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The Erie Reader is the local voice for news, arts, and culture, and is Erie's only independent, alternative newspaper. Founded in 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 250 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 901, Erie, Pa, 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct sales inquiries to 814.314.9364. For editorial inquiries, email contact@ErieReader.com.



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From the Editors

The future might freak you out, and it probably should.

Perhaps The Amazing Criswell put it best in the introduction to Ed Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, insightfully remarking that "we are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives."

In her detailed piece, Mary Birdsong warns that our Great Lakes are in danger. Facing deep budget cuts at the hands of the Trump administration, the Environmental Protection Agency finds itself in dire circumstances. The physical and economic health of our city, along with countless others in the U.S. and Canada, depends on the health of all the Great Lakes. The stakes are high, and at the moment, the outcome looks bleak.

The physical and economic health of our city, along with countless others in the U.S. and Canada, depends on the health of all the Great Lakes. The stakes are high, and at the moment, the outcome looks bleak.

If you've been hearing that we're at a pivotal moment, that's because it's true. As Americans, and as Erieites, we stand at a crossroads. Some good news is that the direction Erie is moving isn't just in the hands of our 70-year-old demagogic commander in chief. Ben Speggen returns with another volume in the growing story of Erie's mayoral race. Diving into our city's history, he discusses the issues brought on by term limits. He also looks ahead to several debates happening prior to the May 16 primary election, including one hosted in part by the *Erie Reader* on Thursday, May 4.

If you are freaking out about the future, maybe you can take something to calm down. One particular "something" that garners quite a bit of attention is marijuana. In our cover story examining the illustrious history of the drug, Matt Swanseger looks at the current state of legal marijuana in Pennsylvania and what's in store for Erie County. Will the state of legalization change? Only time will tell.

And if you're still feeling pessimistic about what lies ahead, remember there's plenty coming up to be excited about. A quick look through our event spotlights and calendar will give you oodles of things to look forward to this month.

There's a lot coming up in the future – everything, in fact.

As far as who said it best, for now let's give that one to Mahatma Gandhi: "The future depends on what you do today."

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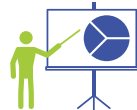
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- ▶ SDHP—Introduction to Services

Participants:

- ▶ Joseph Aguglia, Esq., ECHRC
- ▶ Carla Falkenstein, PHFA
- ▶ Rev. Faith Folwer, Cass Community Social Services
- ▶ Gale Schwartz, Housing Alliance of PA
- ▶ Robert Catalde, Erie County Clerk of Courts
- ▶ Kevin Huwe, Self-Help Determination Project
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Just a Thought

Millfair is worth dirtying your hands.



SHELDON PETERSON

By: Katie Chriest

The urge to “get the dirt on someone” fuels tabloids and websites, while focusing on *actual* soil seems less titillating. But it shouldn't.

Wendell Berry calls soil “the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. ... Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”

Our soil absorbs everything we do, everything we are, everything we'll ever create or buy or throw out or dream up or be.

The awful reality that fact entails is a lot to swallow – and swallow it, we do, since everything we eat depends on soil, too. But there are steps we can take to return our land to better health. And for Erie County residents, the Millfair Compost and Recycling Center, located on Millfair Road at the border of Millcreek and Fairview townships, is a good place to start.

The center, a joint effort of Millcreek and Fairview townships, offers naturally beautiful fine and coarse bark mulches, leaf compost, and other landscape amendments at prices that help make healthier soil and lovelier landscapes accessible.

Though only Millcreek, Fairview, and some other West County residents or landscapers may discard yard waste there, anyone can purchase their products. If you have a pickup or a trailer, you can buy large quantities at bargain prices. But any-

body with a garbage can or bucket can bring home enough for smaller projects – often for around the cost of a cup of coffee – and get a good shoveling workout, to boot.

I learned about the center a few years back at one of Environment Erie's composting workshops. I was in the midst of developing what can now only be described as an obsession with growing things – especially food. Of course, the soil's the thing, regardless of what you're growing. And though compost truly is the “black gold” it's often called, it's

There are steps we can take to return our land to better health. And for Erie County residents, the Millfair Compost and Recycling Center, located on Millfair Road at the border of Millcreek and Fairview townships, is a good place to start.

hard for a small household to make enough for bigger projects.

Meanwhile, bags of compost or mulch – even on sale – can make extensive gardening prohibitive for those of us who are “beg, steal, or borrow” gardeners, with the bulk of our plants coming from divisions of others' perennials, garden center clearance shelves, or garage sale tables.

Lush leaf compost from Millfair Compost and Recycling Center, against a backdrop of seedlings it's helping to grow.

Last summer, I came into a cache of gorgeous ornamental grasses that had been divided from giant mature plants. That I had nowhere to plant them didn't stop me from filling our poor car's trunk. (Logic has never been my strong suit when faced with free flora.)

I laid down cardboard boxes to stifle underlying grass in what's left of our lawn, then headed to Millfair with a shovel and a couple of garbage cans sticking out of the trunk. Shortly thereafter, I'd built up a bed of soil and leaf compost for virtually no money. I added composted manure I'd acquired from Liz and George Farms on Route 99 (also shoveled into garbage cans in the trunk – need a ride, anyone?) and the grasses are thriving today.

We've installed several raised beds in the last few years, and Millfair's leaf compost has been a key component in all of them, just as it was when our neighbor started a community garden in her big side yard down the street. Leaf compost isn't as nutrient-packed as kitchen compost or manure, but it does improve soil composition and reduce the need for expensive fertilizers with the potential to contribute to Lake Erie's harmful algal blooms.

And topping permanent beds with a thick layer of Millfair's fine bark mulch has practically eliminated the need to weed – or to ever apply questionable synthetic herbicides like the glyphosate in Roundup, prohibited in some countries.

Plus, no plastic bags or containers to discard.

But the best part? Both crews who operate Millfair – one from Millcreek and one from Fairview – are a joy to work with, wonderfully helpful and with great senses of humor. When I visit on windier days, I swallow a lot of mulch because I'm laughing so hard. But someone's gotta do the dirty work.

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

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A Candidate's Future, a Citizen's Now

How what we learn before the primary may matter through 2030



MAITHAM BASHA-AGHA

By: Ben Spegen

What do a former City Councilwoman, a former City Councilman and retired wealth adviser, a university professor and preservationist, and the Erie Playhouse executive director have in common with a current City Councilman, a retired police chief, and the current County Council president?

The same thing an independent businessman shares with an associate of MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton LLP.

They're all vying to serve Erie as the city's next mayor.

But before voters head to the polls in November to elect their next executive, they'll narrow the field of nine to two on Tuesday, May 16 during the primary election.

The emerging Republican candidate has a 50 percent chance of heading to the general election. The Democrat's chance, on the other hand, slims down to 14 percent.

Seven Democratic candidates are looking to follow in the footsteps of current Erie Mayor and Democrat Joe Sinnott, who was first elected to office after besting Democratic incumbent Rick Filippi in 2005's primary. Mayor Sinnott went on to win both of his re-election bids to stay in City Hall – and ran unopposed during both elections – and is completing the final year of his third term.

Because of Erie's three-term limit, he cannot seek re-election.

On the other side, two Republican candidates are hopeful that they'll do something that hasn't been done

since 1961: win the election for Erie's mayor as a Republican. Charles Williamson served as Erie's last Republican mayor in the early sixties, and since then, it's been all Democrats with the city's demographics having shifted to a more than 2-to-1 Democratic voter registration edge, making the path to City Hall a more difficult one for Republicans.

Despite recent national media coverage fixated on how Erie County flipped from blue to red to land Donald Trump at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the city still voted overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential candidate who won the popular vote but lost in the Electoral College. That voting disparity marks just the fifth time in the country's history such a thing has happened, the second time this century.

Irrespective of party differences, though, whoever moves into the fifth floor of City Hall has their work cut out for them, both in the near and less-near future.

First, there's the term-limit effect – the near.

Before Joyce Savocchio's tenure as mayor, there wasn't a limit. And Erie didn't seem to mind, re-electing Lou Tullio five times after he first took office in 1966. Since then, two of Erie's three mayors have left office not by the ballot but by the limit.

Savocchio and Sinnott both won all three of their election bids. Filippi did not.

Battling state prosecutor allegations of using his position to broker real estate deals near the then-proposed \$80

million lake front gambling enterprise that arose prior to 2005's primary, Filippi served just one term in office from 2002 to 2006. Although Filippi was acquitted of all charges facing him, publicity the case drew factored in when voters pulled the lever.

Many have wondered ever since that had he not been battling a court case, would he have secured a second – and perhaps even a third – term, given the penchant of Erie voters to stick with what they know until forced to choose from a new lot?

Although we'll never know that, we do know that of Erie's most recent mayors – Tullio, Savocchio, Filippi, and Sinnott – the majority have seen long stays at 626 State Street. That leads many to consider the odds that whoever takes office in 2018 could be looking at a comfortable stay until 2030 – if enough muscle is exercised in the lead-up to May and then the follow-through to November. With enough energy spent on getting through the door in 2018, a mayor could then have a decade and then some to advance his or her vision for the region.

But if that's the first consideration, it can be countered by the second: Erie is perceived as a city in crisis – the near-yet-not-so-near.

One needn't look farther than the spike in opioid-related overdoses, the continued cries of crime, the shaky foundation of the city's public schools, the general population decline now teetering around 100,000, and more. That's our near.

But if one does want to look farther, one could turn attention to the CBS News feature "America: Manufacturing Hope" (note: the title is the only thing rosy about the film) or the Yahoo! News write-up "Clinging to hope in a fading factory town." This, too, is our near.

But, both national stories featured "hope" in their headlines. Even in

the most doom-and-gloom coverage, there's still hope in Erie, and voters will be looking to the mayor to replenish that wellspring. Which means that if they sense a dearth or don't see that hope springing eternal quickly enough, an extended stay at City Hall may not be a given, considering the fact that voters will want to see significant results in the first 100 days.

But to address public health, crime, education, population decline, and more, an executive will need more than 100 days. Problems that didn't percolate overnight won't be righted overnight. Still, that expectation will be there. Which in a primary election can lead to bold but undefined claims.

Which then leads to the third consideration's three key words: jobs, safety, and money.

On the campaign trail, it's easy for candidates to say they'll bring jobs back. That they'll make the region safer. That they'll balance a budget and not raise taxes.

Oftentimes opting for soundbites over details spells success because details can derail and soundbites are simple. Plus, time is limited. There's only so much earned media. So many hours in the day to knock on doors. A limited number of seconds to purchase commercial air time. And column space for op-eds is measured in inches, not feet.

But now, as spring gives way to yard signs sprouting, Erie is entering its debate-forum phase in the final push before the primary election.

Simply put: Debates and forums matter because they can push candidates beyond the soundbites. They're opportunities to see how candidates stack up against each other, how they respond when mere feet from their opponents – stick to the stump or speak from the heart.

Although a few forums have already taken place, more are on the horizon – starting with one the very day this issue of the *Erie Reader* hits stands.

The Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, Erie Arts & Culture, Emerge 2040, Partnership for Erie's Public Schools, Bayfront East Side Taskforce (BEST), Our West Bayfront, League of Women Voters – with additional partners: All Aboard Erie,



MAITHAM BASHA-AGHA

Preservation Erie, and the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network – are hosting “Our City. Our Moment. Our Choice. Erie’s Mayoral Forum” from 6 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12 at the Hirt Auditorium in the Blasco Library.

This forum, which is free and open to the public, will be moderated by WJET’s Lou Baxter with panelists Daria Devlin, Marcus Atkinson, and Jim Kurre. The focus will be on the economy, education, and neighborhoods and will include all candidates on the stage at one time. The Young Erie Professionals will host a candidate meet-and-greet immediately following the forum.

On Wednesday, April 26 at 6:30 p.m., a joint-effort forum between Keystone Progress Erie, Mental Health Association of NWPA, and Erie Gay News will focus on poverty, mental health, LGBTQ rights, and other topics, such as health care, election reform, and more. The event will feature candidates from a host of races (Erie mayor included) and will be held at the Hirt Auditorium in the Blasco Library; it is free and open to the public.

Erie Times-News/GoErie.com, along with Erie News Now and Mercyhurst University, will host a debate from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 3 at the Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center. Questions will be posed to candidates from ETN and ENN representatives.

The Jefferson Educational Society is partnering with the Erie Reader and WQLN Public Media to host the Erie’s Next Mayor debate on Thursday, May 4. Democratic candidates will debate from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and Republicans will take to the stage from 8 to 9 p.m. The

Candidates Looking ahead to the future, Lisa Austin (left to right), Joe Schember, Rubye Jenkins-Husband, John Persinger, and Jay Breneman will all be on Erie’s May 16 primary ballot.

debate will be moderated by C-SPAN Senior Executive Producer Steve Scully, who was tapped as a backup to moderate the presidential debates in 2016.

On May 8, the Manufacturer & Business Association will host a mayoral forum from 8 to 9:30 a.m. focused on business in Erie and held in the MBA Conference Center. The MBA is charging members \$10 admission and \$20 to nonmembers, which marks the only event scheduled to date that is open to the public but not free to attend.

This list is not exhaustive, and voters should anticipate additional events to be scheduled in the coming weeks. Those will be updated online as our staff becomes aware of them.

But for now, it’s safe to say that there are plenty of opportunities to hear from the mayoral candidates. And plenty of conversations that should encourage a deeper dive than one-word promises, like jobs, safety, money, and education.

And although the winner of this race will have plenty of work to do in both the near and not-so-near future, voters have their work cut out for them now by educating themselves on the platforms and promises of the people who are pledging to build on Erie’s hope.

Ben Spегgen can be reached at bSpегgen@ErieReader.com and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpегgen.

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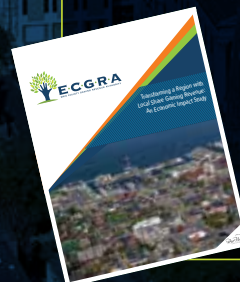
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Sailing on Choppy Waters

Potential devastation in the wake of EPA budget cuts



The Great Lake waters are restless as waves lap the shores of the bay near the North Pier Lighthouse on a cold March day.

