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From the Editors

Game on!

Any head coach would tell you that football is a game of field position. Getting the football at your own 10-yard line is *a lot* different than getting the football at your opponent's 10-yard line.

But they'd also tell you that it's not about how you start, it's about how you finish. Whether it takes 90 yards to score the go-ahead touchdown or just 10, as former New York Jets coach Herm Edwards once emphatically enunciated "you play to win the game!"

Where you've come from is a predictor of — but by no means a guarantor of — success or failure. Before Veterans Stadium hosted its first contest on (appropriately) Veterans Day 1924, it would've been difficult to imagine football as the sensation it is today. Early pigskin enthusiasts muddied themselves wherever they could find a spot — in fact, it took the players building a makeshift fence around a patch of grass at Seventh and Cherry streets before Erie had anything resembling a designated football field.

Ainsworth Field (opened in 1914) helped dignify the sport somewhat, but it was at the Vet where Erie's passion for the gridiron was truly kindled. With the fortress-like Academy High School (opened in 1920) looming in the background, the site has played host to nearly a century's worth of classic interscholastic clashes (including some the largest in Pennsylvania high school football history), six NFL games (a 1940 tilt between the Steelers and Bears attracted a whopping 8,000 fans), and even a high-profile rock concert or two (Bon Jovi's 1987 *Slippery When Wet* tour).

Legendary coaches (Paul Brown of Massillon Tigers, Ohio State, Cleveland Browns, and Cincinnati Bengals repute) and beloved mayors (Lou Tullio, who coached the Academy Lions and Erie Vets professional team) have paced its sidelines, and it's stadium lights — installed at a then-outrageous cost of $4,000 in 1931 — were an object of much fascination in an era that predated outdoor prime-time sports as the norm (consider that the MLB didn't play a game at night until 1935). There's a good reason all those roguish, cash-strapped NFL teams were clamoring to play here!

Not to toot our own horn (we'll borrow sousaphone co-inventor John Philip Sousa's, who played the Academy High auditorium in 1926), but we have some great sports history to cheer for. And as the Reader celebrates back-to-school season, we're hoping to see Erie stack wins in some other major categories, such as architectural preservation (Preservation Erie Greater Erie Awards), artistic expression (FEED Media Arts), and even (sending up a Hail Mary) governmental transparency and accountability.

We'll leave the lights on for you.

Erie at Large: Judges Matter

Interpretation and preservation of law at stake each election

By: Jim Wertz

Judges matter.

I've written that brief statement many times before in this column and I suspect that if we were to recount each instance of its publication, every use would seem more urgent than the time before. This moment is no different and, I will argue, the most urgent.

Across the country, our judges have demonstrated time and again that they are the last lines of defense for our democracy; they interpret and define our liberties, and they protect and preserve our rights. It's what makes their selection, whether by appointment or election, such an important civic responsibility.

Pennsylvania is just one of seven states that still elects judges of the State Supreme Court through partisan elections, and one of only six states that elects judges to what are called the intermediate appellate courts — the courts between your local courts and the State Supreme Court — which in Pennsylvania are our Superior and Commonwealth courts. In the most simplified terms, the Superior Court hears individual matters like civil and criminal appeals and the Commonwealth Court hears institutional matters relating to government and business. Those distinctions aside, the judges of each of our three appellate courts share one important characteristic: each of them is elected by voters through partisan campaigns, in which each of the judges seeks the nomination of a major party, thereby framing the candidates' perspectives on any number of issues.

This fall the people of Pennsylvania will elect a new Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, two new members of the Superior Court, and a new judge of the Commonwealth Court. While each race is important for its own set of issues and impending litigation, no race this year is more important than the race for Pennsylvania's Supreme Court.

We need only look at the Court's decision to preserve democracy in the wake of the 2020 election to understand the magnitude of its power. When a Commonwealth Court judge attempted to halt the certification of Pennsylvania's election results in a case filed by Congressman Mike Kelly, who asked that Pennsylvania throw out all mail-in ballots from the 2020 election, the Secretary of the Commonwealth immediately appealed to the State Supreme Court, which dismissed Kelly's case and the Commonwealth Court decision with prejudice, meaning that the Republican election deniers could not bring the same issue before the courts again.

With a presidential election on next year's ballot and no shortage of anti-democratic shenanigans in the queue, the balance of power on the State Supreme Court remains critical to the future of our democratic experiment.

Moreover, the United States Supreme Court inadvertently elevated the importance of state Supreme Courts across the United States when it issued its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, the case which overturned *Roe v. Wade* and eliminated federal protections for abortion rights. The Dobbs decision essentially made abortion a state's rights issue, relegating the legality of abortion rights to state legislatures and state courts in places where conservative gerrymandering has turned over control of the legislature and the courts to lawmakers and jurists who had anti-abortion legislation teed up for the day *Roe v. Wade* was no more.

In Pennsylvania, that means that any anti-abortion legislation that would make it through the state legislature — an unlikely prospect with the current Democratic House of Representatives and Democratic governor, but a relative certainty should that balance of power revert to full Republican control as it had been during the era of Roe — would ultimately have its constitutionality decided by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

There are currently four Democrats and two Republicans serving on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The winner of this year's general election will fill a vacancy created when then-Chief Justice Max Baer, a Democrat, died last year.

The Democrat in this year's race, Judge Dan McCaffery, is an accomplished judge who is highly recommended by the Pennsylvania Bar Association. Since January 2020, he's been a judge of the Pennsylvania Superior Court and according to the Pennsylvania Bar Association, McCaffery has a sound knowledge of legal principles. His opinions and legal writings are well written and well-reasoned. In addition, the candidate has a demonstrated record of community involvement."

CORGARASHU

Voting in judicial elections is as important as ever, especially now as individual states have control over their own abortion laws and the judges elected will either uphold current abortion protections or attempt to amend or dismantle them.

An Army veteran, McCaffery served as an assistant district attorney in Philadelphia and was elected to the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas in 2013 and the Pennsylvania Superior Court in 2019. He's been unabashed on the campaign trail in his support of women's reproductive rights and his disagreement with the SCOTUS decision in Dobbs.

McCaffery recently told Politico that "it's pretty clear from a personal standpoint that I believe those particular issues are best decided between a woman, her conscience, and her doctor."

His outspoken defense of a woman's right to choose has earned him the endorsement of Planned Parenthood, which calls McCaffery a "reproductive health champion."

McCaffery's opponent, Carolyn Carluccio, is the president judge of the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas. She ran a Republican primary campaign pandering to anti-abortion voters in an attempt to secure her party's nomination. It worked. But once the nomination was secured, Carluccio scrubbed her website of extremist positions on the abortion issue despite endorsements by the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation and the Pro-Life Coalition of Pennsylvania, organizations that refer to contraception as "spiritual evils."

Publicly, since the end of the primary, Carluccio has taken a Brett Cavanaugh-like stance on abortion stating that she would "uphold the law." Cavanaugh showed America how he felt about the "law" when he joined the majority of the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

We shouldn't expect anything less from Carluccio should she have the opportunity here in Pennsylvania.

Judges matter. The voters of Pennsylvania shouldn't take that for granted this November. Our democracy, our liberties, and your rights may depend on it.

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

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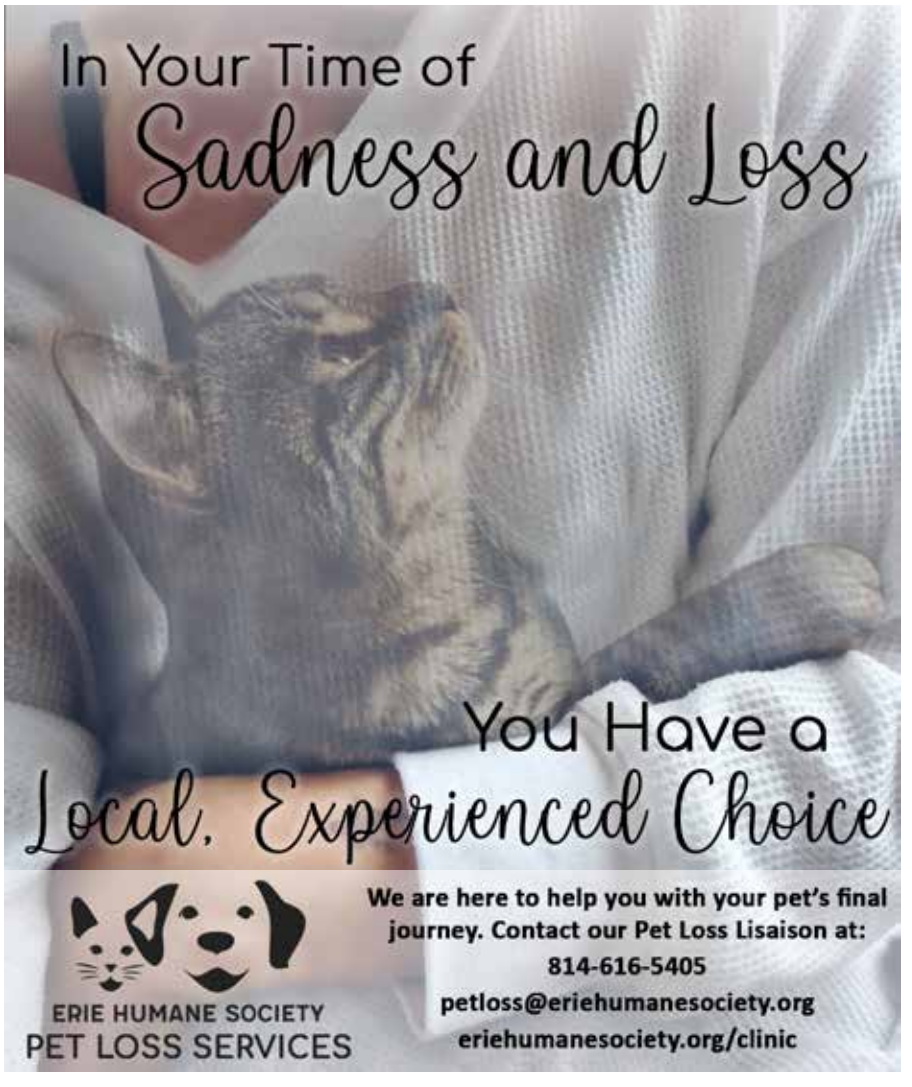

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Promoting Public Participation

How to become a local government watchdog

By: Liz Allen

Sorting through newspaper clips, this headline, based on remarks by Tom Ridge, caught my eye: "Democracies Need Citizens' Involvement."

The headline could have accompanied one of Ridge's forceful op-eds criticizing Donald Trump's presidency, objecting to his bid for re-election or, later, urging a peaceful transfer of power after Joe Biden won. But the headline I found is from a June 9, 1995, story in the Morning News, reporting on Ridge's speech, in his first year as Pennsylvania governor, to Leadership Erie.

Much has changed since then. The Morning News and the Erie Daily Times joined in 2000 to become the Erie Times-News, remaining family-owned until the paper was sold to GateHouse in 2015 and later merged with Gannett. Ridge left his second term as governor to head the Department of Homeland Security after 9/11.

