16 — 5 to 7 p.m.)
Bruce Gallery, 219 Meadville St. brucegallery.info.

Joel Quiggle

Ongoing through Apr. 5
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Henry Katzwinkel

Ongoing through May 1
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.

Erie Peeps Show

Mar. 16, 17, 18 — 4 to 7 p.m. & Mar. 19, 20 — 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Villa Maria Campus - Medaille Room, 2549 West 8th St. eriepeepsshow.wordpress.com.

Erin McCue and David Kiefer Exhibition

Mar. 19 through 26 — 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Bates Gallery, 215 Glasgow Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

93rd Annual Spring Show

Mar. 26 — 5 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Student Art League Art Auction

Mar. 26 through Apr. 2 — 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Bates Gallery, 215 Glasgow Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Senior Art Thesis Exhibition

Mar. 29 through Apr. 24 — 9 a.m. (Reception Apr. 2 — 2 to 4 p.m.)
Cummings Art Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

THEATRE

Drinking Habits

Mar. 16, 22, 23 & Apr. 5,

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- Check out the Food & Wine Pavilion
- Take the kids to Lowe's Build & Grow Clinics Saturday & Sunday
- Visit with HG TV's Chip Wade on Saturday & Sunday
- Visit the Lowe's DIY Landscape Seminars
- View the Don't Give Up the Drip Barrel Project
- Check out all the experts under one roof
- Check out the Lowe's DIY Home Clinics
- Tour the Hawk Home custom built home
- Take the kids to the Penn State Master Gardener's- Kids Garden
-
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Oberlin Historian Renee Romano to Speak at Penn State Behrend About Race and “Collective Memory”

How does memory shape and distort our understanding of history?

Tuesday, Mar. 22



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

State Behrend’s Metzgar Lobby, she will attempt to answer it in a talk titled “The Great Force of History: Collective Memory, White Innocence, and Making Black Lives Matter.”

Over email, I asked Romano what she means by “collective memory.” She defines it as “the ways in which groups remember and construct the past.” Collective memory isn’t necessarily *accurate*, and it often favors misleading-but-reassuring assumptions about our history – World War II was a “good war,” Obama’s election signaled a “post-racial” reality, and so forth.

For Romano, these narratives often “impede a realistic assessment of America’s racial history,” making it “very hard to grapple honestly with the ways in which racism helped enable new kinds of equality *among whites*.” She also believes that collective memory often fosters a false sense of “white innocence,” which allows us to ignore the ways that “racism and freedom (for whites), were not opposed to each other

but in fact were co-constitutive of each other.”

In books like *Racial Reckoning: Prosecuting America’s Civil Rights Murders*, Romano asks difficult and com-

“need to change the way many people think about America’s history if we ever hope to make black lives matter in the way they should.” Whose rights are considered legitimate in the eyes of the law? Who is deemed worthy of prosecution in response to atrocities? To whom do we build monuments? Which of these monuments should we later tear down?

To answer such questions, Romano re-examines our narratives about the Civil Rights Movement (and the white backlash that arose in response to it) to understand what has been effective at creating social change, what hasn’t, and how we can move forward in our struggle for a more just future. – Dan Schank

Collective memory isn’t necessarily accurate, and it often favors misleading-but-reassuring assumptions about our history – World War II was a “good war,” Obama’s election signaled a “post-racial” reality, and so forth.

4:30 p.m. // Penn State Behrend, Metzgar Lobby // 4701 Behrend College Dr. // psbehrend.psu.edu/news-events/events/march-22-renee-romano-reimagining-the-humanities-series

This is a central question in the scholarship of Dr. Renee Romano, Chair of the History Department at Oberlin College. On March 22, in Penn

plicated questions about the cultural and legal history of race in America. And she does so under a belief that we

6 — noon & Mar. 19 & Apr. 2, 9 — 5:30 p.m. & Mar. 20 & Apr. 3 — 2:30 p.m.
Station Dinner
Theatre, 4940 Peach St.
canterburyfeast.com.

Peter and the Starcatcher

Mar. 16, 17, 18, 19 — 7:30 p.m. & Mar. 20 — 2 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St.
erieplayhouse.org.

Tinfoil Haberdashery

Mar. 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26 — 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St.
pacal505.com.

Popovich Comedy Pet Theater

Mar. 22 — 7:30 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St.
erieevents.com.

Six Characters in Search of an Author

Mar. 24, 25, 26, 31 & Apr. 1, 2 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 3 — 2:30 p.m.
Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 217 Meadville St.
laughrioterie.com.

COMMUNITY/VARIETY

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.

PA Department of Revenue Tax/ Rebate Program

Mar. 16, 31 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St.
erielibrary.org.