By: Mary Birdsong

In 1991, Erie Bay was designated an official Area of Concern by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency thanks to “excessive nutrients, organic compounds, and heavy metals,” per the official listing document. It goes on to say, “Point sources of pollution include steel mills, a foundry, water treatment plants, and other industrial facilities. Combined sewer overflows and urban runoff contribute to nonpoint pollution.”

Fish with tumors were found readily, the growths tied to the presence of heavy metals such as nickel, lead, and cadmium as well as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in sediment. Being listed as one of 43 AOCs on the Great Lakes marked the bay as one of the most polluted pieces of water in the region.

Nineteen years after the bay’s listing, in 2007, the first Bay Swim was held, and in 2013 the bay was delisted as an AOC. Millions of dollars were pumped into the project, the most going to update the sewer and storm water runoff systems. No hotspots of toxic chemicals were located, dredging was allowed again, and fewer fish with tumors were found.

Where We Are

Marinas are now flourishing, three hotels have opened, the convention center and tall ships bring thousands to the bayfront, and anglers hang off of every open spot. Scott Enterprises is breaking ground soon on its \$150 million Harbor Place project. Between the beaches of Presque Isle that see approximately four million visitors per year and the new bayfront amenities, the local economy realizes a \$74 million boost.

If the waters of Presque Isle Bay were still laden with heavy metals and toxic hot spots, none of these projects would have materialized.

Most of the money to actualize the bay cleanup came from the EPA. In 2010, when the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was in its first full year, and ever since, most projects involving water that take place in the Lake Erie watershed are funded through the GLRI conduit. That includes removing or reducing the presence of invasive plants and animals, monitoring fish populations, improving riparian ecosystems in the Lake Erie watershed, and monitoring drinking water quality, small flow treatment systems, harmful algal

blooms, and the daily water quality testing of Presque Isle’s beaches in the summer.

Besides being regulatory bodies that ensure clean water and air, the GLRI and the EPA are economic engines, especially in the Great Lakes region. Since its inception, GLRI has pumped more than \$1.7 billion into projects and programs in the Great Lakes area. That money funded jobs associated with the activities of scientists, biologists, water quality experts, and health and safety department officials. Since 2009, our region has received \$2 million in capacity funding alone (there is also a competitive grants program).

The \$1.7 billion investment in the Great Lakes was a good one. According to a study by Michigan Sea Grant in 2011, which utilized 2009 Labor Bureau statistics from the Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages, more than 1.5 million jobs generating \$62 billion in wages are directly connected to the Great Lakes.

Just under 25,500 of those jobs are based in Erie County, as the study included “only jobs in specific industries in the counties bordering the Great Lakes.” If you average the total Great Lakes wages, the annual salary

of one job is more than \$41,000. With 25,500 lake-related jobs in Erie County, the total annual wages stemming from lake-related employment equals more than \$1.04 billion.

But Things Change

In 2016, the GLRI approved budget was \$300 million, which, as part of a Congressional budgetary continuing resolution, extends until April 28, 2017. This means that because the 2017 budget was never finalized, funding for 2017 was to remain the same, but would become negotiable after April 28.

In his budget proposal for 2018 sent to Congress on March 16, President Trump requested that the GLRI’s \$300 million allotment be reduced to \$10 million. Twelve days later, on March 28, Trump further requested \$50 million from the current 2017 GLRI budget to cover early costs of building the wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.

To add insult to that injury, in preliminary EPA budget documents obtained by the *Washington Post* and published on March 31, the GLRI is to be eliminated entirely: “Funding and FTE (full time equivalent) for the geographic program are eliminated, returning the responsibility for funding local environmental efforts and programs to state and local entities.”

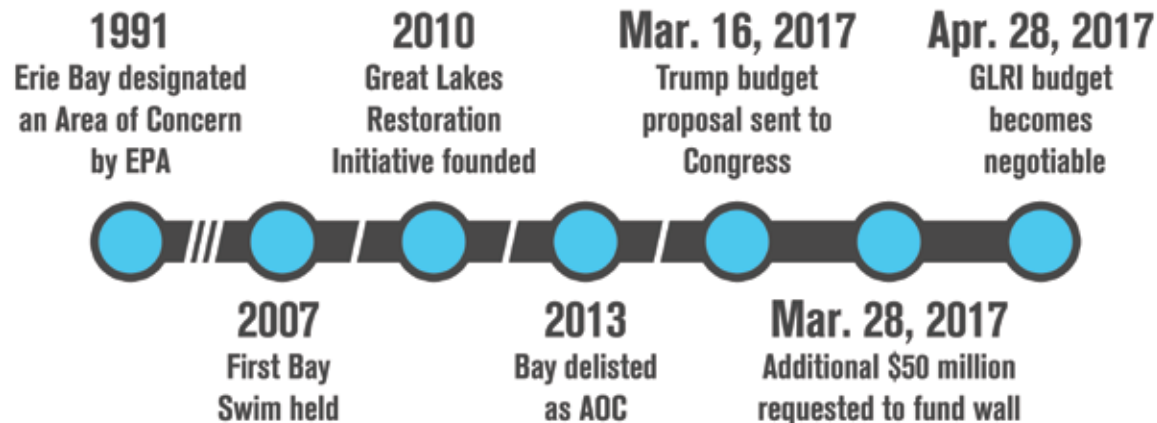
The document is labeled “Confidential and Pre-decisional.”

No one holds the crystal ball that foresees where this is going: If Trump’s proposal will stand and the GLRI will be eliminated, or if Congress will override his axe and spare some EPA programming.

Worst case scenario: If the agencies in Erie County would lose all GLRI funding, what would it mean for you and me?

Tim Bruno, chief of the office of the Great Lakes for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, says it would reduce public health and safety. “As only one ex-

An Erie EPA Timeline



ample, GLRI money recently went toward purchasing and outfitting five new Emergency Spill Response trailers and equipping a sixth. It helped us partner with the Erie County Department of Safety to vastly increase response coverage and time in the event of a hazardous materials accident, something of great concern with significant quantities of potentially dangerous chemicals traversing rail and highway systems passing through Erie County every day.”

And GLRI money can be found in places you may not imagine. According to Bruno, a program called PA Vines was developed in conjunction with the Erie County Conservation District that works with local vineyards to improve the environmental sustainability of agricultural fields, thereby increasing profitability for growers. GLRI money has also been used to work with the Erie County Planning Department to further advance storm water management.

These are not small concerns, given that we rely on Lake Erie for our drinking water. In fact, to see the larger picture, remember that the Great Lakes are joined into one continuous waterway. What happens in one affects others — especially Lake Erie, since the water (and pollution) of three other lakes flows into ours. According to statistics by the International Joint Commission, a U.S.-Canada collaborative body that regulates shared water uses and investigates trans-boundary issues, more than 40 million people in Canada and the United States get their drinking water from the Great Lakes.

Karen Tobin, director of environmental health services for the Erie County Department of Health, handles one part of the healthy watershed puzzle on a local level. Her office receives approximately \$220,000 each year to monitor water quality at Presque Isle State Park and Freeport Beach in North East. It also monitors for harmful algal blooms (HABs) at the same sites.

“We do this monitoring in collaboration with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Regional Science Consortium,” explains Tobin. “The money pays for the collection and analysis of water samples, and even the electronic sign at the entrance to Presque Isle that

posts advisories to visitors. This gives park officials the ability, in real time, on a daily basis, to keep the public up-to-date on water safety.”

Her office is also responsible for the monitoring and regulatory compliance of small flow sewage systems that occur on private properties. If a parcel of land cannot use a septic system — typically because it has poorly-draining soil such as clay — the small flow systems are used. These systems process wastewater and sewage directly and discharge into a nearby creek.

“Erie County currently has 262 of these systems that flow into the Lake Erie watershed and 179 that flow into the Allegheny River watershed through French Creek,” Tobin explains. “We are currently using GLRI funding to map every one of these systems for a better understanding of how and where the systems outflow.” They also spend a considerable amount of time monitoring existing systems and educating landowners about proper maintenance.

“If funding is eliminated,” Tobin warns, “we would not have the time or resources to monitor for compliance or educate landowners who are emitting water from their systems directly into the lake.”

Though it may not seem like it, public education has been key to improving the local environment, and a significant amount of GLRI funding was directed to education as an important component of preventing future degradation.

Thanks to the Center for Great Lakes Literacy, created by a partnership between the U.S. EPA Great

Lakes National Program Office and Sea Grant institutions, Marti Martz, senior coastal outreach specialist for PA Sea Grant, offers professional development opportunities for educators that puts them on research vessels, and in laboratories and in the field with scientists doing hands-on studies. The CGLL also funds programs for students of participating educators that bring them into labs to spend time with experts.

“This year, CGLL educators are focusing on locally relevant issues by bringing their students to the Regional Science Consortium at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center,” says Martz. “Through lab and field activities, students in grades four through 12 are learning how science is relevant to their lives.”

“Relevancy to our lives” is a critical issue at this point in time. Many people view the EPA as an agency that imposes restrictions on what citizens and corporations can do. As a candidate, Trump called the EPA a “job killer” and promised to reduce it to “tidbits.”

Unfortunately, for many living on the Great Lakes, eliminating the EPA would be the job killer. According to Bruno, the EPA now delegates the authority to enforce the law and implement mandated programs. “If funding is eliminated without eliminating the mandate for enforcement, we wouldn’t be able to do it as well, if at all.”

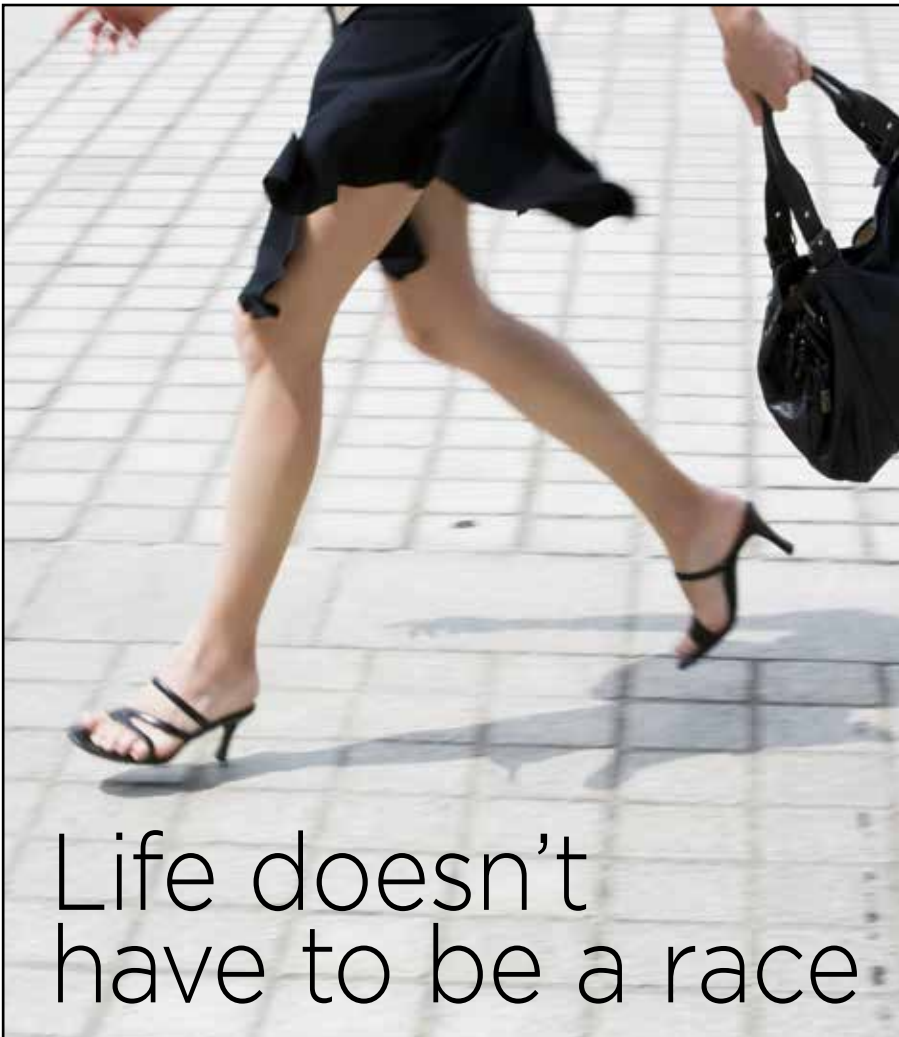
In an interview with the Allegheny Front public radio program, David Hess, secretary of Pennsylvania’s DEP under two Republican governors in the 1990s, said that the staff of people

who do inspections and review permits has already been reduced by 22 percent over the last decade. “If people don’t get permits, they don’t do their projects. If they don’t do their projects, jobs aren’t coming in, factories aren’t expanding. So it can have a major economic impact. The department has been in triage mode, really, for the last decade.”

Bob Light, director of the Lake Erie office of PA Sea Grant, was blunt: “Cuts would affect staffing projects and education.” Projects that could be affected include land acquisition, the removal and prevention of aquatic invasive species, both plants and animals, and training programs.

Light says that after Presque Isle Bay was delisted, it was an opportunity to look at other worthwhile projects. One of them was designing a system that standardized how fish tumors are evaluated, which is now used across the Great Lakes basin. “With no GLRI funding in the future, we would not be able to launch new initiatives such as this one. Plus, we would no longer have a seat at the table during regional or national decision-making.”

Other areas of the economy would suffer in less noticeable ways. Sarah Whitney, extension leader and associate director in the PA Sea Grant Susquehanna office, says that property values decline for landowners whose waterfront property has a high quantity of invasive plants blocking access for fishing and other recreation. “Reducing or eliminating aquatic invasive species (AIS) improves fishing and boating conditions and raises property values.”



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And she says it's far more expensive to control AIS than it is to prevent their spread in the first place, making the outreach component of the program maybe even more important than their control work.