The Jefferson Civic Leadership Academy filled the gap after the Leadership Erie program ended. Yet Ridge's message resonates as much today as it did nearly three decades ago. "In a democracy, it's the citizen leaders who can affect real movement and real change," Ridge said then. "People are not powerless in a democracy unless by choice."

Recommitting to my journalism career after five years in elective office, I've been gauging the depth of civic involvement in Erie city and county government and contemplating how to encourage more of it. With meetings streamed on digital platforms, it's easy to follow Erie City Council and Erie County Council even if you can't attend meetings in person. The City of Erie also streams other meetings where decisions important to city life are made, from the Blighted Property Review Committee to the Zoning Hearing Board.

When big issues generate controversy, such as the removal of an LGBTQ+ display at the Erie County Library during Pride Month, people are fired up to speak out, as they did before both city and county councils in July. But staff cutbacks at the newspaper and Erie TV stations mean that discussion and votes by the two councils and policies proposed by Erie Mayor Joe Schember or Erie County Executive Brenton Davis sometimes aren't covered at all or that those actions only make news when it's too late to have a say.

There are also advantages to going to meetings in person when you can.

For example, when I walked into the Erie City Council caucus before its July 5 meeting, a council member asked: "Are you even allowed in here?" Yes, I replied, the caucus is subject to the state's Open Meetings law. If I hadn't been there, I would have missed an animated discussion about the city's new bike lanes, with council members disagreeing about whether parking would still be permitted around the clock on Greengarden Boulevard. "There is no way to sugarcoat it," Solicitor Ed Betza said. "You can't have a bike lane with unlimited parking."

SEMYON SULLIVANCHUK

Erie City and County Council meetings are open to the public and any citizen can sign up to speak during the meetings. They are often livestreamed over Facebook and always recorded and uploaded to YouTube. It is easier than ever for the average citizen to be engaged with their local government.

When the county council went into executive session to discuss Councilman Terry Scutella's motion to appoint Gary Grack to the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority, I questioned how appointing a non-county employee to a volunteer role qualified as a "personnel" issue to be decided behind closed doors.

For my persistence in invoking Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act, one of the toughest in the country, I was escorted out of the meeting by a deputy county sheriff. Back in regular session, Scutella withdrew the nomination.

Grack had served on the EMTA board until 2018, when Schember and then-Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper revamped the board. Grack was removed from the board and disputed that he had resigned. I asked Scutella why he had nominated Grack to return to EMTA. "Mr. Grack is a friend of mine," he said, adding that it's difficult to find volunteers for unpaid board appointments. "People are too busy to commit," he said.

When I was an Erie Times-News Editorial Board member and later on Erie City Council, I advocated for transparency to attract skilled, diverse applicants for boards and authorities. I am happy that the "featured post" at the top of the City of Erie's Facebook page seeks "volunteers to serve on our Authorities, Boards and Commissions."

Yet when the mayor pushed for the new City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) Authority, he submitted names that he and State Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-49th, compiled without seeking public applications. City council amended that list with its own new names but did not solicit applicants before unanimously approving the revised CRIZ on Aug. 16.

Another economic development issue, to create a new business park in west county, propelled Fairview and Girard residents to loudly voice their objections, but only after Erie County Council voted 5-2 on July 11 to transfer ownership of the property from the county to the Erie County Redevelopment Authority.

Attorney Paul Susko, who owns property on Dobler Road, quizzed council about the proposal during the public comment period, saying he learned about it from a newspaper story. When he called Fairview Township to find out more, he was told that Fairview officials had only heard of the plan two weeks earlier. "I would like this process not to be so much under the radar," Susko said.

Councilman Andre Horton and Councilwoman Mary Rennie voted against the transfer. "I happen to think it's a worthwhile project," Rennie said. But she expressed concern that the proposal had been put on the agenda without advance public meetings. "It really puts us at loggerheads as to how things are done," she said, describing the action as part of the "ongoing" lack of transparency by the Davis administration.

Rennie later told the Erie Times-News that the land transfer was the "final straw" that led her to resign from council on July 24. Both Rennie, who ran for county council as a Democrat, and Rock Copeland,

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selected by the Erie County Democratic Party to replace Rennie on the general election ballot in November, have ideas on how to encourage and improve citizen engagement with local government.

Mark your calendars for committee meetings, caucuses, and regular meetings. County council prepares for its regular meetings at its twice-monthly finance and personnel committee meetings. Council members caucus an hour before the regular meeting, deciding without formal votes on such things as whether ordinances should immediately advance from first reading to the final vote at that meeting and, often, whether bid requirements should be waived.

As the former director of the Erie County Library, Rennie had managed budgets for the county. She pointed out that Erie County government is complex and expensive to run. Indeed the 2023 county budget is $570,594,024, according to the 621-page budget document.

"The services aren't something the average person can wrap their brain around as easily as they can with other municipal services," she said. "People understand the need for snow plowing, trash pickup, and police protection. Court services, public health, and human services, just to name a few, are a little more mysterious. It's difficult to keep people engaged with something that they can't consider in concrete terms."

Yet despite those challenges, it's vital for the public to be engaged, "in the interests of good government, but also to make sure the public's interests are protected," Rennie said. "Clearly, they weren't in the case of the Fairview Girard land transfer. All county residents should understand that next time, it could be them. Politics is infused in way too much local government business. All council legislation should be properly vetted by the people. No one should ever be satisfied by a one-time 'sales' presentation. Ask questions — lots of them."

County council voted for Tom Spagel to fill Rennie's seat until year's end. As the Democratic nominee for the Erie County Council's Third District seat, Copeland will face Republican Kimberly Hunter. Although Copeland is running to serve on county council, he's familiar with the workings of Erie City Council, which he ran for in the May primary.

Copeland, who works in engineering/sales for Hite Co., said he is fascinated by politics and spent a lot of time tracking presidential, U.S. House, and Senate races. "I watched C-SPAN a lot. The process has always been interesting to me," he said. "You can really go down a rabbit hole at any level you want."

He campaigned for Bernie Sanders and for Kristy Gnibus when she ran against Mike Kelly for Congress but it's local government where you can make a difference, he said. "Joe Biden will never come and pave your roads."

He began to watch city council meetings several years ago, before moving back to the city from North East. He's also paid attention to county council meetings. "Social media really helps make government accessible," he said. "On a Friday night, (I might say), oh, shoot, I missed the city council meeting. I can go to the City of Erie Facebook page, scroll down and watch the meeting on my own time."

He also follows social media posts from elected officials, reads online comments to see which issues are percolating, and, if he attends a meeting in person, lingers afterward to talk to council members. "I had this realization that these are people just like me," he said. He also keeps up with other municipal meetings. "I have an alert set up on Facebook if there is a Blighted Review committee or Redevelopment or any of these that use a Facebook Live, I'll pop into these meetings and see what is being discussed."

To truly be prepared as an active participant, you have to do advance homework to understand agenda items, he said. "One thing the county does really well, and I have to give props to the administration, is that the agenda has much more detailed text about what each agenda item is," he said. "That's where the county shines. The readings aren't just the ordinance number and title. There's usually a little more body there."

On the other hand, the City of Erie has an excellent tool for research after the fact, eCode 360. "The search feature is really awesome," he said, especially if you want to read meeting minutes or research existing ordinances.

Like Rennie, Copeland said he is particularly keen to pay attention to budget proposals, whether at the city or county level. "You can talk the language all you want, but when you write a budget, that's when you decide where your priorities are."

Liz Allen can be reached at lizerie@aol.com

Learn more

Erie County Council's finance and personnel committees meet at 4 p.m. on Thursday the week before regular council meetings. These meetings are Zoomed and public comments can be made. County council's regular meetings are on Tuesdays, starting with the caucus at 5 p.m. and the regular meeting, which is live streamed on YouTube and available afterward, at 6 p.m. Check eriecountypa.gov and click on County Council for meeting dates, which can be once or twice a month.

Erie City Council meets at 9 a.m. on the first Wednesday of the month, with the caucus at 8:30 a.m., and at 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday, preceded by a finance committee meeting at 6 p.m., then the caucus.

The City of Erie tries to ensure that most city-run meetings that include public comment are available to view and comment on via Zoom, according to Chris Millette, communications director. The exception is city council but the city hopes to bring back Zoom for those meetings, he said.

Even without Zoom right now for council, Millette or other communications department representatives "monitor comments on the Facebook livestream and introduce those comments into the public record, as necessary," he said. Community Access Media livestreams most city meetings on CAM's video platform, the city's Facebook page, and its YouTube channel. Those meetings exist on CAM's video-on-demand streaming player for one year and indefinitely on the city's Facebook and YouTube pages, he said. The city's webpage, cityof.erie.pa.us, is being revamped, said Millette.

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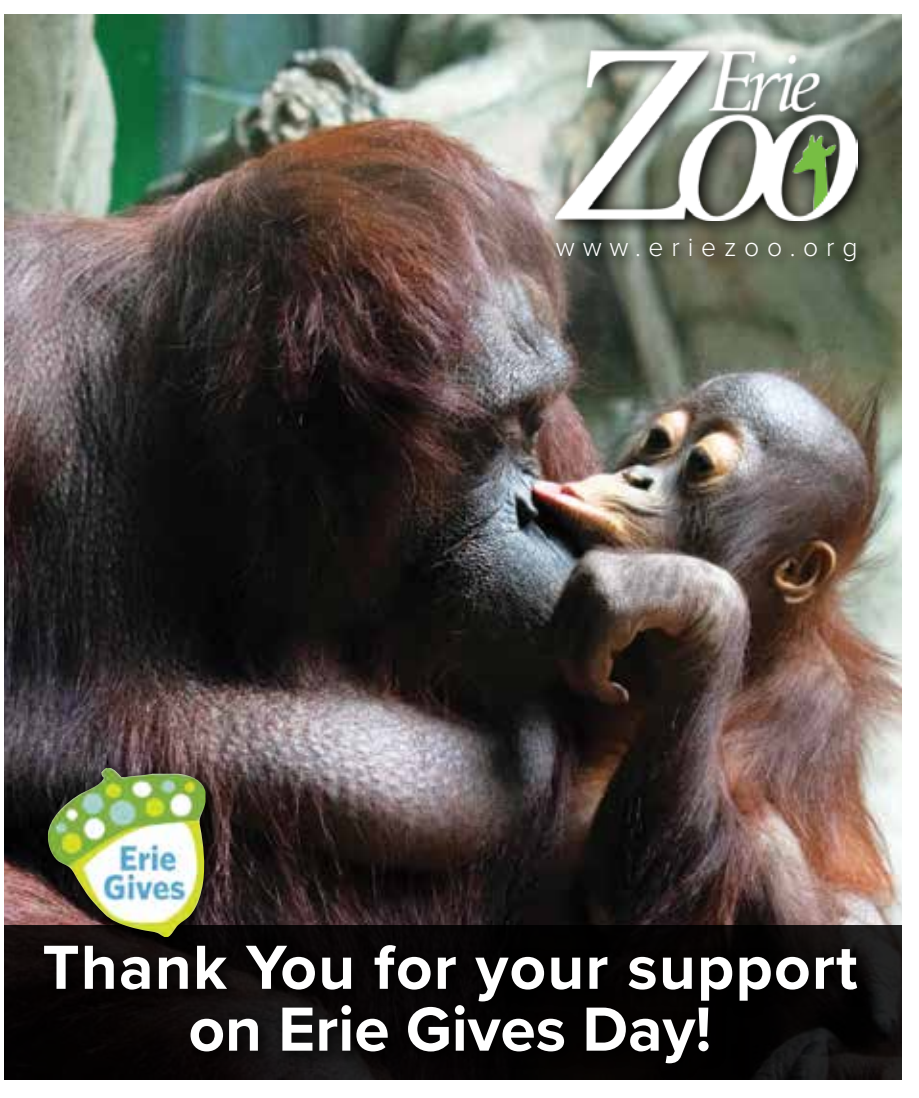

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Sharing our abundant blessings so everyone will know God's infinite love.