Mythbusters: Women, Athletics and Title IX

Mar. 16 — 9:30 a.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

The Call of “Booty”: Female Pirates

Mar. 16 — 9:30 a.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

The Women of the History Channel’s

“Vikings”

Mar. 16 — 9:30 a.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

Crazy in Love: Love, Relationships and Media in the Postmodern Era

Mar. 16 — 12:15 p.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

Strong Women of Harry Potter

Mar. 16 — 12:15 p.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

Women in a changing Middle East

Mar. 16 — 12:15 p.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

The Conflict Between Radical Feminists and Transgender Activists

Mar. 16 — 4:30 p.m.
Frank G. Pogue Student

Center, 405 Scotland Rd.
events.edinboro.edu.

Cultural Series: A Cinematic Journey Through Organized Crime

Mar. 16 — 7 p.m.
Alex Theatre, 16 W. Division St.
mercyhurst.edu.

Erie BayHawks vs. Iowa

Mar. 16 — 7 to 9:30 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St.
erieevents.com.

LifeWorks Erie Members Night Out to Erie BayHawks

Mar. 16 — 7 p.m. to midnight
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St.
lifeworkserie.org.

St. Paddy’s Day Party Headquarters

Mar. 17 — 4 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St.
facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

St. Paddy’s Day

Mar. 17 — 7 a.m.
The Brewery at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St.
brewerie.com.

PA Department of Revenue Tax/ Rebate Program

Mar. 17 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Iroquois Avenue Branch, 4212 Iroquois Ave.
erielibrary.org.

Late Night at the Museum

Mar. 17 — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Experience Children’s Museum, 420 French St.
eriechildrensmuseum.org.

Outside the Window: Rabbits

Mar. 17 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr.
events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Celebrate St. Patty’s Day with The Cork 1794

Mar. 17 — 11 a.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main St.
facebook.com/TheCork1794.

Find that Job

Mar. 17 & Apr. 14 — noon to 1:30 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St.
erielibrary.org.

Home & Garden Expo

Mar. 17 — 2 to 8 p.m. & Mar. 18 — noon to 8 p.m. & Mar. 19 — 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. & Mar. 20 — 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier
erieevents.com.

Women of the World

Mar. 17 — 6:30 p.m.
Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 217 Meadville St.
events.edinboro.edu.

Vegan Book Club

Mar. 17 — 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Barnes & Noble Erie, 5909 Peach St.
theerievegsociety.org.

Erie Otters vs. Owen Sound

Mar. 17 — 7 to 9:30 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St.
erieevents.com.

PA Department of Revenue Tax/ Rebate Program

Mar. 18 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Millcreek Branch, 2088 Interchange Rd.
erielibrary.org.

Get Connected with Penn State Behrend's Digital Media Festival

A variety of regional and national innovators come together to talk tech.



JASON HOWIE

By: Dan Schank

It's tough to think of an idea, issue, market, or community that hasn't been affected by digital technology over the past 10 years. We're watching TV on our telephones instead of in our living rooms. Slang has lead to emojis. Activists often choose hashtags over picket signs. "Friend" has become a verb.

Regardless of how you feel about these changes, one thing is clear – a digital vocabulary is increasingly integral to a successful career. Accordingly, a few tech-savvy professors at Penn State Behrend have decided to celebrate the creative, intellectual, and professional potential of digital media for three days in early spring.

The Digital Media Festival, a free event which runs from March 30 to April 1, will feature presentations from a wide variety of plugged-in innovators

– including artists, musicians, designers, psychologists, and even intelligence specialists.

It's not just a lecture series, either. The first night will conclude with an ambient musical performance from innovator David Watkins. On March 31, expect an introduction to RendrFx, an Erie-based software platform that allows us to create professional videos through user-friendly templates. Later that evening, you'll hear eccentric musical compositions – designed and performed through JavaScript coding – from Charlie Roberts of the Rochester Institute of Technology.

New media has come into recent focus at Penn State Behrend (where, in full disclosure, I also teach). The Digital Media Festival was conceived in conjunction with the school's new Digital Media, Arts, and Technology major, which combines the intellectual rigor

of a liberal arts degree with a more practical, technological focus. Accordingly, the festival's scope extends beyond the voices of experts. Students working in the program will share their aural and visual works during the reception that concludes the festival at 8 p.m. on April 1.

Behrend's recent focus on digital art-making extends to its architecture as well. Its recently constructed Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Center will feature a series of murals designed by HigherGlyphics, an Erie-based design firm founded by artist Todd Scalise. Scalise, who collaborated with several Penn State students on the project, will discuss his concept of "Visual Public Relations" on March 30. Scalise sees the objects he makes as one component among many – and at HigherGlyphics, "an entire public relations strategy is designed around the artwork, including promotional merchandise such as apparel which also serves as a residual source of revenue for clients."

According to Kristan J. Wheaton, associate professor of intelligence studies at Mercyhurst University, "understanding digital media and how to make effective digital media products is becoming increasingly important" in a variety of disciplines. Wheaton has years

of experience in the field of military intelligence, where he saw firsthand how our nation's most important decision-makers "expect shorter, more vivid audio and video enhanced products" that can keep up with our 24-hour news cycle.

On March 30, his talk will emphasize the need for digital literacy in professional settings.