Whitney adds, "Pennsylvania relies heavily on GLRI money because the state doesn't have its own budget for AIS as other Great Lakes states do. If the budget for AIS work is cut or eliminated, it would be much harder for us to do the outreach and control we'd like to do."

So What's To Do?

People who are dissatisfied with the possibility of drastic cuts are many. One of them is Patrick McDonnell, acting secretary of the PA DEP. In a scathing letter to Scott Pruitt, the new administrator of the EPA, McDonnell highlights the damage the cuts in funding would do to the commonwealth, including risking safe water, diminishing local water quality, abandoning farmers, stifling job creation, allowing harmful pollutants into our air, exposing children to radon gas, reducing the safety of coal miners, halting the redevelopment of contaminated industrial sites, exposing more people to lead contamination, and suppressing environmental justice. In summation he states, "Put simply, cuts to the EPA signal the Trump administration's disregard for its responsibilities to protect the health and safety of American citizens."

McDonnell also takes a moment to castigate Pruitt for his comments in a March 9 interview, in which Pruitt stated that he did not believe it has

been proven that carbon dioxide is the "control knob" of the climate. "It is beyond disappointing that the nation's top environmental officer would call into question the overwhelming scientific consensus and undermine progress on this critical subject," McDonnell writes. Unhappily, though, McDonnell

"Put simply, cuts to the EPA signal the Trump administration's disregard for its responsibilities to protect the health and safety of American citizens."

made no specific mention of GLRI funding, which is funneled to the states separately from general clean air and water protection programs.

A local supporter of protecting the GLRI is Rep. Mike Kelly (R-3rd Dist). As a member of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force, a bipartisan working group, he has signed two letters to President Trump supporting the continuance of the \$300 million GLRI in the 2018 budget.

He also signed on to two letters to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior. The first, dated March 30, requested continued full funding of GLRI; the second, more pointed letter says that the task force members are "united in carefully monitoring programs that are integral to the Great Lakes environment and waterborne commerce." It goes on to detail how losses in each program of the EPA could affect the

Great Lakes.

A spokesperson in Kelly's office also stated that Kelly does not support House Bill 861, which proposes terminating the EPA entirely, and that he is not in favor of using \$50 million of the 2017 GLRI budget to fund a border wall.

No response was received to a similar request for comments from Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-5th Dist), who has constituents in the Lake Erie watershed in eastern Erie County.

When Presque Isle Bay was delisted as an AOC, it was only the second one in the U.S. to have successfully made it off of the EPA's list. This is testament to the local people who worked diligently to achieve such an accomplishment; we should all express to them our undying gratitude.

Twenty-seven U.S. AOCs remain and nine Canadian. Of the 27 in the U.S., six are located in Lake Erie, including the Maumee, Black, Raisin, Cuyahoga, and Ashtabula rivers in Ohio, and the Buffalo River in New York.

This coverage is not comprehensive, nor is it truly complete. The *Erie Reader* will continue to follow the fate of the EPA and the GLRI as the 2018 federal budget moves through committees and to the floor of Congress for a final vote in the fall.

Until then, celebrate what we now have, but prepare to fight to keep it that way.

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

Upcoming Local Water Quality Presentations

All presentations will take place at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive, at 6:30 p.m.

Presented by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie and partners: PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, The PA Department of Environmental Protection, and Erie Water Works. – MB

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26

Unconventional Gas Development (Fracking) & Water Quality

Craig Lobins, District Oil and Gas Manager, PA DEP

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

Lake Erie Fishing & Fish Consumption

James Grazio, PhD, Great Lakes Biologist, PA DEP

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Algae in Lake Erie

Tim Bruno, Chief of the Lake Erie Office, PA DEP

Nate Irwin, Aquatic Biologist, PA DEP

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17

Municipal Water Safety and Quality Panel Discussion

Richard Imler, Water Quality Manager, EWW

David Motherwell, Manager, Production and Water Quality, EWW

Jason Seifert, Membrane Specialist, EWW



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Creating an Urban Agrihood: An Inclusive Model for Sustainable Urban Renewal
Monday, April 17 - 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Henry Reese, M.A.
City of Asylum: How Providing Sanctuary to an Exiled Writer Transformed Our Community
Thursday, April 20 - 7 to 8:30 p.m.

John Goldstein, M.A.
Community Benefit Agreements: Tools to Ensure Development Helps Everyone
Tuesday, May 9 - 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Steve Scully, M.S.
Erie Mayoral Democratic Candidates Debate
Wednesday, May 4 - 5:30 to 7 p.m.
Erie Mayoral Republican Candidates Debate
Wednesday, May 4 - 8 to 9 p.m.

Kevin B. Jones
Humility, Curiosity and Bold Moves Forward in Science & Medicine
Wednesday, May 10 - 7 to 8:30 p.m.

For the full list of events, please visit www.JESERie.org or call us at 814.459.8000

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Free market forces have manifested as 'fracking' in Pennsylvania that state and federal governments support. But communities hell bent on protecting their rights are fighting back against state and corporate take over; some with success.

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News of the Weird

Firefighting jetpacks and onstage enemas

By: Chuck Shepherd

World's Coolest City

Recently, in Dubai (the largest city in the United Arab Emirates), Dubai Civil Defense started using water jetpacks that lift firefighters off the ground to hover in advantageous positions as they work the hoses. Also, using jet skis, rescuers can avoid traffic altogether by using the city's rivers to arrive at fires (and, if close enough to a waterway, can pump water without hydrants). Even more spectacularly, as early as this summer, Dubai will authorize already tested one-person, "Jetsons"-type drones for ordinary travel in the city. The Ehang 184 model flies about 30 minutes on an electrical charge, carrying up to 220 pounds at about 60 mph. [Business Insider, 1-23-2017] [New York Times, 2-15-2017]

Latest Human Rights

Convicted murderer Philip Smith (a veteran criminal serving life for killing the father of a boy Smith had been sexually abusing) escaped from prison in New Zealand with the help of a disguise that included a toupee for his bald head before being caught. Prison officials confiscated the toupee, but Smith said a shiny head behind bars made him feel "belittled, degraded and humiliated" and sued for the right to keep the toupee. (In March, in a rare case in which a litigant succeeds as his own lawyer, Smith prevailed in Auckland's High Court.) [BBC News, 3-16-2017]

In March, star soccer goalkeeper Bruno Fernandes de Souza signed a two-year contract to play for Brazil's Boa Esporte club while he awaits the outcome of his appealed conviction for the 2010 murder of his girlfriend. (He had also fed her body to his dogs.) He had been sentenced to 22 years in prison, but was released by a judge after seven, based on the judge's exasperation at the years-long delays in appeals in Brazil's sluggish legal system. [The Guardian (London), 3-13-2017]

Awesome!

The Cleveland (Ohio) Street Department still had not (at press time) identified the man, but somehow he, dressed as a road worker, had wandered stealthily along Franklin Boulevard during March and removed more than 20 standard "35 mph" speed limit signs replacing all with official-looking "25 mph" signs that he presumably financed himself. Residents along those two miles of Franklin have long complained, but the city kept rejecting pleas for a lowered limit. [WEWS-TV (Cleveland), 3-23-2017]

Mating Strategies

The Apenheul primate park in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, is engaged in a four-year experiment, offering female orangutans an iPad loaded with photos of male orangutans now housed at zoos around the world, with the females able to express interest or disinterest (similar to swiping right or left on the human dating app Tin-

der). Researchers admit results have been mixed, that some males have to be returned home, and once, a female handed the iPad with a potential suit-or showing, merely crushed the tablet. (Apps are not quite to the point of offering animals the ability to digitally smell each other.) [Daily Telegraph (London), 2-1-2017]

Peacocks are "well known" (so they say) to flash their erect, sometimes-6-foot-high rack of colorful tail feathers to attract mating opportunities. However, as researchers in Texas recently found, the display might not be important. Body cameras placed on peahens at eye level (to learn how they check out strutting males) revealed that the females gazed mostly at the lowest level of feathers (as if attracted only to certain colors rather than the awesomeness of the towering flourish). [Austin American-Statesman, 3-20-2017]

Spectacular Errors!

In March, jurors in Norfolk, Virginia, found Allen Cochran, 49, not guilty of attempted shoplifting, but he was nowhere to be seen when the verdict was announced. Apparently predicting doom (since he had also been charged with fleeing court during a previous case), he once again skipped out. The jury then re-retired to the jury room, found him guilty on the earlier count and sentenced him to the five-year maximum. (Because of time already served, he could have walked away legally if he hadn't walked away

illegally.) (2) In March, Ghanaian soccer player Mohammed Anas earned a "man of the match" award (after his two goals led the Free State Stars to a 2-2 draw), but botched the acceptance speech by thanking both his wife and his girlfriend. Reportedly, Anas "stumbled for a second" until he could correct himself. "I'm so sorry," he attempted to clarify. "My wife! I love you so much from my heart." [Virginian-Pilot, 3-6-2017] [Daily Telegraph (London), 3-18-2017]

Leading Economic Indicators

It turns out that Layne Hardin's sperm is worth only \$1,900 and not the \$870,000 a jury had awarded him after finding that former girlfriend Tobie Devall had, without Hardin's permission, obtained a vial of it without authorization and inseminated herself to produce her son, now age 6. Initially Hardin tried to gain partial custody of the boy, but Devall continually rebuffed him, provoking the lawsuit (which also named the sperm bank Texas Andrology a defendant) and the challenge in Houston's First Court of Appeal. [Houston Chronicle, 1-25-2017]

Most Competent Criminal

An astonished woman unnamed in news reports called police in Coleshill, England, in February to report that a car exactly like her silver Ford Kuga was parked at Melbicks garden center with the very same license plate as hers. Police figured out that a silver Ford Kuga had been

Just Toyin' Witcha - by B. Toy



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stolen nearby in 2016, and to disguise that it was stolen, the thief had looked for an identical, not-stolen Ford Kuga and then replicated its license plate, allowing the thief to drive the stolen car without suspicion. [Birmingham Mail, 2-5-2017]

Least Competent Criminals

Thieves once again attempted a fruitless smash-and-grab of an ATM at Mike and Reggie's Beverages in Maple Heights, Ohio, in March despite the owner's having left the ATM's door wide open with a sign reading "ATM emptied nightly." Police are investigating. (2) Boca Raton, Florida, jeweler "Bobby" Yampolsky said he was suspicious that the "customer" who asked to examine diamonds worth \$6 million carried no tools of the examination trade. After the lady made several obvious attempts to distract Yampolsky, he ended the charade by locking her in his vault and calling the police, who arrested her after discovering she had a package of fake diamonds in her purse that she likely intended to switch. [WJW-TV (Cleveland), 3-23-2017] [South Florida Sun-Sentinel, 3-31-2017]

Great Art!

At what was billed as part of a cancer fundraising event at the AvantGarden in Houston in February,

performance artist Michael Clemmons and a partner, working as the act Sonic Rabbit Hole, had the elegant idea that one give the other an enema on stage, but there was a "spraying" accident. Viewers were led to believe the procedure was authentic, but the artists swore later that the sprayed contents were just a protein shake. "What I did is not all that (extreme)," protested Clemmons. "I don't understand why I'm getting the attention for this." [KPRC-TV (Houston), 2-20-2017]

The Passing Parade

Two convicted murderers imprisoned in Nepal married each other in February, though it will be at least 14 years before they can consummate. Dilli Koirala, 33 (serving 20 years for killing his wife), and Mimkosha Bista, 30 (with another four years to go for killing her husband), will be allowed to meet (just to talk) twice a month until Koirala's term ends. (A lawyer involved in the case said the marriage, though odd, was perhaps the last chance either would have to meet a suitable match.) [Republica (Kathmandu), 2-24-2017]

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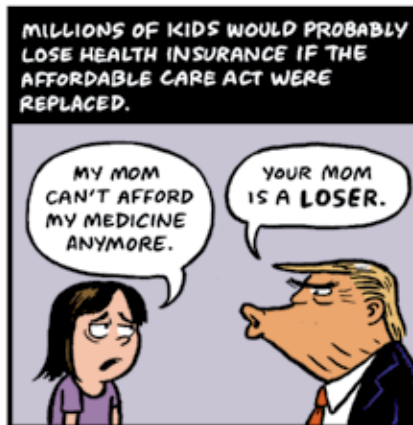
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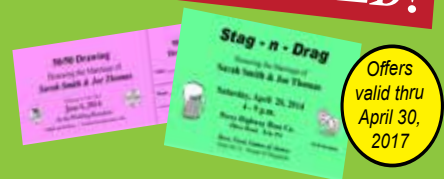
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Blunt Terms

The condition of cannabis use in Pennsylvania



JDU6SVIDEO

By: Matt Swanseger

With nicknames ranging from “the Devil’s lettuce” to “God’s gift,” cannabis is without question a polarizing plant. It has been glorified and damned, shunned and embraced, characterized as both “scourge” and “miracle.” Over the past two decades, public opinion has gradually shifted from outright condemnation to growing curiosity and optimism. Both ancient accounts and modern research suggest its usefulness in a vast array of health applications, and 28 states (including Pennsylvania) have taken notice, installing medical marijuana programs despite prohibition under federal law.

In this overview, we’ll look at the sociopolitical factors that precipitated cannabis’s historical fall from grace and

its rebounding reputation, as well as the forthcoming Pennsylvania medical marijuana system and the prospect of full legalization in the future.

Where Did Weed Go Wrong?

The United States has blazed an unusual trail with its cannabis policies thus far, a path that John Hudak outlines in his 2016 guidebook *Marijuana: A Short History*. Hudak, a senior fellow in governance studies and deputy director of the Center for Effective Public Management at Washington’s Brookings Institution, summarizes it as such: “Over the course of the nation’s history, the plant has gone from a required crop to an accepted medical treatment to a government-regulated pharmaceutical to an illegal drug to a somewhat

legal medicinal option to a locally legal and regulated substance.”