Observing Hispanic Heritage Month in Erie

Commemorate and celebrate Sept. 15 to Oct. 15

By: Jonathan Burdick

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Being Hispanic means that one is from a country whose primary language is Spanish, and those countries are represented during Hispanic Heritage Month in America. They are: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Each year in the United States, Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from Sept. 15 to Oct.15. The month commences in the middle of September to correspond with independence celebrations across numerous Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua celebrate their independence from Spain on Sept. 15, while Mexico celebrates its on Sept. 16, followed by Chile on Sept. 18 and Belize on Sept. 21.

The occasion was first officially observed as Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968. This proclamation was made by President Lyndon B. Johnson after Congress passed a joint resolution first introduced by Congressmen George E. Brown, Edward R. Roybal, and Henry B. Gonzales. "It is with special pride that I call the attention of my fellow citizens to the great contribution of our national heritage made by our people of Hispanic descent," wrote President Johnson, "[N]ot only in the fields of culture, business, and science, but also through their valor in battle."

In 1988, Senators Paul Simon and Orrin G. Hatch (with the help of U.S. Rep. Esteban Torres) pushed to expand the week to a month. "It is important that the nation be educated and made aware of the richness and the significance of the contributions of Hispanics to our society," they wrote in a letter to their Senate colleagues. "Hispanics are not just a significant part of our Nation's origin; they are essential to America's future." National Hispanic Heritage Month was then implemented by President Ronald Reagan, who noted their "outstanding achievements" in the "countless chapters in the unique saga of the United States."

When first observed in 1968, the vast majority of the Hispanic population in the United States were of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban ancestry. In recent decades, the population has diversified greatly due to increased immigration from other Central American, South American, and Caribbean nations.

Today, according to census data, around 8.17 percent of Erie's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino and includes over 12,000 people across the county. As described in Kevin Flowers' 2022 reporting for Erie Times-News, over half are of Puerto Rican heritage, one-fifth of Mexican, and other countries represented include Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Spain.

"But numbers don't begin to tell the entire story," Flowers wrote. "From politics and philanthropy to social services, religion, entrepreneurship and other areas, many of the Erie region's Hispanic/Latino residents are becoming more visible and active at a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion have become community-wide priorities."

"Hispanic heritage is American heritage," President Joe Biden noted in his first proclamation for Hispanic Heritage Month. "We see it in every aspect of our national life: on our television and movie screens, in the music that moves our feet, and in the foods we enjoy."

It is important to note that the Hispanic community, which makes up over 60 million people across the country, is extremely diverse. Furthermore, not all terms are interchangeable. Illustrator Terry Blas is Hispanic and Latino and his mother was born in Mexico. When he realized that many people conflated the two terms (sometimes along with nationalities), he created a short comic to explain it in the simplest terms. "Latino is a term that is telling you about geography. Hispanic is a term that is telling you about language," he explains. "Latino means: from Latin America. ... Hispanic means: from a country whose primary language is Spanish." It's more complex than this, but works as a simple orientation point for those unfamiliar. The terms relate more to culture and ethnicity and not race or nationality, although, as the *Hispanic Network Magazine* explains, the terms one uses are more about *identity* and the way in which people perceive themselves and their communities.

While past Hispanic Heritage Festivals were held in Erie's Perry Square, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed some of that momentum and the Erie Latino Leadership Association is in the midst of reorganization. In 2022, it was reported that Erie Mayor Joe Schember's administration was creating a Latino-Hispanic Advisory Council for the city made up of 14 Erie residents, but there was no response to an inquiry on whether the city was planning any events.

Last year, Jasmine Flores, vice president of Erie City Council, began compiling a work-in-progress list of Latino and Hispanic businesses across Erie. In lieu of festivals or parades, she believes that supporting these businesses is another way to celebrate the month (although outdated at this point, a study from the 1990s by the Pennsylvania State Data Center reported that Erie had over 150 Hispanic-owned businesses).

Local food options include Amigo Taqueria & Botanas, Dina's Authentic Dominican Kitchen, El Amigo Mexican Grill, El Canelo, Enrique's Southeast Mexico Taqueria & Tortilleria, Ju-

lius, La Chona Movil, La Cocina Coqui, Lucky's Mexican Food, Tacos El Chon, and Torero's Mexican Restaurant. If you prefer to cook at home, everything you need can be purchased at Los Primos Latino Products on West 26th Street. You can try out a haircut at Ruiz Barbershop/Salon, commission a piece of furniture from Lake Erie Woodworks, get some new kicks from Status Footwear & Apparel, or snag a t-shirt from Melancholy Brand.

If money is tight, there are plenty of inexpensive ways to commemorate the holiday too. You can check out related books from your local library, find some free educational videos online, or even stream podcasts about important historical figures such as Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, Jovita Idar, Roberto Clemente, Ellen Ochoa, Guy Gabaldon, Sylvia Rivera, Octaviano Larrazola, and Gabriela Mistral. There are online exhibits from the National Archives where you can learn about the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, the Delano Grape Strike of 1965, or the *Miranda v. Arizona* Supreme Court case of 1966. You can also simply make a point to discover new Hispanic and Latino authors, musicians, filmmakers, and artists.

More information on Hispanic Heritage Month and upcoming events can be found at hispanicheritagemonth.gov

Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com

Each year in the United States, Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from Sept. 15 to Oct.15. The month commences in the middle of September to correspond with independence celebrations across numerous Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua celebrate their independence from Spain on Sept.15, while Mexico celebrates its on Sept. 16, followed by Chile on Sept. 18 and Belize on Sept. 21.

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An Entire Building as an Art Project

The FEED Media Art Center brings an ambitious vision to Erie's downtown

By: Dan Schank

CONTRIBUTED

Noté Peter George, a Liberian multidisciplinary artist from New York City, recently showed his "Little Flowers" installation at FEED. Noté was the visiting artist in residence for Erie Arts and Culture in April 2023.

The FEED Media Art Center is absolutely massive. In technical terms, it encompasses 50,000 square feet in a downtown space once occupied by Epp's furniture store. But that description doesn't capture the dizzying experience of walking through it. Its three floors each seem to expand indefinitely, offering boundless eccentric opportunities for artists. Expect plenty of exposed brick, passages with 30-foot ceilings, and multiple balcony overlays perfect for installations, pop-up shops, and performances.

This is not your typical "white cube" art gallery.

"The building itself is very beautiful, and a lot of artists respond to it in its raw, gutted state," says FEED founder Benton C. Bainbridge, who grew up in our region (Edinboro and McKean, mostly) and returned in 2021 after decades of art-making in New York City. When I toured the space in mid-August, Buffalo-based artist Bello Bello's interactive sculpture "Between Hue and Hair (2023)" greeted me near the entrance. This multimedia "self-portrait" consists of 24 rectangular cubes, featuring a combination of screens and physical objects. It's also interactive, engaging with the viewer electronically through video and sound, and utilizing machine-learning techniques as the experience takes shape. Taken as a whole, it stands a little taller than the average art lover — evoking the stacked amplifiers one might find at a stadium-sized rock concert. And there was room for about 10 similarly-scaled art projects on the entry-level floor alone.

Contractor Rob Shearer describes FEED as "a canvas and an innovation lab at once." His team (from Shearer and Son Contracting Services, Inc.) are in the midst of a multi-year renovation project in the space, dry-ice-blasting their way through decades of local retail history. "The process is as important as the product," according to Shearer, who is careful to preserve the architectural eccentricities he discovers along the way.

Benton C. Bainbridge got the idea for FEED as he was concluding a six-year artist's residency at the Andrew Freedman House in the Bronx. As a multimedia artist fond of sculptural forms, he had been amassing a collection of old tube televisions – and running out of room to store them. Finding a cheap space near New York City proved impossible, which led him back to Pennsylvania. "I imagined I'd find a space big enough to store my TVs and make my own art. Maybe something where I could set up a cot to sleep on as well," says Bainbridge. Instead, he began monitoring a much larger space at 1307 State St. on Zillow. After a substantial drop in the owner's asking price, he drove out to see it, fell in love, made the purchase, and committed to establishing a media art center in Erie.

Bainbridge speaks with great affection about his early days in our region. "The art scene in Erie was very supportive," says Bainbridge. "I learned quite a bit about all kinds of art. Amongst other things, I was involved with the local performance art scene. I even showed work at Edinboro's Bruce Gallery when I was a teen, maybe 16 or 17."

Through WQLN, he was introduced to seminal video and media artists like Nam June Paik, Mary Lucier, Shigeko Kubota, and John Sanborn. This led him to begin experimenting with "moving image media artwork," as he puts it. "I would use whatever was available to me at that time, which meant checking out equipment from the high school AV department, or using the 'want ads' to buy whatever gear I could find. My stepfather actually had two VCRs because he liked to copy movies to watch again. So I would use that as a way to make video art — I would record TV commercials, and edit them together." MTV had just emerged around this time, which was also encouraging: "A lot of artists that me and my friends were into assumed that video was a medium equal to any other. Devo, Laurie Anderson, the Residents – all these artists had video incorporated into their live shows."

As fond as he was for our local art scene, his interests ultimately led him to New York City, where he earned a bachelor's degree from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Afterwards, his multifaceted career included exhibitions in faraway destinations like Indonesia, live performances at the Whitney Museum of American Art, a faculty position at Manhattan's School of the Visual Arts, and even a stint as the Beastie Boys' VJ during two world tours.

Since coming back to Erie, he's been as busy as ever. Presently, FEED manages two ongoing residency programs. About a dozen artists from places as varied as Berlin and Colorado have participated in their visiting artist program this summer. Concurrently, FEED's locally-focused Sandbox residency provides space to regional artists for a month at a time.