One thing is clear – a digital vocabulary is increasingly integral to a successful career. Accordingly, a few tech-savvy professors at Penn State Behrend have decided to celebrate the creative, intellectual, and professional potential of digital media.

He'll explore "how to better define client requirements, how to communicate more effectively with [them], and how to deal with the difficulties that inevitably arise" in the workplace.

Artist Richard Sayer uses digital media for a variety of aesthetic, intellectual, and technical purposes. As a photo-journalist for publications like *The Meadville Tribune*, working digitally allows him to reach "larger audiences beyond the print edition, to tell more rounded stories with

unlimited internet space. Each assignment now can be a picture story put on the web which reaches people all over the world, not just within the circulation area." On April 1, he'll explore how the quickness of digital media helps him to "find the right moments" as a visual story-teller.

Finally, the festival will explore the ways that technology has rewired our minds as well as our desktops. On March 31, Christopher Via of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida will explore the psychological impacts of video games. As a PhD candidate in Human Factors Psychology, Via researches the ways that people react to console video games and virtual reality software.

Penn State's Digital Media Festival should prove useful to anyone looking to move forward in a 21st century career. If you're a creative type looking for new ways to express yourself – or simply someone who'd like to make sense of an increasingly tech-savvy world – you'll probably leave with plenty of good ideas.

March 30 through April 1 (event times vary) // Penn State Erie, The Behrend College // 4701 Behrend College Dr.

Dan Schank can be contacted at dschank@eriereader.com.

Make Free Play

Mar. 18 — 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Box of Light Studios, 419 State St. boxoflight.org.

Quinn Dahle

Mar. 18, 19 — 6:40 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Erie BayHawks vs. Westchester

Mar. 18 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Gannon University Indoor Triathlon

Mar. 19 — 8 a.m. to noon
Gannon University Recreation and Wellness Center, 130 W. 4th St. runsignup.com.

Boating Safety Education

Mar. 19 — 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Easter Egg Hunt

Mar. 19 — 10 a.m. to noon
Faith Haven Stables, 11570 Station Rd. facebook.com/Faith-Haven-Stables-116643741711455.

Pysanky Egg Dying

Mar. 19 — 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

The Art of Meditation

Mar. 19 — 1 to 2 p.m.

Edinboro Branch Library, 413 W. Plum St. erielibrary.org.

So You Want to be an ... Emergency Room Nurse

Mar. 19 — 1 to 2 p.m.
Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

Breezin' Along with the Stars

Mar. 19 — 7 p.m.
Mercyhurst University Ice Center, 501 E. 38th

St. glidingstars.org.

Erie Otters vs. London

Mar. 19 — 7 to 9:30 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Sidewalk Trail Hike

Mar. 20 — 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Lighthouse Parking Lot, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Bunny Days at the Museum

Mar. 20 — 10 a.m. to noon
Experience Children's Museum, 420 French St. eriechildrensmuseum.org.

The Politics of Women in Politics Panel

Mar. 21 — 6 p.m.
Compton Hall, 201 E. Normal St. events.edinboro.edu.

Erie Playhouse Mainstage Auditions

Mar. 21, 22 - 6 p.m.
Erie Playhouse Rehearsal

Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture
2015-16 SEASON

Dorrance Dance

Wednesday, March 30 | 7:30 p.m.
 Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

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 miac.mercyhurst.edu
 814-824-3000



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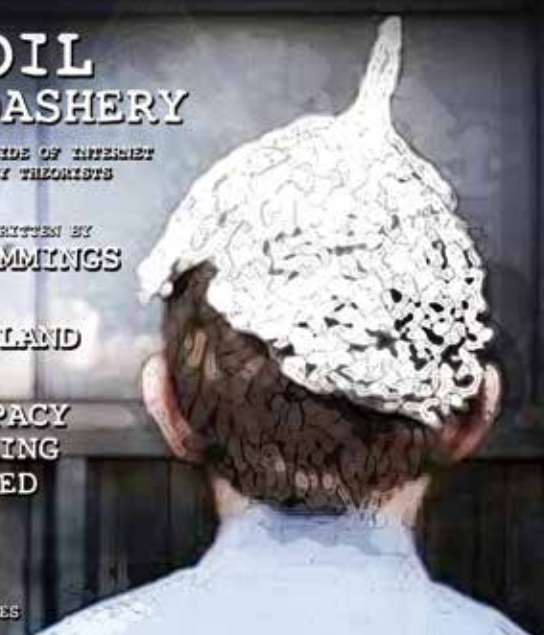
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 TALKING HEADS TRIBUTE
 + HMFO: HALL & OATES TRIBUTE
 [DOWNSTAIRS]

SAT 03/19
 ERIC BREWER & FRIENDS
 + INWARD FOCUS
 [FREE]

FRI 03/25
 RIVERS
 + JESS ROYER & NICK WARREN
 [FREE]

SAT 03/26
 INTREPID TRAVELERS
 [FREE]

FRI 04/01
 THE HORNITZ
 [FREE]

SAT 04/02
 THE BEES TREES
 [FREE]