Marijuana, as it has become known, is produced from the dried flowers of two species, *Cannabis Sativa* and *Cannabis Indica*. The flowers contain the heaviest concentration of the psychoactive compound delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (that’s a mouthful even before the munchies set in, so it’s usually shortened to THC), which is most responsible for the “high.” Effects vary from species to species and strain to strain, but generally they include: elevated heart rate, increased appetite, the release of the “feel-good” chemical dopamine in the brain, and altered or heightened perception, especially in higher or more potent doses.

Together with the stems and leaves, the plants contain

A possible future for Pennsylvania, marijuana growing operations like this one in Washington state will harvest crops for medicinal use.

over 400 unique compounds, including 60 or more cannabinoids, most notably cannabidiol (CBD) and cannabinol (CBN). The full extent of their pharmaceutical properties has yet to be understood, and research is slowly ongoing. Cannabinoids mimic the action of molecules in the human endocannabinoid system, which plays a crucial role in homeostasis, in particular counteracting biochemical imbalances – a sort of inbuilt “damage control.” Therefore, scientists are excited about the range of therapeutic possibilities the drug might offer.

Abusing marijuana, as with any other substance, carries consequences – long-term heavy use may impact the hippocampus, a portion of the brain involved in memory formation (particularly verbal memory). The effect is more pronounced when chronic use begins during adolescence, when the brain is still developing. Additionally, marijuana smoke is a respiratory irritant and contains carcinogenic materials. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has yet to directly correlate marijuana smoking with lung cancer, however.

The scientific community almost unanimously agrees that cannabis is less dangerous than tobacco and alcohol, which are readily available without a prescription and implicated in a host of health issues – and deaths (480,000 annually for tobacco and 88,000 for alcohol). The Drug Enforcement Administration has documented zero incidents of cannabis overdose – virtually impossible, considering that a fatal THC dose of 15 grams is 1,000 times greater

than the effective dose of 15 milligrams (compared to alcohol, where just 10 times the effective dose can be lethal). Cannabis-related deaths do occur, not due to the toxicity of the drug itself, but poor judgment stemming from its side effects – for instance, motor vehicle accidents or fatal falls (THC affects working and spatial memory in the short-term).

“Over the course of the nation’s history, the plant has gone from a required crop to an accepted medical treatment to a government-regulated pharmaceutical to an illegal drug to a somewhat legal medicinal option to a locally legal and regulated substance.”

If marijuana isn’t massaging the masses, then how did it become such a societal pariah? The early 20th century marks the turning point. Following the Spanish-American War of 1898 (ending Spanish rule in the Americas) and subsequent Mexican Revolution (which peaked in the 1910s), Mexican refugees poured over the border by the hundreds of thousands. The influx fanned the flames of an imperial rivalry dating back to Europe, between the Protestant Anglo-Saxons and the Catholic Spaniards. The United States’ W.A.S.P. power base held a condescending attitude toward Latin Americans, viewing them as inferior in all aspects – less motivated, less industrious, and less stable morally and emotionally. Propagandists sowed fears that the Mexicans’ cannabis

cigarettes (“marijuana”) would saddle “pureblooded” Americans with these same deficiencies.

Bureau of Narcotics Director Harry J. Anslinger was perhaps cannabis’ most outspoken detractor early on, playing on mainstream America’s racist and xenophobic sentiments. He described marijuana as a “scourge” from Mexico, corrupting American society and endangering its youth. The hysteria of the era is captured perfectly in the infamous 1937 film *Reefer Madness* (a.k.a. *Tell Your Children*), wherein marijuana cigarettes are depicted as instantized degeneracy. Previously upstanding white schoolchildren are transformed into savages with a single puff, helpless to repress violent and sexual impulses. Despite the opening credits’ claim that “no attempt was made to equivocate [the] soul-destroying effects” of the “violent narcotic ... more dangerous than heroin,” in 2017, *Reefer Madness*’s exaggerations rate as laughable (in fact,

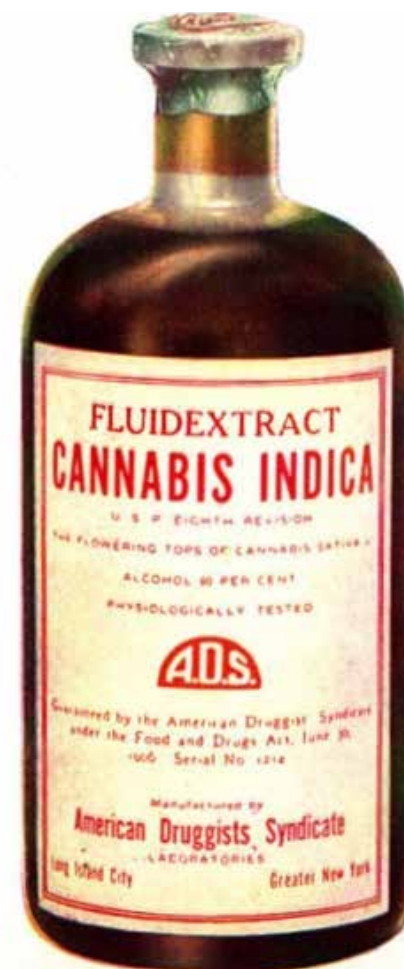
the film also served as inspiration for a tongue-in-cheek musical soon to be staged at Dramashop).

Nonetheless, the social stigmas established back then have been difficult to overcome, and consequent legislation only fortified those difficulties. The Marihuana [sic] Tax Act of 1937 effectively outlawed cannabis in the United States, requiring anyone dealing in the production or transport of marijuana to register with the government and purchase a tax stamp from the Department of the Treasury. The law was later ruled unconstitutional in the 1969 case *Leary vs. U.S.* Harvard Professor Timothy Leary was apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border, charged with transporting marijuana he did not purchase a tax stamp for. Leary (correctly) claimed the Tax Act violated his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination – although he had an obligation to pay the tax, purchasing the stamp would be admitting possession of an illegal substance.

President Richard Nixon would stand to suffer no such embarrassments as he declared his War on Drugs. Hellbent on reining in America after the turbulent 1960s, Nixon worked with Congress to enact the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) of 1970, which has influenced cannabis policy ever since. The CSA brought the U.S. in compliance with the United Nations’ Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which classified drugs into five “schedules” according to their inherent risk. During the initial classification process, Congress filed marijuana as a Schedule I substance, which implies: 1) a high potential for abuse, 2) no currently accepted medical use or treatment, and 3) a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision. Congress did not consult the medical or scientific communities in making its designations and the FDA was uninvolved.

Another lasting legacy of the Nixon presidency was the formation of the DEA, which

(right) Tinctures of cannabis appeared in *The United States Pharmacopoeia* until 1942. (below) A few of the prominent figures throughout marijuana’s history, (clockwise from left) Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, Harry J. Anslinger; drug advocate Timothy Leary; creator of the “war on drugs” President Richard Nixon; originator of the “just say no” campaign, First Lady Nancy Reagan.



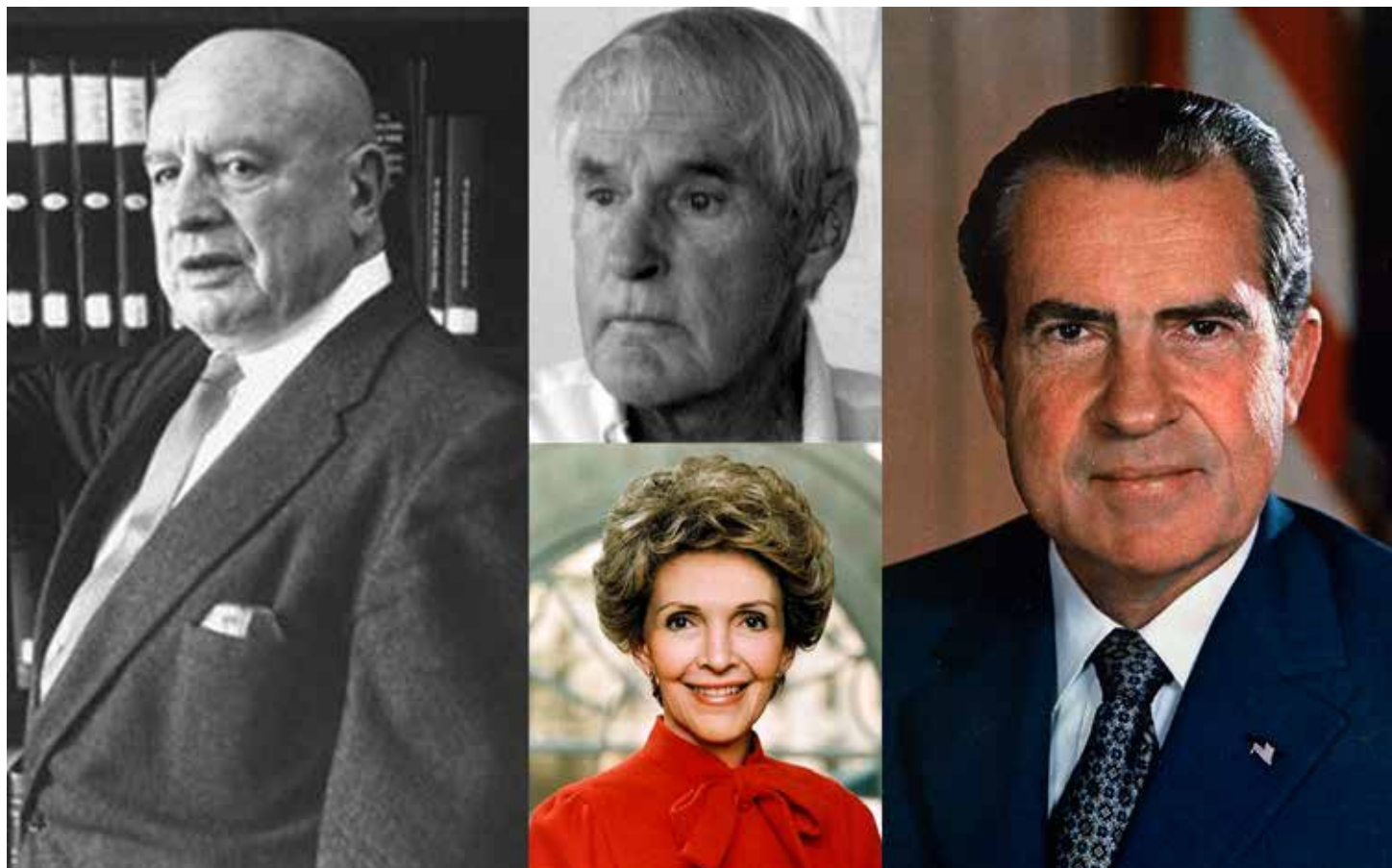
consolidated all pre-existing drug enforcement programs into one under the Department of Justice. The DEA expanded the War on Drugs beyond U.S. borders, with a budget that ballooned to \$2.882 billion dollars in 2014 from \$557 million (adjusted for inflation) in 1974. The War on Drugs intensified in the 1980s under President Ronald and First Lady Nancy Reagan, with laws

raising penalties and mandatory minimum prison sentences for offenders as well as allocating more resources toward drug education. Reagan’s successor, President George H.W. Bush, incorporated the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), headed by the “drug czar.”

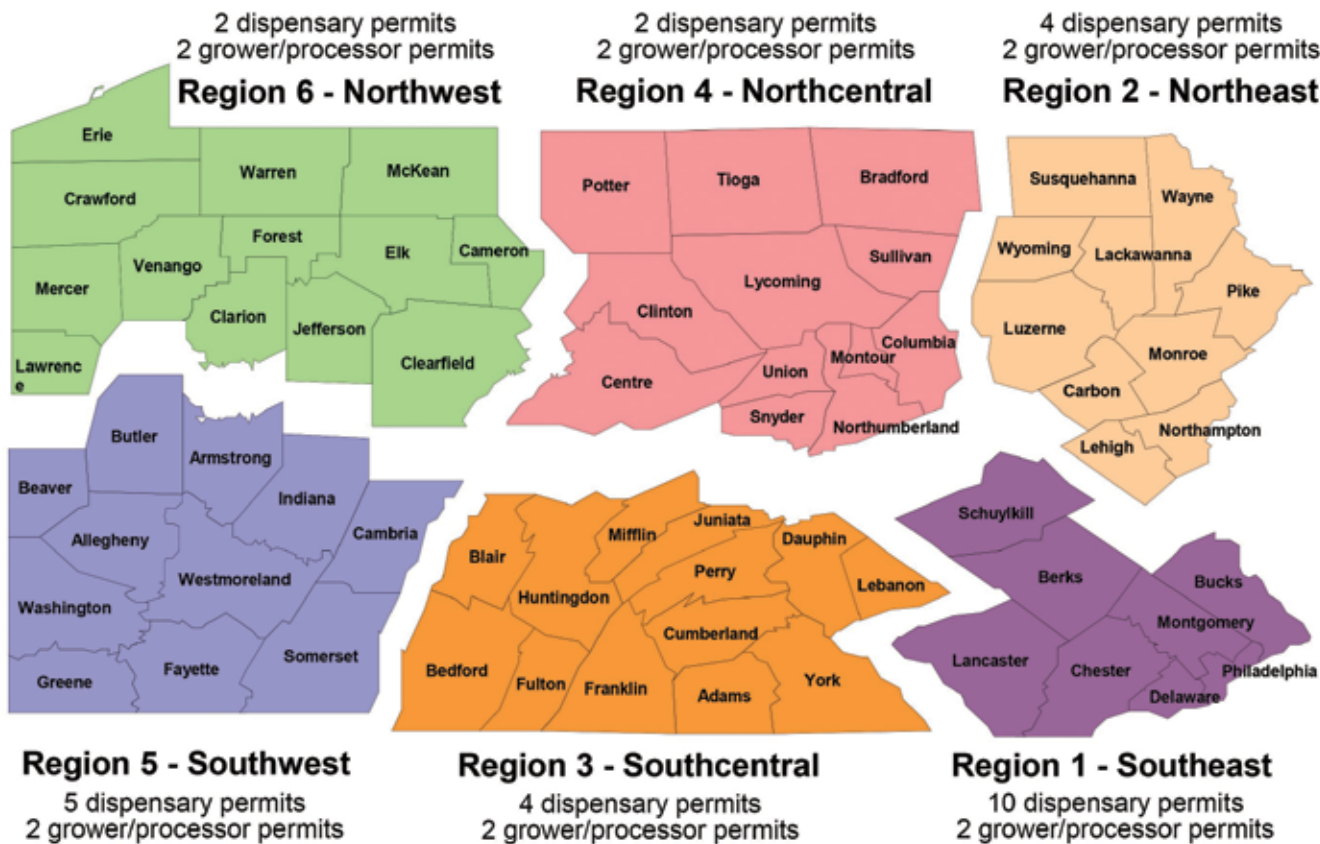
Marijuana-related arrests soared to over 700,000 annually by the end of Bill Clinton’s presidency, thanks in large part to the 1994 Crime Bill (increasing criminalization and funding for local law enforcement). Interestingly, the first president to admit to trying marijuana would also be the first to face the nation’s still-evolving medicinal cannabis conundrum.