"Our motto is that life and art are one," says Bainbridge. "We focus on media art because there are other spaces in Erie to support plastic arts and the performing arts. And this is the one thing that didn't

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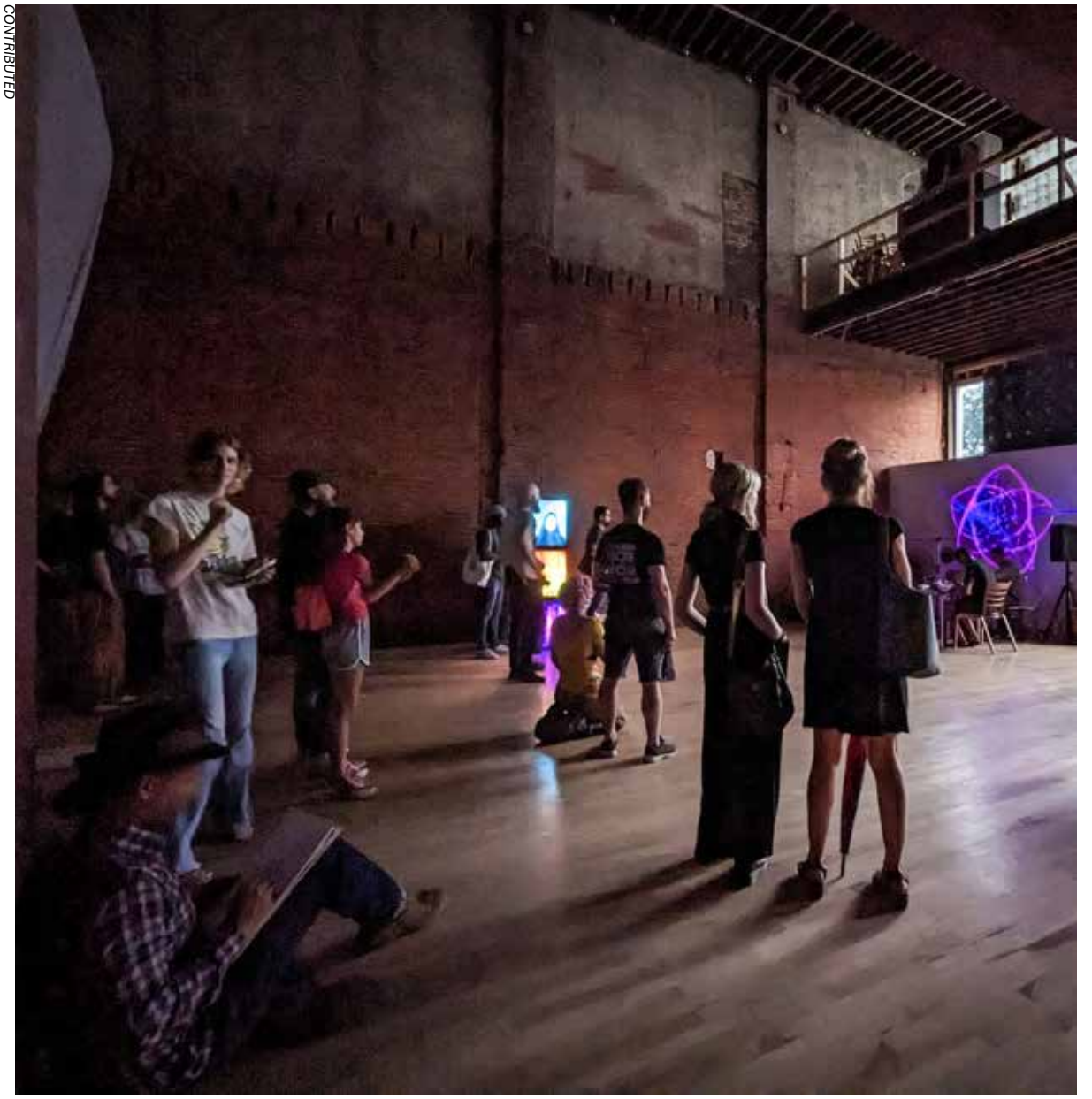

The expansive space of the FEED Media Arts building allows for large scale media art to be displayed and experienced in a number of different ways. Here, KBD + Zoe Smith White perform live music with media art at an OPEN FEED event.

have a home previously. But we have an expansive idea of what media art is. And media art plays very nicely with other art forms. We have shows where media meets dance, poetry, music, painting, and sculpture."

As I type this, renovations have closed their main space until Labor Day, but a smaller, pop-up space titled FEED TOO is featuring work a few feet down the road. On the corner of East 13th Street, Statik Garments is currently running a pop-up shop of recycled and upcycled clothing. While you peruse the fashion, you can also check out video art by Betty Sweaters and Jetset.

Collaboration is essential to much of the work at FEED. Take, for example, the recent residency of Walter Wright, who Bainbridge describes as "one of the original visionaries of video art." The FEED founder was first inspired by Wright, unknowingly, at the age of six when he would watch the spin art animation included in episodes of *The Electric Company*, a classic 1970s kids show. As an adult, Bainbridge would learn that Wright was "one of the special effects artists making animations for the show with a device called the Scanimate." This summer, Bainbridge invited Wright for a residency where, a few weeks back, he collaborated with local musicians Joe Popp and Adam Holquist (aka onewayness) for a night of improvised electronic music. As the trio filled the giant space with sound, visitors could also explore media art by a variety of local and non-local innovators.

According to Bainbridge, "The building itself is an art project." Having made my way across its three floors, it appears to be an ambitious and expansive one. In its first year, partnerships with artists, musicians, designers, and innovators have put FEED on the map for local culture. Given its current momentum, it's exciting to imagine how it will fill all those square feet in the coming years.

FEED is located at 1307 State St. in Downtown Erie. Visit feed.art for more information.

Dan Schank can be contacted at danschank@gmail.com

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It's All Connected: Deconstruction, Reuse, and Climate Change

Preservation Erie shines a green light on salvage

By: Erin Phillips

CONTRIBUTED

In order for construction companies to be eligible to pull permits for demolition, they must first be certified through San Antonio's deconstruction training program. Here is a certified deconstruction team taking apart an old building and salvaging materials for reuse.

If you care about climate change, you should care about historic preservation.

At first glance, one might not see the immediate connection between building demolition, manufacturing of new construction materials, construction waste, and their effect on global warming and climate change — but construction and demolition waste make up over 30 percent of the entire waste stream in the United States and new construction accounts for 40 percent of the global use of raw materials, most of which are not sustainable.

I'm sure we've all noticed and/or have been inconvenienced by any number of the massive demolition and construction projects that have increasingly ramped up throughout Erie in the past few years — some of those projects are very visible and within the public eye. One can easily observe the sheer amount of waste created when a building is demolished, big or small — think Erie Coke, the former Greyhound bus station, or Erie Malleable Iron (EMI) sites alongside residential demolitions or renovations resulting in dumpster after dumpster bound for the landfill.

Quite often, a building being demolished was constructed at a time when knowledge about toxic building materials like lead and asbestos was not available. When an old building is demolished, these previously sealed and contained hazardous materials are released into the environment and become part of a global problem.

In short, the greenest building is the one that's already there.

So historic preservationists point to reuse as the best, most eco-friendly option. Use the building and the materials within it — which, depending on the year of construction, are usually of much higher quality than anything that could be affordably attained today (for example, many 100+ year old buildings are constructed with old-growth wood which is much more stable, stronger, and more rot-resistant than new growth). And there have been plenty of beautiful examples of adaptive reuse of old buildings over the years in Erie, but it is hardly the norm.

Enter Preservation Erie, a local, volunteer-run, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the built environment of Erie and their annual Greater Erie Awards event, where they take the opportunity to recognize the outstanding recent preservation projects completed throughout Erie County. This year they are focusing in on reuse — through both their choice of venue and keynote speaker.

The 2023 Greater Erie Awards will be held at the Erie Center for Arts and Technology (ECAT), which is a beautiful example of adaptive reuse, as the organization renovated the former Wayne School building on East Avenue, saving it from potential demolition, in order to use it for their arts education center (and, worth noting, ECAT happened to win a Preservation Erie Greater Erie Award for this adaptive reuse in 2021).

Deconstruction and Circular Economy Expert Comes to Erie

The keynote speaker for the Greater Erie Awards event is Stephanie Phillips, who is the first Deconstruction and Circular Economy Program Manager for the City of San Antonio: a position housed in her city's Office of Historic Preservation. She happens to be in the *only* Deconstruction and Circular Economy department within a Historic Preservation office in the entire country and is leading a program of true innovation in Texas. She connects historic preservation and building/material reuse to climate change on a broad scale, and also finds their associations with overall economic growth, housing equality and sustainability, and public health.

Phillips comments on this connection between climate change and preservation: "We approach our work locally with the mindset that historic preservation and climate change are not wholly separate ideologies, professions, or areas of study, but rather inextricably linked in so many ways. At its very core, preservation seeks to steward our existing resources — both tangible and intangible — employing a very similar value system to habitat conservation. In the building industry, historic preservation can be considered the pinnacle of waste prevention."

The program that she oversees for the City of San Antonio includes their deconstruction ordinance and deconstruction contractor training program. Deconstruction is the strategic dismantling of a structure, with the intent for the materials to be reused in some way in the future. The program also oversees the city's Material Innovation Center — which attempts to focus on strategic local and regional partnerships to build the city's overall capacity to reuse more and waste less in the built environment. All of these aspects contribute to the city's goal of creating a circular economy.

So what is a circular economy? The long and short of it is this: stepping back from over-producing new materials, while at the same time saving old materials and using those *instead*

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THE CRAFTSMAN BLOG

This photo shows the stark difference between the old-growth wood often found in historic structures and new-growth wood largely used in new construction. Old growth wood is significantly stronger and less prone to rot or insect damage.

of new materials. This feels like a radical economic concept, but in practice it makes a lot of sense. In San Antonio there is an ordinance that states that if you want to remove a building of a certain age, that building cannot be demolished in the traditional sense, rather it must be deconstructed and the salvaged materials from that building can either be reused in the new building, sold, stored, or donated.

Phillips explains, "Our program is anchored by an organ donor analogy — a structure may have reached the end of its life, but its parts and pieces could give new life to other buildings. By redirecting materials back into community use, not only are local salvage, reuse, and upcycling opportunities maximized, but the amount of materials within the marketplace increases to help repair older buildings while working to improve material affordability and accessibility at scale." We've all witnessed what happens when the price of new lumber skyrockets: the price of every project skyrockets in step. This drastic fluctuation of prices doesn't happen with reused materials.

So how does this work practically? Is there special training involved? And who pays for it? Is it more expensive to deconstruct rather than to just simply demolish? The answers are simpler than it seems. Phillips explains, "One of our local contractors says it well: the best way to learn how to construct a building correctly is to deconstruct one first. Deconstruction is the 'unbuilding' of a structure, so in many ways, the training is similar to other repair-focused construction trades, with an emphasis on removing materials carefully so they can be reused for their original purpose. When someone is trained in deconstruction, they also are trained in site safety, tool handling, material condition assessments, material identification (wood species, construction eras), material valuation, contract management, material handling, and more."

And it is through the city that these training programs are facilitated, "Our policy requires that contractors be certified through our city's deconstruction training program to be eligible to pull permits for the work." And while on one hand the initial cost to deconstruct a building seems higher than a demolition option given the increased time and manpower involved, Phillips

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This photo shows the wood salvaged from a deconstruction project in San Antonio, Texas. All of the materials taken out of the deconstructed building can then be reused in a new construction project – mitigating the costs (both monetary and environmental) of new materials.

urges folks to look at the big picture: "I refer to demolition as a sunk cost: you are literally paying someone to throw money away, in almost every circumstance. Deconstruction affords ways to recoup costs during or at the end of a project by selling materials, keeping materials onsite to build a new project (thus mitigating new material costs), or donating them to a qualified charity for a tax benefit. Additionally, deconstruction reduces the need for heavy machinery or dumpster rentals, and mitigates landfill tipping fees."