FRI 04/08
 MISTER F
 [FREE]

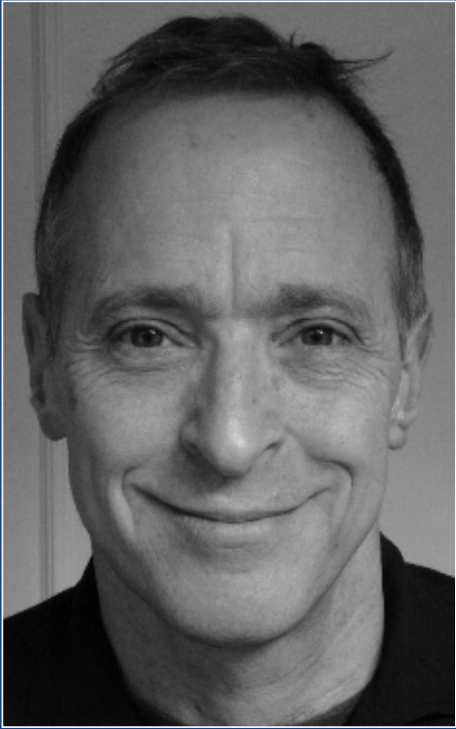
SAT 04/09
 TROPIDELIC
 + SPECIAL GUEST
 [DOWNSTAIRS]
 + LEC
 [UPSTAIRS]

FRI 04/15
 WARP DRIVE
 [FREE]

SAT 04/16
 WYLDWOOD
 [FREE]

FRI 04/22
 SUBTERRAEAN
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 READING & BOOK SIGNING



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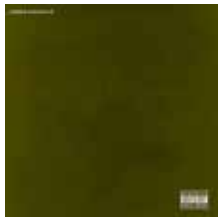
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 5401 Peach Street, Erie, PA

Kendrick Lamar
untitled unmastered
Top Dawg Entertainment

★★★★★

Did you love *To Pimp a Butterfly*? Of course you did. You'll love this too. After that watershed, Kendrick Lamar made many a convert. The release of this collection came as a complete surprise to the music industry. Even people like Thundercat, who played bass on most of the tracks, only knew about its release until "maybe a day before." In one swift motion, Lamar was able to undercut Kanye West's much-hyped *The Life of Pablo*. The tracks are a compilation of material left over from TPAB recording sessions. They find a similar brilliant balance between hip hop and jazz. Absent are singles like "Alright" and "King Kunta," leaving the record with a more subdued tone. It's far from a terrible thing. The listener is left to meditate on complex, intimate grooves. The marketing of the album relishes in the voyeuristic vagueness that follows leaked material. Like the undercase title itself, every song on *untitled unmastered* is an unnamed list item with a number and a date stamp. The user is left to differentiate each song for themselves, psychologically tying all eight cuts tightly together. — Nick Warren



Robert Pollard
Of Course You Are
Fire Records

★★★★★

This is your annual reminder to listen to more Guided By Voices. That includes, of course, albums from Robert Pollard, the singer and principal songwriter for the band. There's quite a few to choose from. Tally-wise, *Of Course You Are* puts Pollard's solo catalog just ahead of his band's. According to The Guided By Voices Database, that's 23 to 22. Don't worry, they'll be catching up soon. Maybe you've listened to every critic's perennial recommendation: *Bee Thousand*, or 1999's poppier *Do the Collapse*. You really can't go wrong anywhere you look. Pollard maintains idiosyncrasies like seemingly non sequitur stream-of-consciousness lyrics. It always sounds like Pollard is singing about an inside joke or reference you aren't exactly aware of. Songs like "Promo Brunette" leave you wondering what the story behind it was. Tracks like "Long Live Instant Pandemonium" showcase tinny, tube-driven, staccato guitars to build unexpectedly catchy hooks. Pollard's batting average continues to be consistently impressive. This album is able to go toe-to-toe with most other GBV related releases. It's a fair place to start diving into such a deep, dense disography. — Nick Warren



Esperanza Spalding
Emily's D+Evolution
EMI

★★★★★

Esperanza Spalding was quickly hoisted up as one of the saviors of modern jazz. 2010's *Chamber Music Society* brought us something fresh, weaving classical prowess into lush symphonic imaginings. *Radio Music Society* again held true to the promise of its title, touching on poppier, more accessible sounds. This album is a further reinvention. From the opening of *Emily's D+Evolution*, you know you're in for something more dangerous. The first few tender notes from Spalding's voice are quickly rebutted by distorted dissonant tritones. "Good Lava" owes more to progressive metal than it does to bebop. Her musical vocabulary is nothing short of astounding. It's easy to see why critics get so excited about her, seeing an artist that's so clearly a genius. Her voice dances from rooftop to basement, like a less percussive Ani DiFranco. Concurrently, chords frantically jump from one to another while her bass provides a virtuosic counterpoint. It's showy, but not overbearing. Walk away from tracks like "Earth to Heaven," and you'll be scating them to yourself all day. All that, and it even sneaks in a *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* cover. — Nick Warren