Don’t Fear the Reefer?

Prior to the 20th century, cannabis was accepted treatment for a variety of maladies – it was the third most common active ingredient in patent medicines and was listed in the United States Phar-



Pennsylvania Department of Health Medical Marijuana Regions



Split into six regions, medical marijuana growing operations in Pennsylvania will be closely regulated.

those under a physician's care for a serious medical condition (to see what qualifies, visit health.pa.gov) are eligible to access marijuana through designated state dispensaries. Patients may appoint a caregiver who can pick up the medication on their behalf (up to five patients can appoint the same caregiver). Ineligible persons in possession of cannabis would still be subject to fines and incarceration, as it has not been decriminalized.

Once the program is fully implemented (the target is April 2018), the state will issue up to 25 grower/processor and 50 dispensary permits (with fees of \$210,000 and \$35,000 apiece, respectively). Dispensary applicants must provide proof of \$150,000 in capital. For growers, that figure is a whopping \$2 million (\$500,000 of which must be on deposit with a financial institution). Applications for the first wave of permits were due March 20, and approvals for up to 12 growers/processors and 27 dispensaries will be announced in late June. The Department of Health has dictated where these will be located geographically, dividing the state into six regions. Each region will initially accommodate two growers, while the dispensaries will be allocated according to earlier population studies.

Erie falls within Region 6, which includes Erie, Crawford, Warren, Mercer, Venango, Lawrence, Clarion, Jefferson, Clearfield, Forest, Elk, Cameron, and McKean Counties. One dispensary permit each will be awarded to Erie County and McKean County. The permit holder will be allowed to open a total of three dispensaries, so long as the first is located within the

macopeia in 1854 (i.e., it was legit). During the country's colonial period, land-owning Virginia and Massachusetts farmers were mandated to set aside a parcel for hemp: non-psychoactive cannabis spun into cloth, rope, textiles, and other materials. The CSA passed under Nixon, however, makes no distinctions – cannabis is a Schedule I substance, and resolutely illegal with no accepted use. The CSA would become the centerpiece of the battle between federal and state law as medical (and later recreational) marijuana programs began sprouting up nationwide.

Numerous appeals for cannabis policy reform were made throughout the previous century, including the 1944 La Guardia Report (under New York City mayor Fiorelli La Guardia), the

1963 Advisory Commission on Narcotic and Drug Abuse (under President John F. Kennedy), and the 1972 Shafer Report (under former Pennsylvania Gov. Raymond Shafer). These investigations all arrived at similar conclusions: Marijuana was not so much of a grave threat to public health or society as to warrant such severe legal repercussions. Either by intention or circumstance (JFK was assassinated just days after the report was delivered to him), none of these reports affected change.

The devastation wrought by the AIDS epidemic in the late '80s and early '90s, however, would. The crisis shook the city of San Francisco like no earthquake ever had, and its beleaguered gay population desperately sought reprieve. Many of those afflicted found some measure

of relief in cannabis, which stimulated the appetite in the later wasting stages of the disease and came without the horrible side effects of many prescription medications. Businessmen, activists, and organizers banded together to push for Proposition 215 (a.k.a., the Compassionate Care Act of 1996) to legalize cannabis for medical use in the state of California. It passed with 55.6 percent of the vote, with 5,382,915 in favor.

Other Western states quickly followed suit, with Oregon, Washington, and Colorado establishing their own largely unregulated programs, leading to a region derided as the "Wild West of Weed." Federal raids were frequent, but medical marijuana supporters were undeterred, and with such widespread use, the CSA proved difficult

to enforce. Clinton-era drug czar Barry McCaffrey threatened to revoke doctors' rights to prescribe if they recommended marijuana, but one Dr. Marcus Conant took the issue to court and prevailed. The Supreme Court upheld the 2002 Court of Appeals ruling that the government could not punish doctors for merely recommending medical marijuana.

With that, the floodgates opened. To date, 28 states possess either an operational or pending medical marijuana program. One year ago, Senate Bill 3 was passed by the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and decreed law. Gov. Tom Wolf proclaimed, "I am proud to sign this bill that will provide medical relief to patients and families who could benefit from this treatment." Only



Speaking at the Jefferson Educational Society, Brookings senior fellow and author of *Marijuana: A Short History*, Dr. John Hudak details the outlook of legalized marijuana in Pennsylvania.

MICK WARREN

county assigned by the state. The exact locations of both grow operations and dispensaries have yet to be determined.

Every aspect of the program will be closely monitored and strictly regulated by the state. Thorough background checks will be conducted for both growers/processors and dispensaries, and anyone involved in the supply chain must enroll in a two-hour training course dealing with handling, record keeping, security and safety, and diversion prevention (that is, distribution to non-patients). Quarterly reports will be collected on marijuana sold (growers), purchased (by dispensaries), and dispensed (to patients/caregivers), and that data will be aggregated to establish fair standards on per-dose price.

At the grow facility, every seed and plant must be logged into an electronic tracking system and daily records of growing conditions must be maintained. Concentrations of THC and CBD between specimens must remain consistent and their percentages clearly marked on the packaging of product dispensed. Primary dispensaries must have a licensed physician or pharmacist on duty during all

operating hours. Secondary dispensaries (satellites to the state-assigned location) may substitute these personnel with a physician's assistant or certified nurse practitioner. Transportation of product may only occur between the hours of 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. Any product that goes missing must be documented and any that causes adverse effects is subject to recall.

"It is a very tightly-controlled process," says Laura Guncheon, public relations director for former state Sen. Sean Wiley, who collaborated in a uniquely bipartisan effort to push the law through. "This is medicine and will be treated as such. It is engineered within very specific parameters for a consistent, high quality product."

This Bud's Not for You – Yet

By and large, the overwhelming majority of American adults support medical marijuana – in fact, nearly nine out of 10 (86 percent, according to a 2014 CBS poll). A 2015 poll by Quinnipiac University revealed that 88 percent of Pennsylvanians were in favor. To this, state Sen. Daylin Leach (D-Montgomery County) remarked, "You can't get 88 percent in

a poll of almost anything. If you'd ask people if you want to be eaten by wolverines, less than 88 percent would say no."

The prospect of legal adult recreational use is far more contentious, however. In January, Leach introduced Senate Bill 213, which would allow purchase of cannabis in state stores (similar to liquor) and home-grows of up to six plants, of which three may be flowering/mature at any given time. Public consumption would be disallowed and driving under the influence would be penalized (as with alcohol). Two others – Sharif Street (D-Philadelphia County) and Auditor General Eugene DePasquale have endorsed the bill thus far. DePasquale estimates legalization would generate \$200 million in additional revenue, which would go toward an estimated deficit of \$600-700 million, according to an article on PennLive.com.

The tepid response contrasts national trends – per the 2016 Gallup poll, 60 percent of adults favored legalization, most overwhelmingly younger Americans (Millennials – 77 percent, Gen X – 61 percent). Advocates make several arguments for reform – personal rights and freedom, racial justice (arrests

are skewed against blacks, although use amongst whites is nearly equal), displacement of the illegal market, product safety and regulation, and economics (cutting enforcement/judicial/corrections costs, tax revenue, and employment and innovations that would come with the industry).

However, Hudak says, it has to make sense for the state: "You really need the right alignment of stars. You need a public that supports the measure, the right combination of legislators – liberals and libertarians, in particular. It is not enough to agree with it; legislators need to see a purpose for it, because it is a political challenge and a risk. It will happen in some states sooner than others."

Colorado, Washington, Alaska, Oregon, and D.C. have already legalized. California, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Maine will launch recreational programs within the next year. Pennsylvania, meanwhile, seems to have adopted a "wait-and-see" approach. Given the socially conservative rural areas that comprise the bulk of the state, it is not likely to happen anytime soon. Says Gov. Wolf: "We want to learn from the experiences of other states that have full legalization and I welcome discussion on this issue with the legislature." Pennsylvania will observe their successes and their missteps, and try to formulate a set of "best practices" from there.

"The discussion can't simply just be about tax revenue," says Guncheon. "That would be irresponsible as there are public health implications, workplace safety questions, and the overarching question

if the commonwealth is really ready."

That is not to mention the tenuous coexistence of contradicting state and federal laws. The biggest obstacles on that level are the CSA, cannabis-averse Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and conservative majorities in both the House of Represen-

It may be a while before the smoke clears on a definitive cannabis policy.

tatives and the Senate. Rescheduling cannabis would greatly disencumber and accelerate research efforts – as a Schedule I substance, the clearances and background checks required of handlers is exhaustive. However, the rescheduling process is a bureaucratic labyrinth worthy of Crete – moreover, it moves through the Attorney General's office, where Sessions is the proverbial Minotaur. Among other things, Sessions has said: "Good people do not smoke marijuana."

It may be a while before the smoke clears on a definitive cannabis policy. For now, though, Wiley and others are pleased with Pennsylvania's impending ability to offer treatment to those in need. Clinical research may be scarce, but the testimonials have been plenty – and for many state lawmakers, that was motivation enough.

"There is no stronger lobby than a mother with a sick child," says Wiley. "When that child goes from suffering hundreds of seizures each day, every day, to just a handful, that is enough research for me."

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mwsanseger@eriereader.com. You can follow him on Twitter @SwazzySwagga.



Active Aging Fitness Day

Thursday, May 25
9 am - 1 pm

Register now for a healthy day of fun and fitness! Senior members and guest are welcome to join the LECOM Medical Fitness & Wellness Center for events and workshops that will encourage and educate you on the benefits of living a healthy and active lifestyle.

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE.
Register at the Member Services desk or call 814-868-7800.

CALL 814.868.7800
VISIT LECOMWELLNESS.com

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Spotlight on Erie

April 12 – 25, 2017

Wednesday, April 12

Erie Mayoral Forum: Our City, Our Movement, Our Choice



Erie Refocused: A Comprehensive Plan and Community Decision-making Guide was published last spring at the behest of outgoing Mayor Joseph E. Sinnott. With a city “short on resources, long on challenges, and covering nearly 20 square miles,” the onus will be on the incoming mayor to choose where to focus first.

Ten candidates – seven Democrats, two Republicans, and one third-party (Michael Bush of the Disability Party) – are in the running for what promises to be a pivotal election. The Erie Mayoral Forum at the Blasco Memorial Library will serve as a foreword to the May 16 primary, facilitating a more informed decision at the polling center. The public is invited and strongly encouraged to join in the discussion and meet-and-greet with the candidates after the event. Panelists Daria Devlin, Marcus Atkinson, and Jim Kurre will moderate.

The Erie Mayoral Forum at the Blasco Memorial Library will serve as a foreword to the May 16 primary.

On the Democratic ticket are Edinboro University professor Lisa Austin, County Councilman Jay Breneman, Erie Playhouse Executive Director Almitra Clerkin, retired Erie Bureau of Police Chief Steve Franklin, former City Councilwoman Rubye-Jenkins Husband, City Councilman Robert Merski, and former City Councilman and retired PNC Bank Vice President Joe Schember.

Lawyer John Persinger and Jon Whaley, a businessman and former aide to Mayor Sinnott, comprise the Republican ticket. – Matt Swansager

6 to 8 p.m. // H.O. Hirt Auditorium, 160 E. Front St. // Free and open to the public

Thursday, April 13

**Sonic Explorations
Courtesy of electroFLUX**



“A journey. An exploration. A bold test. ... The ongoing-on-occasion electroFLUX Experimental Music Series, curated by Erie-based sonic space-traveler Adam Holquist (onewayness), is always all of those things, and never the same thing twice.”

I wrote those words about the exclusive-to-Erie sonic series in early spring of 2015. And in the two-plus years

For anyone interested in hearing what music from new places and headspaces sounds like, it’s an excursion well worth taking.

since then, electroFLUX has continued to be ... well, everything (and anything) it always has been.

This time around – on Thursday, April 13, from 8 to 11 p.m. – electroFLUX is being presented as a 21-and-over event at Bobby’s Place, and is featuring some serious soundbenders and shakers.

The evening’s music roster includes the new-industrial trip-hop vibes of Elephant Pill (local experimentalist Alex Wilson); onewayness’ own heady blend of post-ambient texturing; ST-CLVR – Jamestown-based “harsh noise and power electronics”; the trancey chiptune tones of Marsh Sound, from New Jersey; and, to top it all off, the abrasive electro-hip-hop of WRISTS.

That’s a lot of sound travel. And for anyone interested in hearing what music from new places and headspac-

es sounds like, it’s an excursion well worth taking. – Ryan Smith

8 to 11 p.m. // 1202 W. 18th St. // facebook.com/electroflux.music

Friday, April 14

**Daya to Perform at
Edinboro University**



A Grammy-winning artist is coming to Edinboro University’s McComb Fieldhouse.

Singer and songwriter Daya will perform at the university’s annual spring concert and as part of her first headlining tour.