She continues, "Comparing the cost of deconstruction using the same methodologies for pricing demolition will, on its face, seem to be more expensive, but when viewed holistically, it becomes much more competitive. That doesn't even begin to account for the public health, air quality, sustainability, material accessibility,

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R.T. FIORENZO

The carriage house north of the Olds-Norman house on Seventh and Sassafras streets, pictured here prior to its deconstruction, was taken apart brick by brick in order to salvage and reuse the materials in other local restoration projects.

and local economic benefits afforded by deconstruction, which also have inherent value."

How Could This Work in Erie?

San Antonio is the seventh-largest city in the country. So could such an innovative, forward-thinking program realistically be deployed in our (much smaller) City of Erie? Like many of its other initiatives, Erie's push for preservation is in its infancy but moving slowly forward, with implementation of a city-wide Historic Preservation Office and eco-conscious policies in the works. A few years ago, this began with the Historic Preservation Task Force, a volunteer committee that helped to hire a full-time employee within the city tasked with overseeing the nascent Historic Preservation Program and start putting plans into action. In terms of progress, there is currently a city-run facade grant program working in tandem with a program created to help designate historic landmark buildings or historic overlay districts (which will aid building owners in attaining local, state, and federal grant money towards restoration work). There are numerous programs funded through the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority that provide historic preservation facade grants in different municipalities at the county level. We're getting there, preservation policy-wise. And that is the first step towards implementing the kind of deconstruction program happening in San Antonio.

Phillips feels optimistic about the potential for programs like this to take root in smaller communities. She comments, "I absolutely believe communities of all scales can shift to a culture of reuse. One of the best ways to start is to begin holding space to discuss what it might look like in Erie specifically, bringing in an intersectional group of stakeholders to start envisioning the shift. Smaller communities like Ithaca, New York and Savannah, Georgia have formed coalitions as a major first step, and other cities like Pittsburgh and Baltimore have leveraged these conversations into major actions, like an executive order from the mayor and the drafting of a deconstruction ordinance sponsored by a city councilmember."

This shift can come about as a city-wide effort, but can just as easily be initiated by non-government organizations, citizen groups, or volunteer organizations like Preservation Erie. Phillips continues, "An ordinance isn't the only tool in the toolbox. Investing in deconstruction contractor training, pursuing a deconstruction demonstration project, convening a conference or workshop, or undertaking studies are non-regulatory steps that can move the needle forward in any community."

Is Anything Similar Happening in Erie Now?

On a smaller, non-civic scale, Erie's own historic architectural expert Jeff Kidder has a lot of experience dealing with architectural salvage and reuse within his many preservation projects happening throughout Erie, but most noticeably in the West Sixth Street

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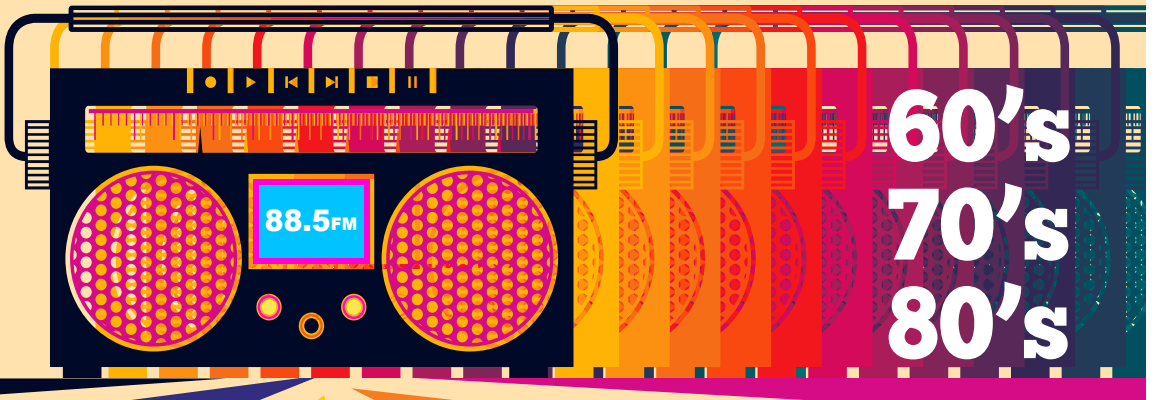

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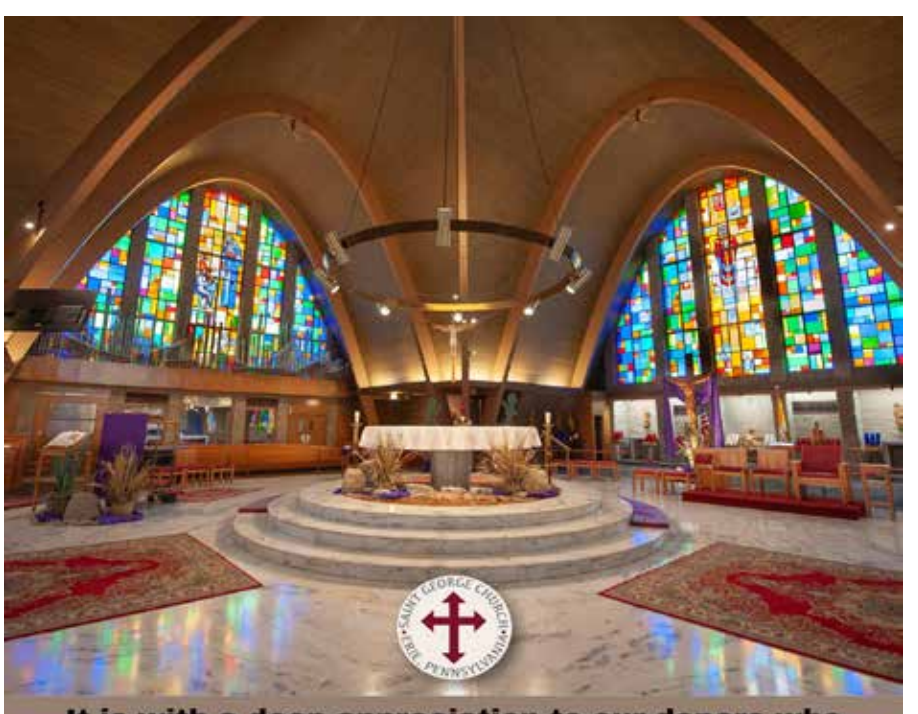

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Historic District and near Gannon University.

Anyone passing by in recent months may have noticed that the carriage house behind the Olds-Norman house (216 W. Seventh St.) was recently deconstructed using similar principles that dictate the ordinance in San Antonio. Kidder Architects decided to deconstruct the entire carriage house brick by brick, nail by nail, as their plans involving the renovation and reuse of the adjacent home meant that the carriage house could not stay where it was.

Kidder comments, "Our plan is to pick up, rotate 180 degrees, and move the Olds-Norman House north to West Sixth Street after Gannon tears down Werhle Hall Dormitory the summer of 2025. The carriage house was in the way of this move and it was not realistic to move the carriage house as it did not have a basement and there was no first floor structure to hold the building together if picked up."

So rather than just scrap the carriage house altogether, Kidder made a plan to reuse it. "The hardest historic building material for us to find has been 19th century orange brick. New brick is not orange enough and typically not the exact size needed. We reused the Olds-Norman brick to reconstruct the Lowry House (453 W. Sixth St.) front porch piers and we will continue to use this brick on future projects where needed. We also saved a lot of the carriage house wood framing for future use as needed." Kidder continues, "We have a salvage yard full of brick and stone and a warehouse full of salvaged doors, mantles, newel posts, and railings. We have been reusing these materials where we can."

Kidder also notes that there was no special training necessary for the construction crews to deconstruct the carriage house, just manual labor and modern construction equipment to make it go as quickly and as efficiently as possible. This kind of deconstruction and reuse is a perfect example of the work that Phillips is succeeding at on a much larger scale in San Antonio.

Another local player who has been at the salvage and reuse game for a while is the Habitat For Humanity ReStore which is located at 4922 Pittsburgh Ave. and was created by the team at the Greater Erie Area Habitat for Humanity. The store exists as a way to encourage the reuse of previously discarded or donated architectural salvage materials for use in current construction or renovation projects. Examples of materials available to purchase include doors, windows, sinks, flooring, vanities, countertops, light fixtures, paint, and furniture. This presents a great option for someone who is undertaking a renovation project and does not want to purchase new, unsustainable materials or for someone who has deconstructed/dismantled rather than demolished during a renovation project. The materials that are donated to ReStore are then sold for reuse — the funds going towards helping Habitat for Humanity reach their housing goals in the community.

Obviously, construction companies who are used to the old ways of demolition and new construction will not necessarily willingly switch over to deconstruction and reuse of materials, they will need to be nudged either through policy creation or through the inability to ignore the issue any longer (i.e., extreme climate related issues becoming much more urgent). But small steps in the right direction, by bringing deconstruction into the conversation, may help create a gradual shift to the direction of reuse.

More Information About the Greater Erie Awards

If you'd like to attend the 2023 Greater Erie Awards to hear Stephanie Phillips give her presentation entitled "Circular Heritage: Leveraging Reuse for a Sustainable Future" and to join the board of Preservation Erie in congratulating their 11 award recipients this year, the group invites you to purchase your ticket from their website at preservationerie.org. The event will take place at ECAT (650 East Ave.) on Thursday, Sept. 14 at 6 p.m. Tickets are $25 which includes heavy hors d'oeuvres and refreshments provided by Dinner is Served by Lisa. Sponsorship information is available by emailing info@preservationerie.org

Erin Phillips, who serves as the secretary of the board of Preservation Erie, is beyond excited to listen to Stephanie Phillips (no relation) speak at the 2023 Greater Erie Awards. She can be reached at erin@eriereader.com

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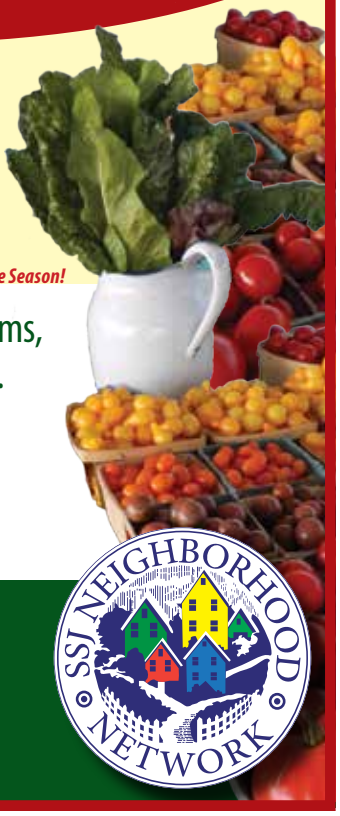

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Punk Rock For Charity at the Kings Rook Club

Doing it for the cause

BEGINNING FRIDAY, SEPT. 15

Music Mayhem Promotions is hosting a punk rock weekend to help raise money for mental health and suicide prevention at the King's Rook Club. The two-day event is dubbed Punk Rock for Charity and features some of Erie's most socially conscious rock bands. The organizer of the fundraiser, Khristina Juarez, who also fronts the band Running Backwards, chose the nonprofit organization Opportunities Unlimited of Erie to benefit from a weekend of punk music. Juarez says that she chose this agency because "they not only help with counseling for those struggling with mental health, but also help neurodiverse individuals obtain employment and work with them day to day, to make sure they are doing well. That means a lot to me."