Quilt
Plaza
Mexican Summer

★★★★★

A lot of good music came out this month. Releases are in full swing again. There was Thao and the Get Down Stay Down's impressive new one, *A Man Alive*. M. Ward's *More Rain* was quite pleasant, albeit forgettable. The unfairly maligned *Surface Noise* by Jennifer O'Connor captured me instantly. My personal favorite this month, though, was from Quilt. *Plaza* is their third album. I hadn't heard about the band prior to this. It's easily loveable music. Stylistically, it's comparable to a hifi version of Elephant Six alumni Olivia Tremor Control or The Circulatory System. There are still plenty of psychedelic swirlings and plenty of anglophile affectations for a Boston band. The singing is shared by guitarists Anna Fox Rochinski and Shane Butler. Rochinski's vocals in particular have a hushed appeal that suits the mix perfectly. Butler's have that charming British-Invasion lilt similar to their producer's band (Jarvis Taveniere of Woods). An unexpected highlight comes with new bassist, Keven Lareau. His melodic lines are a welcome addition compared to their previous efforts. *Plaza* blends all these elements into an ideal package with its own distinct sound. — Nick Warren



Hall, 1158 E. 12 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Spring Equinox Meditation

Mar. 22 — 1 to 2 p.m.
Edinboro Branch Library, 413 W. Plum St. erielibrary.org.

Speaking of Diversity

Mar. 22 — 2 to 3:15 p.m.
Cooper Science Center, 230 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Gentle Yoga

Mar. 22, 29 — 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Gardening Series

Mar. 22, 29 — 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Edinboro Branch Library, 415 W. Plum

St. erielibrary.org.

County Council Meeting

Mar. 22 — 7 p.m.
Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. 6th St. eriecountypa.gov.

Spring Night Hike

Mar. 22 — 8 to 9 p.m.
Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

Women in the Military: Past, Present and Future

Mar. 23 — 5 p.m.
Hendricks Hall, 235 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Creativity Matters

Mar. 23 — 5:30 to 7 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Rabbits

Mar. 24 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

The Vibrant Life Series

Mar. 24 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. & 12:30 to 2 p.m. & Mar. 28 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

The Legacy of Jane Goodall

Mar. 24 — 12:30 to 1:45 p.m.
Cooper Science Center, 200 Cooper Cir. events.edinboro.edu.

Cocktails and Color Painting: Sunset Vineyards

Mar. 24 — 6 to 8 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main Rd. facebook.com/Arundel-Cellars-398619953537600.

Erie BayHawks vs. Grand Rapids

Mar. 24 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Rob Little

Mar. 25, 26 — 6:40 & 9:30 p.m.
Jr.'s Last Laugh, 402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Spring Animal Art Show

Mar. 25, 26
Erie Zoo, 423 W. 38th St. eriezoo.org

Evening Fireside Talk: Fox and Coyote

Mar. 25 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Rotary Pavilion, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Rock It Up For Lymphoma

Mar. 25 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Spring Egg Venture, Egg Hunt

Mar. 26
Erie Zoo, 423 W. 38th St. eriezoo.org

Peep Playdough

Mar. 26 — 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Experience Children's Museum, 420 French St. eriechildrensmuseum.org.

Erie BayHawks vs. Canton

Mar. 26 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

Gull Point Clean-up

Mar. 26 — 9 a.m. to noon
Beach 10 Parking Lot, 301 Peninsula Dr.

events.dcnr.pa.gov.

University Spotlight Series

Mar. 29 — 12:30 to 2 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Mind, Body, Beer

Mar. 29 — 7:30 p.m.
Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. facebook.com/ErieAleWorks.

Monthly Book Club

Mar. 30 — 11 a.m.
Werner Books, 3514 Liberty St. wernerbooks.com.

Birding by Trolley: Waterfowl

Mar. 30 — 2 to 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.



A DOT-111 tank car is the vehicle of choice for transporting crude oil from fracking fields to the coasts. The cars also carry other volatile substances, like ethanol, and can be spotted daily in the Erie area.

HARVEY HENKELMANN

[Cont. from page 19] nounced new rules for phasing out older DOT-111 tank cars, implementing stronger tank car standards, and upgrading braking systems.

The new cars will have a thicker shell and upgrades to prevent leaks and fires in the event of a derailment. Oil producers and rail-car leasing companies will have five years to replace the crude oil tank cars, and ethanol cars must be scrapped or retrofitted by 2023, a timeline criticized by legislators in high-traffic states, including U.S. Sen. Robert Casey. Casey is pushing legislation that requires a phase-out of DOT-111 cars by 2017.

Casey co-sponsored the Hazardous Materials Rail Transportation Safety Improvement Act. The Act would establish a fee on DOT-111 tank cars used to transport crude oil, ethanol, or other flammable liquids and would use the funds raised from the fees to reduce risks to communities by training first responders, hiring more state railroad inspectors, and relocating tracks that carry large volumes of flammable liquids and gases.