“I’m so excited to have Daya coming,” said student Rebecca Bortnick. “Her song ‘Sit Still, Look Pretty’ is one of my favorites.”

Grace Martine Tandon, better known as Daya, is a Pittsburgh native, raised more specifically in Mount Lebanon. The singer and songwriter, whose stage name is the Hindi word for grace, found a passion for music at a young age. At only three years old, she took piano lessons. Later, at age 10, she began voice lessons, giving her a jump start toward her career in the music industry.

She signed with Z-Entertainment in 2014, and the young artist hadn’t even graduated high school yet when her songs were making the charts. “Hide Away” and “Sit Still, Look Pretty” have both reached the Top 50 on the Billboard Hot 100. The latter spent 24 weeks on the chart.

Daya was also featured on the The Chainsmokers’ single “Don’t Let Me Down,” which won her a first Grammy Award (Best Dance Recording) in 2016. The song was nominated for Best Collaboration at the 2016 American Music Awards and Best Electronic Video at

the 2016 MTV Video Music Awards. It reached number three on the Billboard Top 100 and has garnered nearly 684 million views on YouTube and more than 691 million streams on Spotify.

Additionally, Daya was chosen as one of *Rolling Stone’s* “10 New Artists You Need to Know” and *InStyle’s* “Six Indie Artists You Should Be Listening to in 2016.” – Tracy Geibel

7 p.m. // Edinboro University’s McComb Fieldhouse, 455 Scotland Rd., Edinboro // \$25, Students \$20 // 732.2177 // edinboro.universitytickets.com

Saturday, April 15

**The Abruptors Pick
It Up at Scotty’s**



After you submit your taxes, you’ll need something a little more upbeat in your life. It’s easy to forget the world of audits and receipts when you’re listening to ska. Have no fear, rude boys and girls, because Buffalo’s seven-piece band, the Abruptors, will return to Scotty’s Martini Lounge just in time. The band made quite an impact when they were in town last October, their high energy winning over many a fan. Carrying the torch lit by countless bands of earlier generations, The Abruptors wear the ska mantle proudly. Originating in Jamaica in the early 1960s, ska music rose to prominence, and laid the foundations for rocksteady, as well as reggae. The genre saw a healthy resurgence thanks to British 2-Tone bands of the early 1980s. The 1990s gave birth to the “third wave” of ska, often blending elements of punk, finding wide mainstream popularity. Recent years have not been kind to ska, but if the genre’s history tells us anything, it’s that this is a resilient sound. The Abruptors blend the 2-Tone sound of traditional upbeat strumming, major tonality, and healthy horn sections with a hearty mix of soulful singalongs. With vocal duties shared by Ka-

CALENDAR

ley Lynch and guitarist Mike Geraci, they exude a tone reminiscent of The Dance Hall Crashers and early Pietasters, respectively. Evan Kaminski's baritone saxophone adds that growly, low rumble that works perfectly with the group's danceable feel. The band has a true love for the music that shines through. Opening up the show will be the Steve Trohoske Trio, with a set filled with dub grooves and virtuosos fusion sounds. If last October's performance was any indication, this show will be packed to the brim with skanking fans. — Nick Warren

9 p.m. to 1 a.m. // 301 German St. // facebook.com/ScottysMartini

Friday, April 21

Committed Citizen Debuts at PACA

Inspired by real events and experiences, the new play *Committed Citizen* grapples with the issue of abortion from several unique perspectives. Written by Erie native Abbe Tanenbaum, the play is making its world debut at Erie's Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA) this April. The one-act play will be directed by Karen Schelinski and Mark Tanenbaum. Mark is the artistic director and driving force behind PACA, as well as Ab-

be's father. Since graduating from Collegiate Academy and Ithaca College, Abbe, 29, has resided in New York City for seven years, finding success as an actress. But she never had aspirations to be a playwright. Through her side job, however, Abbe found herself in a remarkable situation. Working with a client, a story began to emerge. "That's actually what started the whole thing," she explains. "I'm a personal organizer. I was helping her and we were finding all these letters."

At first glance, Abbe suggested that the papers be thrown out. What use were a couple dozen handwritten letters from the 1970s? The owner of the letters, known in the play as Roberta, balked at this completely and revealed what they were. Between 1970 and 1973, Roberta (portrayed by Betsy Butoryak) received handwritten personal accounts thanking her for her work in an underground New York City abortion clinic. In the years prior to *Roe v. Wade*, things were markedly different. The risks for women were much greater, and the social stigma that these women carried was nearly unthinkable. It's been more than 44 years since the landmark court case, and the issue of abortion still garners some of the most powerful reactions from groups on both sides. The stand-in for Abbe's character,

known as Anne in the play (played by Jess Pierce), begins to realize that the world she lives in was massively shaped by women like Roberta. "It's really about Anne's journey of waking up to the realities of being a woman in America and today's society, and that she has a responsibility to keep moving the movement forward. To build on what's already been started."

The letters come to life, with different actors standing in for the original authors (Brit Soule, Jennifer Perry, Leslie Gordon Ford, and Amy Eisert Brotz all play multiple roles). Abbe explains that "in the beginning, when they start finding the letters, the younger woman doesn't hear the women who come out and recite their letters, and as the play progresses, the older woman helps her start questioning the status quo, essentially. She starts to hear them. She starts to wake up."

Using the actual letters as source material, the play tells these true, personal stories in the author's own words. Abbe admitted that "this was not something I set out to do, but the story was so compelling that someone had to do it." — Nick Warren

8 p.m. on April 21, 22, 28, 29; 2 p.m. on April 30 // 1505 State St., 2nd Floor // \$12.50 // 434.0687, paca1505.com, or facebook.com/CommittedCitizen

Saturday, April 22

Oddities, Absurdities, and Prom Dates



JOSH ARLINGTON/CAPTAIN'S PRESS

Does the strange and unusual call to you? Do you feel out of place among "the norm?" Then Basement Transmissions has the show for you. BT is pulling out all the stops for this year's fourth annual Toxic Prom, with a "Freak Show & Oddities" theme. Bring a friend, bring a creepy cousin, unpack your favorite outfit from your goth phase, and get ready for the dance-tastic, emo line-up you wish you had at your real prom. Maddock, The Standby, Mallory Run, Jivån, Joose, and Time Cat won't disappoint with all their psychedelic, bitter, post-pop-punk, grooving tunes that will

MUSIC

SAS Acoustics featuring Kayti Stadler

Apr. 12 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Colony Pub and Grille,
2670 W. 8th St. facebook.com/SASAcousticDuo.

Gem City Revival

Apr. 12 — 6 to 9 p.m.
The Back Deck, 4646 Buffalo Rd.
facebook.com/gemcityrevival.

Dave VanAmburg & Friends

Apr. 12, 19, 26 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Maxi's Restaurant in the
Bel Aire Clarion Hotel, 2800
W. 8th Rd. facebook.com/gemcityrevival.

Rock Star Crazy Tour with K Camp

Apr. 13 — 6 to 11 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145
W. 11th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Colony Pub Trio

Apr. 13, 20 — 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Colony Pub and Grille, 2670
W. 8th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Wrists, Marsh Sound, STCLVR, Onewayness and Elephant Pill

Apr. 13 — 8 to 11 p.m.

Bobby's Place, 1202 W.
18th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.
[electrofluxmusic](https://facebook.com/electrofluxmusic).

Dave VanAmburg

Apr. 14, 21 — 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Dickey's, 3716 Liberty
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Linda Lewis

Apr. 14 — 6 to 9 p.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Album Release Party for Echoes of Ethos

Apr. 14 — 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Bobby's Place, 1202 W.
18th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Daya

Apr. 14 — 7 p.m.
McComb Fieldhouse at Edinboro
University, 455 Scotland
Rd. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Chris Higbee

Apr. 14, 15 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry
Hwy. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

The Box Presents

Apr. 14 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Goose

Apr. 14 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St.
facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Senior Bagpipe Recital: Allyson Crowley-Duncan

Apr. 15 — 6 p.m.
Louis C. Cole Auditorium in
Memorial Hall at Edinboro
University, 205 Meadville
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

The Abruptors, Ska Show, Tax Relief Party

Apr. 15 — 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Scotty's Martini Lounge,
301 German St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

This American Song, Rebel Souls and Paoello & Gone

Apr. 15 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St.
facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Theory of Evolution

Apr. 15 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Cultural Series: The Celtic Hooligans

Apr. 19 — 7 p.m.
Mercyhurst North East Alex
Theatre, 16 W. Division St.
facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Celtic Woman

Apr. 19 — 7 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Smoke Signals 2017 Part 1

Apr. 20 — 4 to 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Gem City Jazz Ensemble

Apr. 20 — 4:30 to 5:15 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1
Sassafras Pier. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Smoke Signals 2017 Part 2

Apr. 20 — 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Bobby's Place, 1202 W.
18th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Celebrating Swing

Apr. 21 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Bel Aire Clarion Conference
Center, 2800 W. 8th
Rd. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Rick & the Roadhouse Rockers

Apr. 21 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Gem City Revival

Apr. 21 — 6 to 9 p.m.
The Cork 1794, 17 W. Main
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

PA Music Educators Event

Apr. 21 — 7:30 p.m. &
Apr. 22 — 11 a.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

The Real Soul Band

Apr. 21 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry
Hwy. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Mister F

Apr. 21 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St.
facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Mala Sangre, Synaptic Rage, Joe Nameless and Narwhal Bloodbath

Apr. 21 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

The Chillbilly's

Apr. 22 — 1 to 4 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main
Rd. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Toxic Prom

Apr. 22 — 5 to 11 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145
W. 11th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Whiskey Road

Apr. 22 — 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs, 8199 Perry

Hwy. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Big City Hangover and The Ice Cream Socialists

Apr. 22 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St.
facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

I-90's

Apr. 22 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Sherlocks, 508 State
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Pink Cadillac

Apr. 23 — 1 to 4 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main
Rd. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Erie Composers

Apr. 24 — 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Cathedral of St. Paul, 134
W. 7th St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Symphonic Wind Ensemble/Jazz Ensemble Concert

Apr. 25 — 7 p.m.
Louis C. Cole Auditorium in
Memorial Hall at Edinboro
University, 205 Meadville
St. facebook.com/pg/basement.transmissions.

Gem City Concert Band Spring Concert

Apr. 25 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran Church, 2216



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Photo Credit: A local student tie-dyes at Erie Arts & Culture's booth during JUMP! Back to School Expo 2016

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CALENDAR

Wegman, whose well-loved work is part of permanent collections at such prestigious places as the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and Centre Pompidou, also gave a free lecture at Edinboro University on the evening of April 6.

He "is exposed to a lot of art and dabbles with many different expressions," EAM Director John Vanco said of Wegman in a recent news release. "Anyone who has posted a cat video on YouTube is following in his footsteps.

It should be most interesting, then, to see just where Wegman's feet stopped and stayed awhile in the field of this year's entries from around the region. — Ryan Smith

Opening reception: Sunday, April 23, 1 to 3 p.m. (exhibit open through July 9) // 20 E. Fifth St. // erieartmuseum.org

Monday, April 24

Erie Chamber Orchestra is Well Composed



Nobody wants to start their week off on a sour note, but seeing as Monday is just one semitone removed from "last weekend," a sense of foreboding and menace is not unheard of. Let the Erie Chamber Orchestra stand as resounding proof that you, too, can

compose yourself with dignity.

The Erie Composers concert will feature the original works of Erie-based composers Christina Brice Dolanc and Stephen Colantti, performed by the ECO's talented assembly of musicians. "The Songsmith Collective," a string quartet piece based on selected motifs from Perseus House Charter School of Excellence students, will also debut this evening.

Even St. Paul Cathedral's vaulted ceilings will be hard-pressed to contain the immensity of Dolanc's awe-inspiring "Stars Alone," an eerily gorgeous ode to the breadth of the universe. Incredibly rich and textured choral harmonies float over haunting string sustains, creating a sense of being surrounded by the cosmos — it's surprisingly soothing and reassuring, even if we are all just specks on a grain of dust in the grand scheme of things. Dolanc, also a violinist and singer, has composed over 100 works for string quartet and arranged for numerous other ensemble settings.

Stephen Colantti is no stranger to enormity himself, having written the opera "The Selfish Giant," based on Oscar Wilde's poetic short story of the same name. He began his career in the city's thriving opera scene before teaching himself to compose. He specializes in songs for chorus, guitar, piano, and strings in addition to playing classic guitar and viola himself. ECO principal cellist Ruth Ann Scanzillo marvels at "how surely his melodic line [carries] over such serious harmonic complexity."

Sigh, Mondays — they're complicated. — Matt Swanseger

7:30 to 9:30 p.m. // 134 W. 7th St. // free and open to the public

St.erieevents.com.

Don't Dress for Dinner

Apr. 19 & May 2, 3 — noon & Apr. 22, 29 — 5:30 p.m. & Apr. 23, 30 — 2:30 p.m.

Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

The Trojan Women

Apr. 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 23, 30 — 2:30 p.m.

Edinboro University's Diebold Center for the Performing Arts, 217 Meadville St. events.edinboro.edu.

Baby with the Bathwater

Apr. 20, 21, 22 — 8 p.m. & Apr. 23 — 2:30 p.m.

Allegheny College Vukovich Center for Communication Art, 520 N. Main St. allegheny.edu.

D'Angelo Opera Theatre: Carmen

Apr. 21 — 8 p.m. & Apr. 23 — 2 p.m.

Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Committed Citizen

Apr. 21, 22, 28, 29 — 8 p.m. & Apr. 30 — 2 p.m.

PACA, 1505 State St. paca1505.com.

Ape and Essence

Apr. 21 — 8 p.m. Apr. 22 — 2 & 8 p.m. & Apr. 23 — 2 p.m. & Apr. 28 — 8 p.m. & Apr. 29 — 2 & 8 p.m. & Apr. 30 — 2 p.m.

Gannon University's Schuster Theatre, 620 Sassafras St. gannon.edu.