Jen Quirk from Mayhem Music Promotions comments, "I hope it gives awareness and lets people know that even during their darkest moments they are never alone. That there are so many that suffer and can empathize."

The two day event begins Friday Sept. 15, kicking off with local indie singer-songwriter Elle Taylor (who won the Best of Erie 2022 Best New Musician award as well as a 2023 40 Under 40 distinction), followed by the DIY post-grunge band Odd Atrocity, and punk-rockers Running Backwards (featuring Lone Sav) who will round out the evening on both nights. Saturday's lineup will feature Erie's loudest progressive punk band Re$inate, pop-punk/post-hardcore band Real Fake Doors, and an encore performance from Running Backwards.

Cy Eihwaz from the band Odd Atrocity comments, "We're a band whose songs revolve around navigating deep issues, like mental health and trauma. Most of our members have been publicly vocal about our personal experiences and struggles with mental health diagnoses. We are honored to be part of something that brings awareness and unity to those who are also struggling."

The event is taking donations for Opportunities Unlimited throughout the night, as well as donating a percentage of the ticket sales. The event is open to both members and non-members of the Kings Rook Club and you certainly don't have to be a punk to attend. — Larry Wheaton

Friday, Sept. 15 and Saturday, Sept. 16 // 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. // Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. // $13.50-$20 // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

DAVID DESIN

Local rockers Odd Atrocity will take to the Kings Rook stage along with Elle Taylor, Re$inate, Real Fake Doors, and event organizers Running Backwards for two nights of loud, fast, and totally original fundraising fun, all benefiting local organization Opportunities Unlimited.

Feel the Earth Move Under Your Feet at the Erie Playhouse

Beautiful: The Carole King Musical comes to the LECOM stage

BEGINNING FRIDAY, SEPT. 15

The Erie Playhouse is bringing the iconic music of Carole King to the stage in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. First premiering in 2013 at the Curran Theater in San Francisco before its Broadway debut the following year, the Tony Award-winning musical "tells the inspiring true story of Carole King, from her early days as a Brooklyn teenager struggling to enter the record business, to her years as a chart-topping musical legend. *Beautiful* covers the pop classics she wrote for the biggest acts in music, to her chart-topping success with *Tapestry*."

Looking at the success of the original Broadway run and subsequent touring productions, the Erie Playhouse saw the potential it had with local audiences. "It was a new title for the Playhouse and for the Erie region, which was definitely exciting and a draw," describes Emily Cassano, the director for *Beautiful*. "This seemed like the right show at the right time. I loved the music, and I knew it would draw a fun crowd in terms of who would audition."

"I began listening to the *Tapestry* album pretty close to when we were having auditions, and that's what I've been listening to this whole summer," said Kate Thiem, who portrays Carole King. "It's very intimidating to portray a real person, especially somebody people know and love and have adored for years."

Thiem prepared vigorously for the role, from reading King's memoir and listening to her discography to watching live performances in order to perfect the nuances of the voice. "I got to a point with it where I was obsessing about trying to make it perfect that I realized it was never going to be perfect because you can't be somebody else. You have different voices, you look different, and you're not going to pull off a perfect impersonation."

Finding her own voice in King's music was immensely rewarding. "The minute that I realized that it didn't have to be 100 percent Carole King was a freeing moment," Thiem recalled. "There are people who have said they are looking forward to it because they love her music and are fans of just her, not even the musical. I don't want to let those people down, but at the same time, you want it to be more than just an impersonation. I try to find the small things that [King] and I possibly have in common to add that part of my personality into it because I've lived it too."

"I wanted to make sure we were doing the history justice," Cassano explained on her approach to directing the show. There is a focus on the dynamics between songwriting duos Carole King and Gerry Goffin as they compete with Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil to write for well-known musical acts. "I tried to encourage [the cast] to take their own perspective on each character based on what we know. Everybody came in with a great knowledge of these historical people. We've all done our research and shared it with each other."

King's music has resonated with the entire cast during this production, being felt every second on stage. "The thing that I've learned from listening and performing her music is that it can be simple," Thiem described. "[It's] the simplicity of her voice coupled with the wonderful chord progression. She's singing directly to you, and it's conversational. The focus is completely on the voice, and there's this honest quality about it that you identify within the lyrics."

RICK KLEIN PHOTOGRAPHY

***Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* features the songwriting and life story of beloved music icon Carole King. Her story will be brought to life on the Erie Playhouse stage by lead actress Kate Thiem, who has vigorously prepared for the role.**

As the production prepares for opening night, Cassano has a message for Erie audiences. "We could not have found a better person to portray Carol than Kate Thiem. All of these performances give life, meaning, and passion to these songs that everybody knows and are not to be missed. I hope everyone who sees this has a renewed interest in the time period and work that was put into these masterpieces." — Thomas Taylor

Fridays and Saturdays through Sept. 30 at 7:30 p.m., Sundays 2 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // $17.49-$27.40 // For tickets and info: erieplayhouse.org

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FRIDAY | SEPT. 15, 2023
5:00 pm | Grand Opening Ceremony featuring Bagpipers
6:00 pm | Aine Celtic Dancers
7:00 pm | Ally the Piper
8:45 pm | Screaming Orphans
10:30 pm | Festival Wraps up on Friday Evening

SATURDAY | SEPT. 16, 2023
11:00 am | Long's School of Irish Dance
12:00 pm | Ally the Piper
2:15 pm | The Low Kings
4:15 pm | Long's School of Irish Dance
5:00 pm | Saturday Festival Mass at St. Patrick Church
5:45 pm | Aine Celtic Dancers
6:30 pm | The Spain Brothers
8:35 pm | The Tan & Sober Gentlemen
10:30 pm | Festival Wraps up for Saturday Evening

SUNDAY | SEPT. 17, 2023
11:00 am | Aine Celtic Dancers
12:00 pm | The Spain Brothers
2:00 pm | Tan & Sober Gentlemen
3:45 pm | Festival closes around 4pm. See you in 2023!

**Please Note: this schedule is subject to change at any time.*

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Thursday, September 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the JES

Written in Ink and Marked with Blood: Frederick Douglass's Gettysburg Address
Featuring Cody Eash, B.A.
Tuesday, September 26 at 7:00 p.m. at the JES

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Featuring Eric Rivet, B.A.
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Try On Dramashop's *The Brothers Size* For Size

Exploring the idiosyncrasies of sibling dynamics on stage

PREMIERING FRIDAY, SEPT. 15

If you've ever had a brother — or been a brother — you know the relationship dynamic is rarely simple and is indeed, very often charged beneath the surface, no matter what it looks like to outsiders.

In his play *The Brothers Size*, playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney explores these substantial bonds of brotherhood: what it means to be a brother and what it means to be brothered. Erie's own Dramashop is bringing this bit of theater to the stage, with regular Friday and Saturday night performances beginning Sept. 15 (including a season opening reception the same night) and ending Sept. 30, with a special discount matinee on Sunday, Oct. 1.

The play reads straightforward enough. Younger brother Oshooshi Size is fresh out of prison, lost, not at all sure what to do with his life — but hopeful for the future. His older brother, Ogun Size, is the steadier of the two — he owns a mechanic shop and he gives Oshooshi a job there, so the younger man can get his bearings, find his footing, and get used to life beyond prison walls.

When Oshooshi's friend Elegba, whom he met in prison, shows up, he draws Oshooshi into a world of trouble, seemingly leading him back to the cells where they met. And naturally, Oshooshi runs straight to his brother for help.

Set in the Louisiana Bayou, the play draws on Yoruba culture — including dance, music, and cosmology — while expressing the very real, very human need for connection and freedom. Featuring a four-person cast of Nicholas Gore as Ogun, Aaron Holman as Oshooshi, Isaiah Aldridge as Elegba, and Sakhari Thomas as the Narrator (all of whom except for Holman are making their Dramashop debut), Dramashop's production of *The Brothers Size* is directed by Andrew Lyons, assistant directed by Zachery Hoffman, and choreographed by Allex Coles. — Cara Suppa

Fridays and Saturdays through Sept. 30 at 7:30 p.m. // 1001 State St., Ste 210 // $15-$25 // For tickets and info: dramashop.org

CONTRIBUTED

***The Brothers Size*, coming to Dramashop in September, shows the complicated dynamics in the relationship between two brothers. The four-person cast features Nicholas Gore, Aaron Holman, Isaiah Aldridge, and Sakhari Thomas.**

The Cardboard Boat Regatta is Back in 2023

Sink or float, annual event remains a sensation

SATURDAY, SEPT. 16

BETH RACINE, BMC

Families, friends, and individuals tap into their innate maritime heritage as they take to the lake in their homemade cardboard boats for a regatta unlike any other – all to raise funds for the Bayfront Maritime Center.

The bayfront and waterways define this city. From tranquil creeks to the picturesque beaches of Presque Isle, there is an irresistible urge to be where the water flows. Sitting in a quiet public park during sunset while observing the majestic Brig *Niagara* is a simple pleasure that is uniquely Erie, a testament to our deep-rooted bond with the water.

What better way to honor this connection than the return of The Bayfront Maritime Center's Cardboard Boat Regatta? After a three-year hiatus during which shipwright dreams were put on hold, Erie residents can once again embrace their maritime heritage. Shipbuilders of all ages and backgrounds can now test their skills by crafting vessels using nothing but cardboard, tape, glue, and paint (engines are strictly prohibited). They will race across the bay, celebrating Erie's rich history, economic significance, and natural beauty.

The Cardboard Boat Regatta presents an inclusive opportunity for individuals of all ages to explore the art of boat craft. Participants, organized into four categories — children, teens, adults, and mixed ages — compete two by two in their unique and imaginative cardboard creations.

Christopher Cusson, waterfront manager of the Bayfront Maritime Center sees this event as "a great way to connect and engage our Erie community with our bayfront and waterways in this fun community event." Cusson also provides assurance, stating, "Participants need not worry; we have safety boats for anyone struggling, and there is always a prize for the best sinking."

In addition to recognizing the most dramatic sinking, participants compete for the fastest time in their respective divisions, create the most innovative boat, and vie for the title of crowd favorite. For those who prefer to stay dry, spectators are welcome, where they can bring a chair and witness a showcase of epic cardboard creations during the boat parade and the regatta itself. The day is filled with food, drinks, merchandise, and raffle prizes to enhance the festivities.

Beyond the fun and excitement, the Cardboard Boat Regatta offers a chance for both children and adults to build something personal and unique while forging a deeper connection with Erie's waterways. Furthermore, supporting this event serves as a crucial fundraiser for the Bayfront Maritime Center to aid in their mission to promote maritime education. — Spencer Cadden

Check-in at 9 a.m., race begins at 11 a.m. // East Canal Basin behind Bayfront Maritime Center, 40 Holland St. // Watch for free, $50 registration fee per boat // For more info: bayfrontcenter.org

Homegrown Harvest at Goodell Gardens and Homestead

The organization's 17th annual festival celebrates with local goods and greenery

SUNDAY, SEPT. 17

Goodell Gardens and Homestead is closing out the summer and kicking off their fall season with their 17th annual Homegrown Harvest Festival. The event features local produce, art and handicrafts, food trucks, children's activities, and music. Executive Director Amber Wellington says this year the festival will have more vendors than ever before. "We have more than 50 vendors with items ranging from homemade soap to produce to fine art," says Wellington.