At the top of the National Transportation Safety Board's "Most Wanted" list is nationwide installation of Positive Train Control (PTC), designed to prevent train collisions and derailments by automatically slowing locomotives traveling at excessive speeds. Congress

first ordered the rail industry to implement PTC in 2008. The system was to be fully operational by Dec. 31, 2015, but rail operators fell short despite having so far invested \$6 billion in the technology. Only 14 percent of the more than 60,000 mandated miles were enabled with PTC by the end of last year, according to the Association of American Railroads. Last fall, the railroads threatened to shut down service over the deadline, so Congress extended it to 2018. But Ron Nixon of the *New York Times* reported that "... tucked into a 1,000-page transportation law signed Dec. 4 is new language that could effectively extend the deadline until 2020." CSX and Norfolk Southern say they won't have the system ready until 2020.

Casey is not happy with the delays. "I believe that it is essential that railroads do all they can to implement PTC technology. This life-saving technology could have prevented countless fatal accidents, including the Amtrak derailment that killed eight passengers near Philadelphia last May," Casey told the *Erie Reader* through his press secretary, Jacklin Rhoads.

"I understand the concerns about cost, interoperability, and technical difficulties that come with installation, which is why I have consistently supported funding Amtrak and critical safety measures, like PTC, through the appropriations process. Every railroad,

carrier, and passenger rail should continue to make a good faith effort to meet the PTC mandate by the end of 2018," Casey said.

Gov. Tom Wolf met several times with railroad officials to discuss safety measures, including reducing speeds in urban areas. "Pennsylvania sees some of the largest volume of Bakken crude oil transportation by rail in the United States and the potential for disaster is too great to ignore," says Jeff Sheridan, the governor's press secretary.

At the governor's request during his first full week in office, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) brought the governor, his cabinet, and senior staff together for a tabletop emergency preparedness exercise that simulated an oil train derailment in Harrisburg.

Wolf hired Dr. Allan Zaremski, a train safety expert, to focus on ways to reduce risk and increase safety.

Zaremski's report, *Assessment of Crude by Rail Safety Issues in Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, released last August, includes 27 recommendations. The measures, addressed to the Commonwealth and the railroads, are designed to prevent derailments, improve the resilience of tank cars in the event of a derailment, and help state and local emergency responders deal with a catastrophic event.

One of the recommendations called

upon railroads to voluntarily reduce oil-train speed limits to 35 mph in cities with populations of 100,000 or more. Neither CSX nor Norfolk Southern has adopted the voluntary speed reduction, though Burlington Northern Santa Fe agreed to do it. "The governor will continue to push for this, as it has little impact on their operational ability, but a significant impact on reducing the risk of an incident. Without federal regulation, however, there is nothing compelling either company to adopt a speed reduction," Sheridan says.

Inspections and enforcement

In a scathing audit report released Feb. 26, the U.S. DOT's Inspector General faulted the FRA for failing to provide the comprehensive risk assessment and oversight necessary to protect communities from serious accidents involving hazardous materials, including crude oil. The government watchdog stated that FRA inspectors are failing to refer serious safety violations for criminal actions and are going light on fines.

The FRA has exclusive responsibility for regulation and enforcement of federal standards, so states have little authority over safety – including on the 700 miles of track that carry crude oil in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) inspects the tracks and reports violations to the FRA when they discover them. The PUC has seven full-time inspectors in its rail division and is working to fill another vacancy, according to PUC press secretary Nills Hagen-Frederiksen. Two more inspectors are included in the PUC's budget proposal for next year. The railroads have their own inspectors.

Recognizing the need for more safety resources, the FRA included in its 2017 budget a request for more rail bridge program staff and a national bridge inventory.

In January the PUC, in conjunction with Norfolk Southern and the FRA, conducted a targeted inspection on a crude oil route between Harrisburg to Hagerstown, Maryland. Wolf's spokesman said one defect was found and targeted for repair.

Neither the FRA nor PUC would permit one of their inspectors to be interviewed for this story, nor would CSX, when asked. "As a general matter of policy we don't set our inspectors up with interviews," said Hagen-Frederiksen. "We prefer that they spend their time actually doing the inspections."

CSX's Rob Doolittle instead told the *Erie Reader* that routes traveled by crude oil trains are visually inspected at least three times per week; the steel rails are subject to internal inspections using sophisticated ultrasound technology on a cycle ranging from three to 12 times annually, depending on the volume of freight that uses them; and the tracks are inspected regularly by a geometry car which measures the track structure for compliance with design standards. "This regimen helps ensure that CSX's infrastructure is safe and suitable for the freight consigned to us for transport," says Doolittle.

Trainspotters

With the decline in oil production, the daily average number of crude oil trains on the CSX network has been reduced to one to two per day, says Doolittle. CSX declined to share with the *Erie Reader* the precise routing and frequency of their crude oil trains in Erie County, saying that doing so would pose a risk to national security. Yet the long caravans of black, torpedo-like oil cars can be easily observed by the general public and counted by amateur trainspotters.