An Evening of Jerome Kern

Apr. 22 — 7 p.m. Apr. 23 — 2 p.m.

Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

COMMUNITY

Tai Chi

Apr. 12, 17, 19, 24, 26 & May 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24 -- 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

30 MyPlate Steps to a Healthier You

Apr. 12 — 10:30 a.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Bowie Baysox

Apr. 12 — noon

UPMC Park, 110 E. 10th St. erieevents.com.

Bike Trek Across America

Apr. 12 — 2 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach



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Life Doesn't Make Sense

David Lynch: *The Art Life* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* come to the Erie Art Museum



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12 & WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19

Cinema doesn't get much weirder than the works of David Lynch. For 40 years, he has helped push surrealism into the mainstream with his films combining dreamlike imagery, bizarre, otherworldly performances, and an overall atmosphere of ominous dread. Now a new documentary, *David Lynch: The Art Life*, is coming to the Erie Art Museum.

The film is a one-on-one discussion with the director as he discusses his early years, including his upbringing in suburban

Montana and eventual move to the mean streets of Philadelphia. We learn about the events that inspired his art, music, and – most importantly – his challenging, provocative films. After winning a \$5,000 grant from the prestigious American Film Institute, Lynch made his debut with the nightmarish mid-night-movie cult hit *Eraserhead*, which brought his surreal style of filmmaking into the public consciousness. From there, he went on to make award-winning, critically-praised films like *The Elephant Man* and *Blue*

Velvet, one big-budget sci-fi epic with *Dune*, and several independently produced arthouse films like *Lost Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*, and *Inland Empire*.

The Art Life is a fascinating look into the mind of one of the most interesting and enigmatic figures in American cinema, but it doesn't stop there. The very next week, the Art Museum is showing Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, the prequel/sequel to his much-loved cult TV series, *Twin Peaks*. The show, about the investigation of a teen girl's murder as well as a glimpse into the bizarre and sometimes horrifying activities of the residents of Twin Peaks, Washington, helped usher in a new style of supernatural and character-based serial drama, inspiring such shows as *The X-Files* and *Lost*. Fans of the show were intrigued and frustrated in equal measure as the film – which sought to give them all the answers – ended up leaving

them with even more questions.

If you haven't yet experienced the strange and surreal worlds that Lynch creates with his films, maybe now is the time to check them out. Fans and detractors alike have expressed frustration with Lynch because he steadfastly refuses to explain the meanings of his films, instead letting the imagery speak for itself. I think Lynch expressed it best when he said, "it's better not to know so much about what things mean," adding that he doesn't understand why people always want art to make sense when, as he says, "life doesn't make sense." – Forest Taylor

David Lynch: *The Art Life* will be shown at the Erie Art Museum on Wednesday, April 12, and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* runs on April 19. Both shows: Doors at 6 p.m., film at 7 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. // \$5 // erieartmuseum.org/events-film

[St. lifeworkserie.org](http://St.lifeworkserie.org).

Oriental Painting

Apr. 12, 19 — 5 to 7 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Erie's Mayoral Forum: Our City, Our Moment, Our Choice

Apr. 12 — 6 to 8 p.m.

H.O. Hirt Auditorium at Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. facebook.com/besterie.

The Power of the Present Moment Course

Apr. 12 — 6:15 to 8:15 p.m.

Whole Foods Co-op Community Center, 1341 W. 26th St. bhaktaschool.org.

Planetarium Show: Legends of the Night Sky

Apr. 12 — 7 to 9 p.m.

Cooper Science Center at Edinboro University, 230 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Weightlifting & Cardio Fitness Class

Apr. 13, 20, 27 & May 4, 11, 18, 25 -- 9:30 a.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Gender Conference

Apr. 13 — noon to 6 p.m. & Apr. 14 — 5 to 9 p.m. & Apr. 15 — 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Reed Building at Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Living Well with Hearing Loss

Apr. 13 — 1 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Library Explorers

Apr. 13, 18, 27 — 4 to 4:45 p.m.

Children's Storytime Room at Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

Remarkable Women: Patricia Schroeder

Apr. 13 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

New Horizons Music Project: Strings and Folk

Apr. 13, 20, 27 & May 4, 11, 18, 25 — 4 to 6 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Innovation Commons Open House for Entrepreneurs

Apr. 13 — 5 to 7:30 p.m.

Room 109 in Buke Center at Penn State Behrend, 5101 Jordan Rd. facebook.com/InnovateBehrend.

Creative Writers Reading Series, Mecca Jamilah Sullivan

Apr. 13 — 6 to 7 p.m.

Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Monoprints Class

Apr. 13 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Peninsula Room at Blasco

Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

Music of the World, A Creative Arts Residency

Apr. 13, 20, 27 & May 4 — 6:30 to 8 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Following the Reformation Trail in Germany & Switzerland

Apr. 13 — 7 p.m.

Erie Maennerchor Club, 1607 State St. gcsoe.org.

Nick Di Paolo

Apr. 13 — 7 p.m. & Apr. 14, 15 — 6:45 & 9:30 p.m.

Jr's Last Laugh Comedy Club, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Mourning for the Environment on Earth Day

Apr. 13 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr.

lakeeriegroup.webs.com.

Paint and Rock

Apr. 13 — 8 to 10 p.m.

Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Tai Chi

Apr. 14, 21, 28 & May 5, 12, 19, 26 -- 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.

Regency at South Shore, 322 Washington Pl. lifeworkserie.org.

Edinboro's Got Talent

Apr. 14 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Edinboro University Frank G. Pogue Student Center, 405 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

First Day of Trout

Apr. 15 — 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

East Water Works Pond in Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Easter Egg Hunt

Apr. 15 — 11 a.m.

Lake Shore Railway Museum, 31 Wall St.

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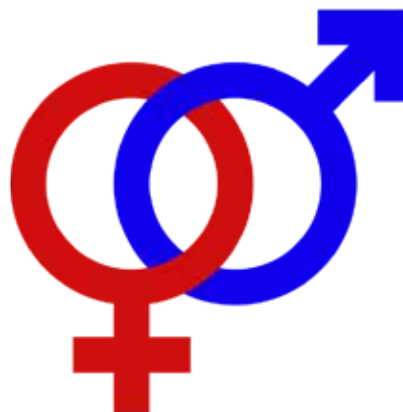


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CALENDAR

We Need Penn State Behrend's Annual Gender Conference More than Ever

THURSDAY, APRIL 13 &
FRIDAY, APRIL 14



Princess culture. Eco-feminism. Reproductive rights in Ireland. Cyber-culture in China. Gender biases in STEM fields. Human trafficking. Transgender children. The 2016 election.

These are a few of the topics you can expect from the 2017 Penn State Behrend Gender Conference, a multifaceted collaboration between faculty, students, and national scholars dedicated to generating awareness about issues of agency, identity, and sexuality. This year's theme is *community* – the social norms we encounter in our everyday

lives, and the need for diverse voices to be heard in response to the problems that affect us.

The conference features an array of free events on Behrend's campus designed to encourage dialogue among women, LGBTQ folks, their allies, and interested people in the community. Invited guests include author Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, an associate editor for *The Feminist Wire*, and Pearl Gluck, whose recent film *The Turn Out* explores the role of human trafficking in West Virginia. The conference also provides Behrend students with an opportunity to offer insights about the opportunities and obstacles they face on campus.

The Penn State Behrend Gender Conference feels especially urgent this year, in the wake of a political season scarred by "locker room talk" and attempts to legislate the bathroom habits of trans people. If you've been horrified by the rhetoric of the election – or inspired by the Women's Marches that followed – you won't want to miss this conference. – Dan Schank

April 13 & 14 // Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, 4701 College Dr. // genderconference.wordpress.com/

lakeshorerrailway.com.

T-Shirt Printing Class

Apr. 15 — 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Edinboro Branch Library, 412 W. Plum St. erielibrary.org.

Trump Tax Day Rally in Erie

Apr. 15 — noon to 1:30 p.m.
Griswold Park, 150 W. 14th St. facebook.com/keystoneprogresserie.

Creating an Urban Agrihood: An Inclusive Model for Sustainable Urban Renewal

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

Fit for Life Fitness Class

Apr. 18, 25 & May 2, 9, 16, 23 -- 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Keeping Your Computer Secure and Healthy

Apr. 18, 25 & May 2, 9 — 10:30 a.m. to noon
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Sacred Geometry:

The Architecture of the Universe

Apr. 18 — 1:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Porreco College Open House

Apr. 18 — 3 to 6 p.m.
Barn Classroom Complex at Porreco College, 2951 W. 38th St. events.edinboro.edu.

Great Books: Standing Down, From Warrior to Civilian

Apr. 18, 25 & May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 & June 6 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Tour

Apr. 18 — 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

A Citizen's Action Guide to Blight

Apr. 19 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Halfway to Halloween Haunted History Tours

Apr. 19 — 7:30 p.m. & Apr. 21 — 7 & 9:30 p.m. & Apr. 26 — 7:30 p.m.

The Brewererie at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerie.com.

Relaxation for Productivity and Happiness

Apr. 20 — 12:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Adult Art Classes

Apr. 20 — 1 to 3 p.m.
LEAF Education Center, 1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org.

Know the 10 Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

Apr. 20 -- 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Westlake Woods Assisted Living, 3301 W. Lake Rd. facebook.com/westlakewoodsassistedliving.

You've Still Got It: Sexuality and the Aging Process

Apr. 20 — 4 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

American Short Stories

Apr. 20, 27 & May 4, 11, 18, 25 & June 1, 8, 15, 22 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.

This Earth Day, Celebrate Our Planet Like It's The Only One We Have



SATURDAY, APRIL 22

2017 may well go down as the year of the march. We have marched on Washington, in our hometowns, and on each other's Main Streets. We have protested, raised awareness, and rallied. Each of these actions has shown why we love this country and want to keep it great. But here's the thing – no matter how we view religion, politics, our kids' educations, or public restroom policies, we all share one indisputable fact: We can achieve nothing without clean air to breathe, pure water to drink, and sustainable agricultural practices to grow food.

On April 22, for the 48th time, we will celebrate Earth's vivid coral reefs, lush rain forests, desert sands of Nevada and Africa, and the more than 14 miles

of peninsula jutting into Lake Erie right here in our own backyards. This year, Earth Day Network and the March for Science have partnered to raise awareness of our dependence on scientific research to understand earth's changing ecosystems. The main Earth Day march and "teach-in" will take place in Washington, D.C.,

with a satellite "sister" rally and march scheduled at Perry Square here in Erie.

"Science is a process, not a product – a tool of discovery that allows us to constantly expand and revise our knowledge of the universe," states the March for Science website. In other words, the more we know, the greater power we possess to make viably symbiotic decisions for Earth/human cohabitation.

Make 2017 the year that you celebrate Earth Day the same as any other holiday. Set the day aside and ask your neighbor what she's doing for the Earth on April 22nd. – Ti Sumner

10 a.m. speakers and demonstrations begin; 3 p.m. march // Perry Square, downtown Erie // free admission // More info on Facebook.com

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Creative Writers Reading Series, Mary Biddinger

Apr. 20 — 6 to 7 p.m.

Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Poster/Portrait Print Class

Apr. 20 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Peninsula Room in the Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

Greg Warren

Apr. 20 — 7 p.m. & Apr. 21, 22 — 6:45 & 9:30 p.m.

Jr's Last Laugh Comedy Club, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Extreme Event Game Night

Apr. 20 — 7 to 8 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

City of Asylum: How Providing Sanctuary to an Exiles Writer Transformed Our Community

Apr. 20 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

The New Jim Crow

Apr. 20 & May 4, 18 &

June 1 — 7 to 9 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 7180 Perry Hwy. uuerie.org.

Astronomy Open House: Great American Eclipse

Apr. 20 — 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Penn State Behrend, 4701 College Dr. behrend.psu.edu.

Mercyhurst Literary Festival: Lumen Reception

Apr. 20 — 8 p.m.

Mercyhurst University Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Trivia Night at LifeWorks Erie

Apr. 21 — 6 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Colorful Birch Trees Canvas Class

Apr. 21 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Claytopia, 924 W. Erie Plaza Dr. heathercash.com.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Binghamton Mets

Apr. 21 — 6:30 p.m. & Apr. 22 — 4 p.m. & Apr. 23 — 1:30 p.m.

UPMC Park, 110 E. 10th St. erieevents.com.

Theme of Line, Book Release

Apr. 21 — 7:30 p.m.

Avalon Hotel, 16 W. 10th St. chuckjoy.com.

EPIC Volleyball Tournament

Apr. 22 — 8:30 a.m.

Fort LeBouf High School, 931 North High St. eriesportscommission.com.

Spring Open House

Apr. 22 — 9 a.m. to noon

Frank G. Pogue Student Center at Edinboro University, 405 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Day in World Languages

Apr. 22 — 9 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

Day of Caring

Apr. 22 — 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Asbury Woods Nature Center, 4105 Asbury Rd. asburywoods.org.

16th Annual Walk for Autism

Apr. 22 — 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Rotary Pavilion in Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula

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[Dr. nwpa-asa.org](http://Dr.nwpa-asa.org).

The First Spiritualist Church of Erie's Spring 2017 Expo

Apr. 22 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Zem Zem Shrine Club, 2525 W. 38th St. facebook.com/firstspiritualistchurch.

March for Science Erie PA

Apr. 22 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Perry Square, 568 State St. facebook.com/marchforscienceeriepa.

Poster Printing Class

Apr. 22 — 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Iroquois Branch Library, 4212 Iroquois Ave. erielibrary.org.

Annual Greene Township Lioness Card Party

Apr. 23 — 1 p.m.

St. Boniface Coleman Center, 9637 Wattsburg Rd. facebook.com/greentownshiplionessclub.

Dig into Erie's Past

Apr. 23 — 2 to 4 p.m.

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

The Price is Right Live

Apr. 23 — 7:30 p.m.

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

Know the Ten Signs

Apr. 24 — 10:30 a.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Altoona Curve

Apr. 24, 25 — 6:30 p.m.