The festival began as an event to celebrate chrysanthemums and has evolved in its nearly two decades to showcase a variety of local goods and celebrate the end of the summer season. Keeping with the local theme, the bands Salmon Frank along with The Kelloggs will provide the music with lighting and sound by PA Sound LLC.

The Homegrown Harvest Festival is an all ages event and there are fall and tree-themed educational activities for children to enjoy. Wellington explains the organization is planning activities around trees to recognize their accreditation as a Level II Arboretum and as the only organization to earn this title in Northwestern Pennsylvania. For those interested in the trees, Wellington adds that Goodell Gardens' Franklin Tree, an extinct species in the wild, is typically in bloom during the festival.

While admission is free, a raffle auction and donation opportunities are available to support the organization. "While we still have some programs in late September and October before we close for the season Oct. 31, the Homegrown Harvest Festival really is the last big hurrah of our season each year," Wellington says. — Alana Sabol

Noon to 5 p.m. // 221 Waterford St., Edinboro // Free // For more info: goodellgardens.org

CONTRIBUTED

The annual Homegrown Harvest Festival is a way for the folks at Goodell Gardens and Homestead to wrap up their summer slate of events. With live music, over 50 vendors, and a focused theme of native trees, this year's festival is bigger and better than ever.

Sutton Foster Brings Broadway Power to Erie

MIAC kicks of 2023-2024 season with stage and screen superstar

THURSDAY, SEPT. 21

CONTRIBUTED

The stage at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center will light up with the Broadway sounds of Sutton Foster, kicking off the 2023-2024 season of events from the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture.

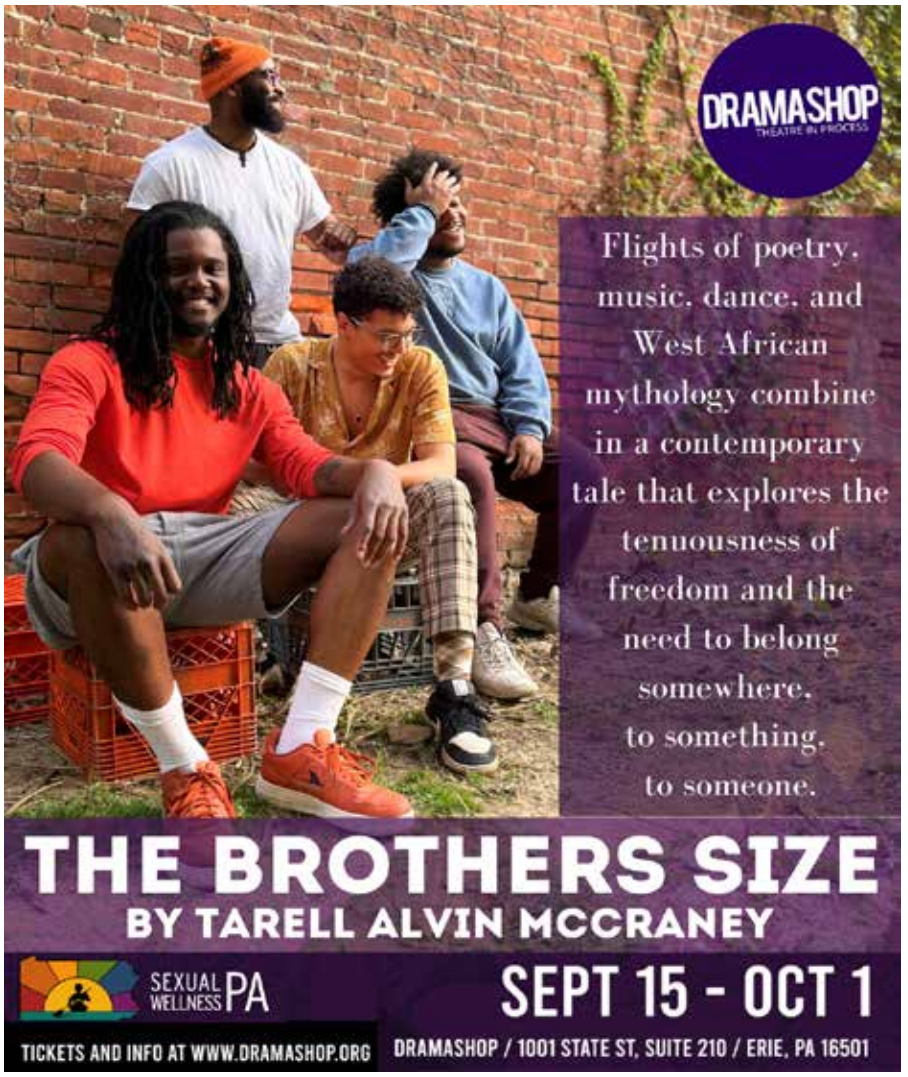
A new season of culturally relevant, world-class performances hosted by Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) kicks off in September with Tony-award winning powerhouse Sutton Foster. Foster's Broadway acumen is extensive, most recently performing in the role of Marian Paroo in *The Music Man*, opposite Hugh Jackman (which earned her a *seventh* Tony nomination) — she has also starred in a laundry list of Broadway favorites including: *Violet*, *Anything Goes*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Little Women*, and more. If you don't recognize her name from the playbills, you may remember her from her roles in multiple popular television series like *Younger*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Flight of the Conchords*, and *Sesame Street* among others.

Brett Johnson, artistic director for MIAC, is excited to be in a position to bring such big talent to the Mary D'Angelo stage. He comments, "Since 2016, MIAC has welcomed a multitude of Broadway legends to Erie. Kristin Chenoweth, Bernadette Peters, Patti LuPone, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Audra McDonald, Chita Rivera, Leslie Odom Jr., Kelli O'Hara, Aaron Tveit, Betty Buckley, and others have enthralled our patrons. Now, we're thrilled to welcome the incomparable Sutton Foster to campus for what promises to be another unforgettable evening of songs and stories."

Touring as a solo artist, Foster has performed in such renowned venues as Carnegie Hall, The Café Carlyle, Feinstein's, and Lincoln Center, and now thanks to MIAC, we're in the position to host her here in Erie. Johnson feels this kind of programming is a key component of the student experience at Mercyhurst University, "Mercyhurst students get free tickets for all MIAC Live performances. For our emerging artists, these events are an invaluable part of their education — we know the best way to learn is not only by practicing your craft but also by watching world-class performers at work."

Attendees can expect a medley of Broadway hits, original solo performances, and truly moving vocal displays. Johnson is excited to start the season with such a bang, "Sutton Foster lights up every stage with her infectious energy and undeniable talent, and I cannot think of a better way to kick off our 2023-2024 MIAC Live season." — Erin Phillips

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // $35-$60 // For tickets and info: miac.mercyhurst.edu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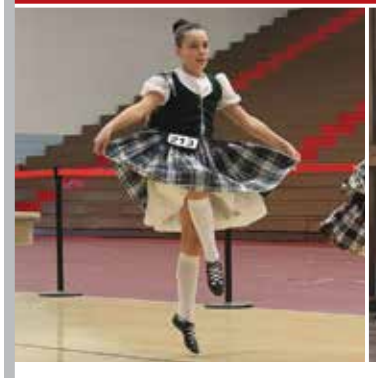

EDINBORO HIGHLAND GAMES & SCOTTISH FESTIVAL

Thursday, Sept. 7
Planetarium Show

Friday, Sept. 8
Fiddle Workshop
Regional Qualifier Fiddle Competition
Movies Under the Stars
Special Event: Brave

Saturday, Sept. 9
U.S. National Scottish Fiddle Championships
Pro/Am Heavy Athletic Competitions
Scottish Clan Gatherings
Scottish Village Vendors
Weaving
Scottish and American Foods
Solo Bagpipe and Drum Competitions
Music Performances
Disc Golf Tournament
Plein Air – Live Paint and Art Exhibitions
Kids' Highland Games and Crafts
Clydesdales
Highland Dance Competitions
Archery
Beer Garden
Folk Harper Showcases
Opening Ceremonies and Massed Bands
Bagpipe Band Competitions
Chelsea House Orchestra
Tug O War
Harp Workshop
Student Contests and Games
Arts and Crafts
Closing Ceremony/Massed Bands
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West Bayfront PorchFest Returns in 2023

Local music lovers get ready to pull up a chair

SATURDAY, SEPT. 30

Our West Bayfront is getting the band and the neighbors back together this year for PorchFest 2023. The event, which originally began in 2014, was the brainchild of Tom Maggio, grants manager at the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, and his wife. As the name suggests, residential porches and small business storefronts throughout the neighborhood become makeshift stages for the afternoon, playing host to some of Erie's finest musicians.

"We're going to have over 20 bands this year with the finale being Familiar Spirit at 5 p.m. at the Hagen History Center," said Chuck Nelson, Erie City Council president and co-organizer of the event. Phunkademic, This American Song, Saturn to Brazil, and the Elle Taylor Band are among the local bands on the schedule. Nelson and David Tamulonis, events and marketing manager for Erie Downtown Partnership, relaunched the event after a few years' hiatus during the pandemic, bringing PorchFest back on a much larger scale and with the help of neighborhood group Our West Bayfront.

PorchFest is a family-friendly, walkable event filled with local music and great food. To participate this year, just grab a chair or a blanket and head to the participating addresses (a map is available at the Our West Bayfront office, 404 W. Eighth St., or on their website, ourwestbayfront.org) to enjoy live music all afternoon from the beautiful porches in the West Bayfront. The event represents a fantastic opportunity to admire some of Erie's best historic architecture, get to know your neighbors, and discover our talented local musicians.

"Our signature sponsor is Federal Resources Corporation. New this year, we'll have the Gridley Park Grub Area, which will be active all day. It will feature local food and drink vendors, including Erie Ale Works, whose brewery is located in the West Bayfront," said Marissa Litzenberg of Our West Bayfront.

DAVE TAMULONIS

The porches of homes and businesses throughout the West Bayfront neighborhood will transform into stages to host local musical performers of all genres for Our West Bayfront's annual Porch Fest.

Our West Bayfront will provide a form for interested bands, hosts, and sponsors early next year for 2024 PorchFest. Keep an eye on their website and Facebook page if you are interested in participating, either as a performer or as a host-porch. — Amy VanScoter

Noon to 6:30 p.m. // Various addresses throughout the West Bayfront Neighborhood // Free // For more information: ourwestbayfront.org

Goblin, Romero, *Hocus Pocus* Highlight Eerie Horror Fest

Film festival grows with live music and family-friendly events, back at the Warner

BEGINNING THURSDAY, OCT. 4

Get to know the reason for the spooky season, as the Eerie Horror Fest returns with a vengeance. Back at the historic Warner Theatre, the four-day festival is filled with live music, film screenings, guest appearances, vendors, panels, and more special events. First debuting in 2004, the Eerie Horror Fest has come to be nationally known and well-loved by area cinephiles. This year marks a further evolution for it, with musical performances and family-geared programming. A few of the headliners even manage to keep things firmly tied to the Rust Belt.