A group of western New Yorkers recently took it upon themselves to count crude oil trains coming through Hamburg, New York, over a 24-hour period. The group, organized by Dr. Charles Bowman, chair of the Environmental Justice Task Force for the Western New York Peace Center, saw four crude oil trains, among them two long, high-volume unit trains, one carrying 124 cars,

within half an hour of each other. The same trains had already passed through Erie County.

Are we ready for worst-case scenario?

"Are we prepared?" repeats Erie County Emergency Management Director Dale Robinson. "I'll tell you right now there isn't a community out there that's prepared to have a train explosion in the middle of their downtown. Once it happens, it happens. You're not going to stop it, unless you take mitigation steps like, hey, let's build a pipeline instead of shipping this stuff through and around a quarter of the world's fresh drinking water supply. I'm in the business of managing risk. Putting this stuff in a virtual pipeline that moves is not a good way to manage risk."

"Are we prepared?" repeats Erie County Emergency Management Director Dale Robinson. "I'll tell you right now there isn't a community out there that's prepared to have a train explosion in the middle of their downtown."

Robinson says the biggest danger is the explosive mixture of oil and gases inside the rail cars. "You get a lot of pentanes, methanes, and butanes that come off this oil; that's what's causing these things to explode when you have a train derailment. I can only imagine one of these trains going through downtown Erie at noon on a Tuesday. You know you're going to have a death toll, regardless of any amount of emergency planning and preparedness."

If anything good has come from the at-

Ripley crash: Believe it.



LISA GENSHHEIMER

Any doubt that a derailment could happen here was erased March 1 when 16 cars on a 34-car Norfolk Southern train hit the dirt in nearby Ripley, New York, at about 9:30 p.m., spilling ethanol fuel from two tankers and raising fears that a car carrying liquid propane could explode. First responders knocked on doors of 50 homes within 1,000 feet of the tracks, evacuating local residents to safety at the Ripley United Methodist Church. There were no reported injuries.

Punctures were patched and a new foam trailer, delivered just three weeks before the accident, enabled emergency responders to quickly suppress 408 of gallons of spilled ethanol and keep it from igniting. Hazmat and cleanup crews then drained and offloaded the remaining ethanol. One tank car can hold anywhere from 20,000 to 30,000 gallons of fuel. The propane tanker was found to be intact.

Chautauqua County Emergency Services Director Julius Leone commended firefighters, hazmat crews, law enforcement, emergency medical services personnel, state, local and federal officials – 21 agencies in all – and the railroads themselves for their coordinated response.

"They did all the right things. Potentially, it could have been a disaster," says Leone.

Officials said it was too early to speculate on the cause of the derailment. "We're going to look at all possible factors," says Dave Pidgeon, spokesman for Norfolk Southern. "All weather, mechanical, human, and non-human factors will be considered."

Investigators from the Federal Railroad Administration were on site right away. Norfolk Southern has until April 30 to file its own report to the FRA. – Lisa Gensheimer

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tention on crude oil train derailments, it's the increased focus on emergency response. In addition to the county's all-hazards Emergency Operations Plan, the county is working on a Crude Oil Unit Train plan that will enable the county and all its municipalities to effectively respond to a crude oil train incident.

Robinson and his team of countywide emergency management coordinators have attended crude-by-rail training conducted by PEMA, and participate in training offered by the railroads. One HazMat team member went to a three-day crude-by-rail training in Pueblo, Colorado, and another staff member attended a five-day session in Atlanta, both sponsored by CSX.

Still, Robinson says, you can't plan trail derailments out of existence. They've become what some call "acceptable loss."

"We're letting private industry and politicians who support them say, hey, yeah, we understand the risks, but because of profits and politics, we're going to throw that risk aside," Robinson

rants. "And that's the criminal part of this whole thing that nobody wants to talk about."

Poor and people of color at greater risk

A 2015 PennEnvironment report, *Danger around the Bend: The Threat of Oil Trains in Pennsylvania*, used GIS data and statewide rail routes to confirm 3.9 million Pennsylvanians live within a potential one-mile evacuation zone. The City of Erie has more than 51,058 people living in the danger zone, making us the fifth largest Pennsylvania city in terms of population at risk.

The burden of risk for crude oil trains falls disproportionately on a community's most vulnerable citizens, according to a study by PennEnvironment Research and Policy Center, ForestEthics, and ACTION United released in February.

The report, *Environmental Justice and Oil Trains in Pennsylvania*, found that people of color and low-income were more likely to live along the rail routes compared with white and higher-income communities.

Zoe Cina-Sklar, who led the study for PennEnvironment, maintains that oil trains will never be safe, and that as a nation we need to transition away from using oil trains, and for that matter, dirty energy, altogether. But until then, she says, it's crucial that emergency management personnel reach out to the people who are most at risk.

"People in these neighborhoods deserve to understand the risk that oil trains pose to their health and safety," says Cina-Sklar.

"You look at this issue, and you look at the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, and it's the same story. It's the story of people of color bearing the brunt of the cost of environmental degradation in so many different ways."