& Apr. 26 — noon

UPMC Park, 110 E. 10th St. erieevents.com.

Sister Maura Smith Earth Day Lecture: Tara Houska

Apr. 24 — 7 p.m.

Mercyhurst University Taylor Little Theatre, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

From Planning to Action: An Inside Look at Erie's "War Room"

Apr. 24 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Planetarium Show: What's Up

Apr. 24 — 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Cooper Science Center at Edinboro University, 230 Scotland Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Antarctica or Bust

Apr. 25 — 1 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Joan D. Chittister, OSB and Cokie Roberts 'In Conversation'

Apr. 25 — 7 p.m.

Mary D'Angelo Performing

Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

The State of Erie County Poverty

Apr. 25 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

Pennsylvania State Police 'Come Get to Know Us Day'

Apr. 26 — 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu.

LifeWorks Erie Open House

Apr. 26 — 4 to 6 p.m.

LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Local Quality of Water

Apr. 26 & May 3, 10, 17 — 6:30 p.m.

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

Candidate Forum

Apr. 26 — 6:30 to 9 p.m.

H.O. Hirt Auditorium at Blasco Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. facebook.com/keystoneprogresserie.

Cultural Series: Facts, Alt-Facts and Anything But the Facts: Politics in the Digital Age

Apr. 26 — 7 p.m.

Mercyhurst North East Alex Theatre, 16 W. Division St. northeast.mercyhurst.edu.

Portraits of Us

Gary Cardot's take on our rich diversity



By: Mary Birdsong

Very few artists do saturated color as well as Gary Cardot, who has new works at the Erie Art Museum's Holstein Gallery through June 24.

His photographs have historically been rich in imagery depicting divergent settings and ways of life from county fairs to Hare Krishna temples. He has always gravitated to communities and gatherings outside of mainstream America, such as gay pride parades and Catholic processions, and places such as religious shrines, amusement parks, pawnshops, cemeteries, porn shops,

and nightclubs. To him, these subcultures are rife with the nuances of this country; the back places where people find spiritual homes, work, and satisfaction. But they've also represented how we have separated ourselves from one another into different tribes.

Unlike earlier work showing us Ferris wheels and curious storefronts in a straightforward singular way, Cardot is now deconstructing the images, building them back up into abstract constructions, and imbuing them with an even richer palette than in the past.

For example, "Tainted Love" mingles

A rich blur of color and texture, Gary Cardot's Hare Krishna Temple creates a shimmering artistic narrative.

window reflections, hash pipes, video screens, a glowing chandelier, a hookah, and strings of twinkle lights. The composition keeps your eyes moving from one place to the next, finding new things, experiencing the busyness, and feeling the rush of color. All of the components serve its centerpiece, though, which is a sculpture of a shirtless male tattoo artist tucked between a woman's spread legs, working his machine above her breast. Her head is flung back, her orange hair streams down.

For Cardot, this approach is an experimental and formal exercise in light, shadow, substance, and transparency. The results, in many ways, have the feeling of cubism. We are seeing objects from more than angle and point in time, with ATMs eliding into mannequins and then into stairwells. Manipulating images this way, he says, feels like "painting" with photographs.

But he adds that by layering related images he can more completely instill in them "the memory of the shoot or [his] impressions of an event." Therefore, the artificial and lushly detailed worlds Cardot explores become larger symbols of how we divide people.

The subculture of the county fair, which is predominantly white, rural, and Christian, is just as self-limiting or


insular as that of a Hare Krishna event. "We often use quick, visual observation to form perceptions of people different from us. A Krishna would feel just as out of place in a porn shop or a county fair as someone from the fair would feel in the Krishna temple. Yet, we all see the 'other' as unusual."

Cardot's work provides the narrative of diversity our country has always embraced, at least on a superficial level.

Cardot's work provides the narrative of diversity our country has always embraced, at least on a superficial level. Drag queens, bikers, psychics, and brides, Easter parades, religious altars, and the endless kitsch of Times Square all rub elbows. He advocates for learning to incorporate and celebrate that splendid variety, and left me with a Neil Simon quote: "Never underestimate the stimulation of eccentricity." Cardot, however, would replace "stimulation" with "contribution," suggesting that it is exactly our differences that make us strong and give us life. I think he's right.



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

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A Review of *Galaxy Love*

The 92-year-old secular rabbi of American poetry, ferocious and funny as ever.

By: John Repp

Not only does it beggar belief that a writer Gerald Stern's age remains both prolific and vital, but the Pittsburgh native's strongest poems' cantankerous refusal to tame rage into annoyance or exaltation into enjoyment stands as a rebuke to anyone who prefers art to behave itself – if such can rightly be called "art." I know devoted readers of poetry who have long disapproved of Stern's devil-may-care tone, sometime lack of rhetorical coherence, relentless name-dropping, and obsessional subject matter – black locusts, dead insects, long-gone political movements, and what he called in "The Dancing," one of his best-known poems, "beautiful filthy Pittsburgh, home/ of the evil Mellons."

The thing is, they're correct, these readers, correct as far as correctness goes. Too often in Stern's recent collections, the poems hit their Stern-esque

marks, giving his people exactly what he's taught them to expect, the poet finally easing into his La-Z-Boy after one of the last half-century's great runs of excellence.

Like all his best work, *Galaxy Love* once more gives us Stern in all his sprawling, polymathic, harshly compassionate contrariness. In poems that range from tender lyrics like the title poem (in which the speaker turns "the light off with the right/hand and gather[s]" the loved one "in close with the wrong") to self-lacerating elegies like "Bastards" to "Ecstasy," a poem whose gravitational field holds Hedy Lamarr, "Toyotas and Chevys," "the reason broken glass wouldn't do," and "a boundless absorption of the world" in nested orbits, to how "Poverty" in line after line yields paradoxical riches, Stern proves once again he's a consummate trickster, our latter-day Walt Whitman, and a contemporary Isaiah, even as he keeps

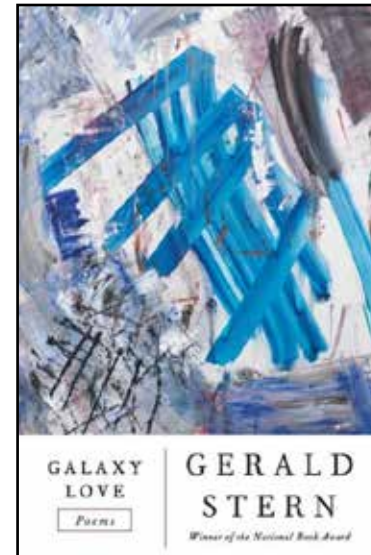
arguing with every prophet you can name. His work here feeds the imagination as surely as the potatoes feed the speaker of "Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, 1939":

*The one thing that kept me going
above all else
were the potatoes we roasted in
the burning ash
and for their sake I made one trip
too many
on the three-bladed sled.*

For me, Gerald Stern is one of a dozen or so writers absolutely necessary to living. His work has long since convinced me to forgive ahead of time whatever failures or flaws may come. Stern's poems could not have been made by anyone else, and very few practitioners of any art can say that.

Galaxy Love, by Gerald Stern, W.W. Norton & Co., 2017, 124pp., \$25.95

The poems in John Repp's most recent



chapbook (*Music Over the Water*, Alice Greene & Co., 2013) are set in or near Presque Isle State Park. He coordinates the Writing Concentration at Edinboro University and teaches courses in every genre the Concentration offers.

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

Franchise's freedom sets open world game apart



By: Paul Schillinger

Minor story location spoilers ahead

I could have taken the main road to "Zora's Domain" – only to be ambushed by 12 Lizalfos (recurring lizard-like enemies) equipped with lightning arrows. I could have set up my own ambush on an unexpected camp of monsters halfway up the trail. I could have fought that lone mini-boss on the bridge heading into town. Instead, I ate some "cooked endura carrots," popped a "stamina elixir," and climbed the nearest mountain, bypassing the main road and heading straight to "Zora's Domain." It's moments like these that set *Breath of the Wild* (BOTW) apart from just about every open world game that preceded it.

BOTW opens with your character, "Link," awakening in a tomb after a 100-year sleep. Not knowing how or why you got there, you emerge in the center of Hyrule, one of the most expansive open world games I have ever seen. Continuing down the trail, you meet a lone traveler who gives you a couple of simple tasks in order to get a paraglider, allowing access to the whole map.

In the first area you learn combat mechanics. You learn that all weapons – swords, bows, and shields – are durable and break (often). You learn that making food and elixirs is a necessity. Also, you learn new abilities such as "magnesis" and "stasis" that are crucial on your journey. But most importantly, you learn BOTW is a game overflowing with emergent gameplay.

Nintendo markets BOTW as an "open air" game – and the gameplay speaks

volumes toward this concept. Wood burns. Metal swords and shields conduct electricity. Rain makes climbing almost impossible. You can freeze to death in cold climates; burn to death in hot climates. If you think it's a possibility, it almost always is. Try to block a fire arrow with a wooden shield? It won't work. Adventuring during a lightning storm? Better holster your metal weapon and shield or get zapped. Have a mountain to climb in the rain? Time to find another

It's this freedom to explore, to play this game how you want to, that sets it apart from every other open world game before.

er way around. Monitor how hot or cold you are or suffer the consequences.

I've spent 120 hours combing the land of Hyrule, unlocking 90 of the game's 120 shrines (bite-sized dungeons). I beat the main dungeons and killed the final boss. Killing end game bosses, tying up unfinished quests, and seeking out more shrines is still pulling me through. The first quest given was to kill the main boss, Ganon. And you totally can! Speedrunners are conquering this game in under an hour – without cheats or glitches. It's this freedom to explore, to play this game how you want to, that sets it apart from every other open world game before. Open world? I'll take open air.

Paul Schillinger can be contacted at pSchillinger@ErieReader.com.

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Mount Eerie

A Crow Looked At Me
P. W. Elverum & Sun



A shockingly open portrait of a person in mourning, Mount Eerie's eighth studio album is a striking one. Phil Elverum pours out his feelings in an unadorned, spartan acoustic recording similar to Sun Kil Moon, a style glimpsed at on a handful of tracks from Elverum's previous band, The Microphones. Lyrically, Elverum provides incredibly specific details regarding his personal experience following the death of his wife, musician/cartoonist Geneviève Castrée. Passing away in July of 2016, Castrée fell victim to pancreatic cancer at the age of 35. Death is a difficult subject in all instances, and songwriting is no exception. A death in the family consumes your entire existence for a time. An honest and cathartic documentation of this critical time can be helpful for not only the documentarian, but also the audience. Everyone goes through grief, and many people don't have the first-hand experience required to deal with such a shattering event. This album has the ability to help others who've grappled with loss. The raw, quivering open nerve that is *A Crow Looked at Me* won't be for everyone, but it might just be the perfect thing for someone.
– Nick Warren



Richard Edwards

Lemon Cotton Candy Sunset
Joyful Noise Recordings



Richard Edwards' first solo album is a lusciously beautiful work full of pain and redemption. The former frontman of Margot & the Nuclear So and So's, Edwards was diagnosed with a *Clostridium difficile* infection, the devastating stomach disease known as C. diff. Causing the singer to abandon his previous band, the disease left Edwards scarred yet standing. To make matters heartbreakingly worse, last year has also seen the dissolution of his marriage. Without the context and on a purely superficial level, *Lemon Cotton Candy Sunset* simply sounds like a gorgeous work of acoustic-leaning indie rock. The album begins with a swell, not unlike an orchestra tuning up before transitioning to the melodic, glowing shimmer of "Lil Dead Eye-d," gradually adding more and more instrumentation. Tracks such as "Disappeared Planets" and "Rollin', Rollin', Rollin'" stand out as early favorites in the latter half of the record. Served with a softer hand than many of Margot's tracks, the sound is perfect for fans of The War on Drugs, Phosphorescent, or Cass McCombs. It's softly cooed notes amidst a rich atmosphere. Lyrically, it offers a welcome depth and insight, similar to Edwards' previous works.
– Nick Warren



The Buttermtones

Gravedigging
Innovative Leisure



Full of 60s throwback madness, the junior release from The Buttermtones is a frenetic and twisted party playlist for any decade. Like a Quentin Tarantino soundtrack in hyperdrive, the band delivers a nonstop barrage of evocative scenes. Building on the time-tested template of garage rock and surf tones, the Los Angeles quintet creates a mysterious and inviting aura. Singer and guitarist Richard Araiza has the chaotic theatricality of James Chance with just a drop of Jello Biafra thrown in, perhaps if he somehow wound up singing for the Ventures. The album starts off with the same downbeat pattern that made "London Calling" famous, marches in time and moves on. Immediately, you hear the growling saxophone of London Guzmán, who proves to be a vital secret ingredient that sets this album apart. The real beatnik dance party starts with "Sadie's a Sadist," its tongue-in-cheek title connoting the darkly playful nature of the album. Tracks like "Two Headed Shark" and the almost-titular "Gravedigging" offer some of the most swinging tracks with their psychedelic, groovy shuffles.
– Nick Warren



Laura Marling

Semper Femina
More Alarming Records



Laura Marling's sixth album, *Semper Femina*, translates to "always a woman." It's a shortened version of a Virgil quote she has tattooed on her leg, the full meaning of which roughly translates to "a woman is an ever fickle and changeable thing." Marling has crafted an intricate album filled with lush explorations of womanhood. Beginning with the hypnotic fretless bass riff of "Soothing," Marling broods and flutters, showing her range as a vocalist and songwriter. Notes of "The Valley" softly cascade in a mist of passionate folk sounds, replete with swelling strings and the first use of female pronouns, a consistent motif throughout the rest of the album. Easily the poppiest track comes in the form of "Wild Fire," with the lyrical twang of a country balladeer. Convincingly reinventing sounds in the American folk tradition, the Hampshire songwriter's British accent comes out for a bit in "Wild Once." Marling's catalog has been appropriately celebrated by critics and fans alike, and *Semper Femina* shows no signs of that praise halting. It's a dense, literate work from a genius musician, full of complex ideas.
– Nick Warren





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