More oil trains on the horizon?

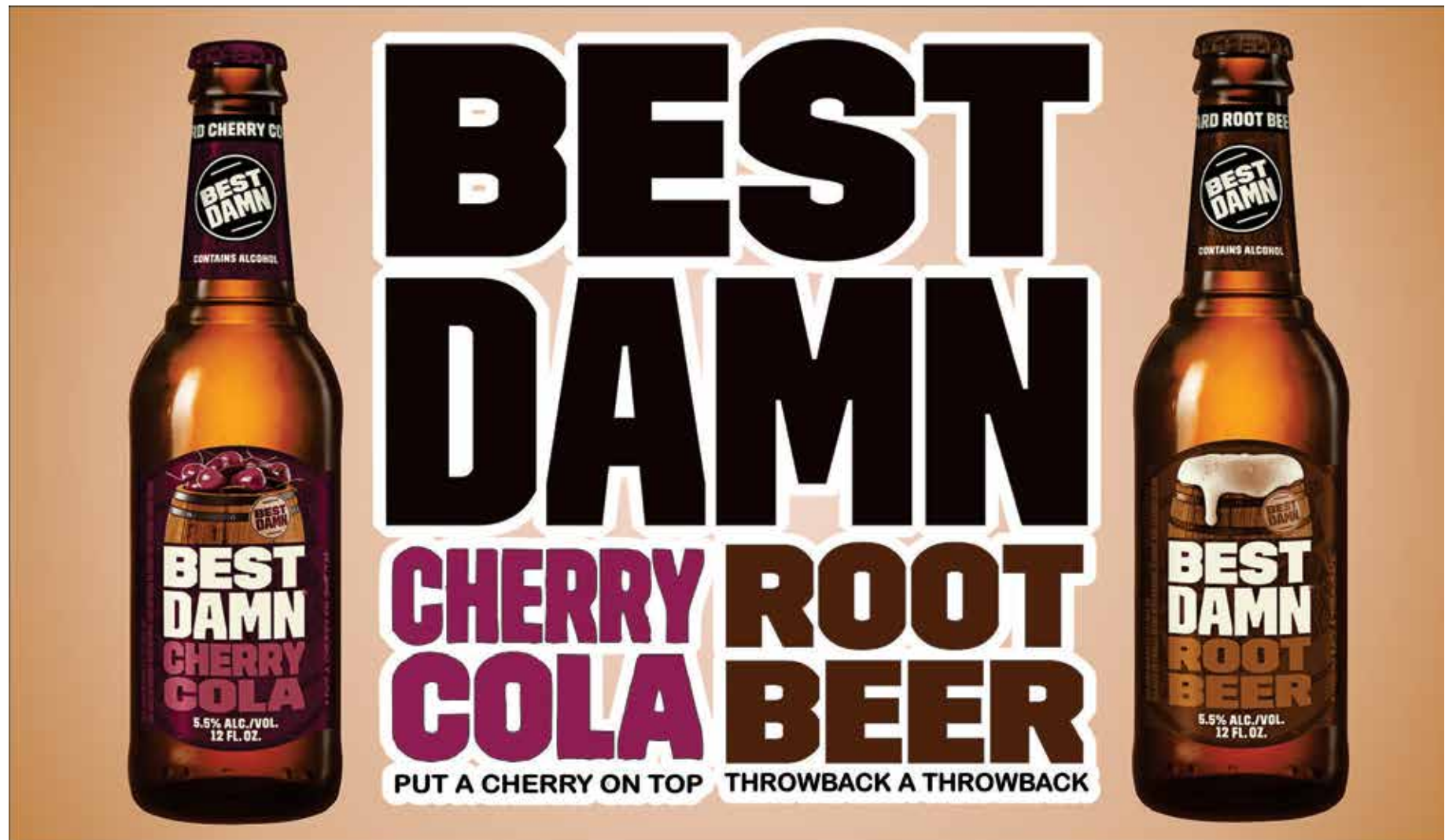
The budget deal passed by Congress and signed by President Obama in December lifted the 40-year ban on oil exports, opening new markets for oil producers. The market may be saturated for now, and it might take a few years before the impact of lifting the ban is felt, but once prices rise and the market

starts to tighten again, U.S. producers will be free to move large volumes out of the United States, Tyson Slocum, energy director at the Washington-based consumer advocacy group, Public Citizen, told CNBC news.

This doesn't sit well with Sam Miller, a retired engineer and Erie activist who participated in a national protest marking the two-year anniversary of the Lac-Mégantic disaster last summer. He thinks efforts should be focused on keeping the oil in the ground.

"Of course the immediate concern with these crude oil trains is for safety in residential areas," says Miller. "But the long-term risks of climate change by continuing the use of fossil fuels is the real problem. We need to invest now in existing clean energy sources for electricity and transportation, so that our children will have a healthy, sustainable future."

Lisa Gensheimer is a documentary producer and writer who lives in North East. She can be reached at lisa@onmainstreet.com






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