Kicking things off will be a special Wednesday screening of ***Night of the Living Dead***. The iconic 1968 film by George A. Romero essentially invented zombies as we know them, and was primarily shot less than two hours away, in Evans City, Pennsylvania. Experience the film like never before, with live accompaniment by the band **Morricone Youth**. The New York City-based group has been active since 1999, composing their unique brand of music as a memorable cinematic backdrop. Prior to the screening, there will be a party for Living Dead VIP ticket holders and All-Access Premium ticket holders hosted by Tina Romero, daughter of George Romero, New York City DJ, and vice president of the George A. Romero Foundation.

Thursday will also see a screening of the 2022 hit film ***M3GAN***, followed by a Q&A with **Jenna Davis**, who provided the title character's voice. The film centers around an AI prototype doll who becomes violent toward anyone who comes between her and the child she's paired with. Davis rose to prominence for her work on *M3GAN*, along with appearances in *Raven's Home* and *Treehouse Detectives*, and has over two million followers on Instagram. Davis will be appearing during all four days of the festival. Thursday will also see a screening of the festival's winning entries.

For more regional flair, let's head down the Ohio River to Point Pleasant, West Virginia, for ***The Mothman Prophecies***. The 2002 film centers around the titular cryptid, as Richard Gere is lured in by its legend. There will be a special screening on Friday, with its director, **Mark Pellington** on hand for a Q&A session hosted by Dr. Rhonda Matthews immediately following. Pellington will also serve on an industry panel on Saturday.

Saturday morning will feature the first Horror Fest event specifically geared towards families, with a screening of the 1993 classic ***Hocus Pocus***. "This is absolutely the first time we've ever done anything family-oriented. And it's definitely not going to be the last," explained Erika Berlin, executive director of the Film Society of Northwestern Pennsylvania. "We really want the horror fest to be accessible to the entire community."

Prior to the 11 a.m. showing, families are invited to a safe trick-or-treating session with the Hamot Health Foundation at 10 a.m. Jenna Davis will also be in attendance for this event.

Romero will return on Saturday with the 1973 film ***The Crazies***. The George A. Romero Foundation will provide a live commentary. Limited edition screen-printed posters of both *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Crazies*, designed with art by "Monster" Mark Kosobucki, will be available at the festival.

Capping off the weekend will be a special performance by **Claudio Simonetti's Goblin**. The Italian progressive rock band has had numerous iterations since forming in 1972, with Simonetti famously writing the score for Dario Argento's *Profondo Rosso* and *Suspiria*, along with Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*.

Vendors at the fest are so far set to include: The Art of Eerie Eric / Krampusnacht Erie, 1331 Studios, A Paranormal Group, Alchemy of Spirits, Amy Gone Art & Curiosities, Cast Collective, Erie Roller Derby, Rock & Roll Medium, Severin, Sleep In Fear, Steens Wicked Daycare, Sugar T's Smell Goods, Made By A Weirdo, Chronicles of Yarnia, The Art of Georgia Buchner, Candy Bones Creative, Ghost Lake, Little Panda Acts of Kindness, and Shan Pie Designs.

CONTRIBUTED

Eerie Horror Fest returns to the Warner Theatre for their four-day event celebrating the horror film genre. Among many events, featured this year are (clockwise from top left): *Night of the Living Dead*, *Hocus Pocus*, *M3GAN*, and *Goblin*.

The first wave of film selections includes: *Demon Box*, *English Tutor*, *Match*, *Mother Nocturna*, *Sætnere*, *Treeline*, and *We Forgot About the Zombies*. A full schedule, along with additional films will be available soon.

Be sure to stay tuned for more news in the weeks leading up to the fest, as there are more high-profile guests and events yet to be announced. — Nick Warren

Oct. 4 to Oct. 7 // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // Night of the Living Dead and VIP Party $50, All Access Premium VIP $167, All Access VIP $130, Day Passes $25, $30, Hocus Pocus $15, Claudio Simonetti's Goblin $40 // For tickets and more information: eeriehorrorfest.com

Gem City Style: Back to School

An interview with artist and teacher Brad Pattullo

By: Jessica Hunter

Jessica Hunter (JH): Brad, you are a multifaceted individual. Please tell us a little bit about who you are and how you got to where you are today.

Brad Pattullo (BP): I'm from Michigan originally and I studied animation in Savannah, Georgia. I've always loved art and I've always loved theater, so animation became a natural fit since it combines those processes. I was a production artist doing stop motion character animation for several television shows back in the late 1990s/early 2000s (*Gary and Mike*, *Celebrity Deathmatch*, etc.) before my teaching career began. I've been teaching in the art department at Edinboro University (PennWest) for 20 years now. In that time, I've done a lot of commission work — ranging from directing segments for *Sesame Street* and music videos to painting portraits of people's houses. My career has been so varied because I'm the kind of person that likes to constantly challenge myself and learn new things, and teaching affords a lot of opportunities to do that. I also have a wide variety of artistic influences: *MAD Magazine*, Moebius, Jack Kirby, Norman Rockwell, Stanley Kubrick, Chuck Jones, Jan Svankmajer, and the Garbage Pail Kids, to name a few. I enjoy all types of art, film, and animation. When I see a thing that looks cool, I always want to try it.

JH: You designed this issue's cover for the Erie Reader, my alma mater (Collegiate Academy), and it's awesome! You have also been a contributing comic artist for the Erie Reader for years! Can you describe your inspiration and process for the cover and comics?

BP: Thank you! I don't have any personal history with the location. I love to draw buildings and I've always loved the Academy building's architecture. I was in conversations with the folks at the Reader about a cover illustration, and the "Back to School" issue theme came up. I had done a fairly detailed pen-and-ink drawing of a General McLane football game that served as inspiration for the mood I wanted to create. Most everyone has memories of high school football games and Academy High is an iconic Erie location, so the concept came together. The entire piece was drawn and painted digitally in Procreate. This allowed me to tweak the composition without having to redraw individual elements. I enjoy drawing crowd scenes — I come up with back stories for each figure and I try to imagine what they are thinking or how they are feeling at that moment. I use the same process for animation — it's character-based storytelling. There weren't a lot of notes from the people at the Reader — everyone seemed to really like the piece!

My comics are a lot of meta, self-referential dad jokes. If I don't have any other ideas, I'll just tell a personal story and add a punchline. I've gotten jokes from memes, television commercials, and work emails. I mean, how does a college professor not know the difference between "reply" and "reply all?" Some are just pithy observations that are made funny by a visual gag. Five Guys gives you a lot of fries, but what if they gave you a LOT of fries? Like, so many that they need a dump truck? I think comics are good for visually bringing out the absurdity in everyday situations. I also occasionally like to throw in what I've been calling a non-joke; the joke is that the audience is expecting a joke and there isn't one. I've had to explain many of these to my mom, who doesn't share my dark, absurdist sense of humor.

JH: AI has been everywhere lately. How do you see its role in the future of animation and film? Are you using it currently?

BP: At this point in history, it seems like technological achievement has outpaced human evolution — our ability to adapt is slower than the scientific progress around us. I'm always slow to embrace new technology — as a species we have a bad habit of leaping before we look. In the end I think AI for artists will probably end up being just another tool. You really can't replace human experience and human connection.

JH: Can you share your opinion on how art has influenced Erie culturally?

BP: I'm a little embarrassed to admit that I'm only tangentially involved with Erie's art scene and that, as an animator, I don't get out much. Every time I go to an event like the Erie Art Museum's gallery night, I'm always amazed by the level of talent and the vibrant community around it. That said, I would love to see more film and animation being done here.

JH: As a professor of animation and film at Penn West Edinboro, what is your opinion of the talent in our region?

BP: It's great! The students we get at PennWest (mostly from around the area) always surprise and inspire me. The Spring Show at Erie Art Museum is always incredible.

JH: What has been your biggest professional accomplishment (or failure) to date?

BP: I'm really proud of the work I've done here, in Edinboro. Over the past two decades, a handful of colleagues and I have designed, built, and maintained an animation program that's just as popular and successful now as it has ever been. I love teaching because it connects you to other people's creativity. Our program exists within a strong, diverse art department within a public institution, so our students are getting a quality education for literally a fraction of what a private art school would cost.

JH: If you could animate a celebrity death match today, who would it be between?

BP: A YouTuber battle might be fun. Mr. Beast versus Markiplier, maybe? My generation had rock stars, my kids' generation has YouTubers.

JESSICA HUNTER

Brad Pattullo, an artist, teacher, animator, pop-culture aficionado, and life long learner designed this month's cover of the Erie Reader. He has always loved the Academy High School building and wanted to draw upon the universal experience of attending a high school football game.

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Three Roads Back: How Emerson, Thoreau, and William James Responded to the Greatest Losses of Their Lives

How the 19th century's greatest thinkers processed grief

"All the suffering gets done by the ones we leave behind," wrote the deceased poet David Berman for his band Purple Mountains. The line is painfully direct and true. I've been turning the lyric over like a smooth stone in my palm lately, having experienced the recent deaths of friends and loved ones. Most of us have endured the deepest sorrow in losing someone close, knowing the heavy chains of grief. A father's or friend's demise suffocates us with what Ralph Waldo Emerson referred to as "the heaviness of the fact of death."

This final book by Robert D. Richardson explores the most significant losses of the aforementioned Emerson, his friend Henry David Thoreau, and their protege William James. Having written separate biographies on each of these men, Richardson was well-versed with their letters and essays. He flipped through them like a worn, often shuffled deck of cards for this publication. His style of "documentary biography" works exceptionally well. He lets these seminal thinkers speak for themselves. Richardson simply threads their excerpts together like beads on strong sinew.

Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson handled the death from consumption of his first wife Ellen as if he were a phoenix emerging from her ashes. He left his ministries within the Unitarian church to travel throughout Europe, being reborn within museums and universities. Emerson came back with new, stronger convictions. He suggested resilience was an effective way to repair decay. He dove into his new writings, regenerated in nature rather than religion. Years later, he approached the death of his son Waldo differently, with profound comprehension.

Naturalist Henry David Thoreau's brother John died in his arms, painfully, from tetanus. Not only did Thoreau abruptly stop journaling, he also became sympathetically ill. When he finally resumed writing, the words spoke of isolation and detachment. As he emerged from his grief, his observations began to focus on the cycles within nature. Thoreau even went as far to state that death is beautiful when seen as a law, not an accident. Less likely to cling to memories, he eventually found joy again.

Philosopher and psychologist William James approached the grief he experienced over his young cousin Minnie with what would become the seeds of pragmatism and functionalism. Through a choice of actions and thoughts, James would rebuild himself. He believed the necessary resources of comfort were found within the individual.

This book shows how death guided Emerson, Thoreau, and James toward their most important works. The reader witnesses a birth of transcendental resilience and clear focus on individualism. These men moved forward from devastation to find growth and success — Richardson's heady work is easily digested with an invigorating pace. It rekindled a desire to revisit the works of each of these men. — Melissa Sullivan Shimek

Princeton University Press // 128 pages // Literary Criticism, Biography, History

MOVIE REVIEWS

Game Over

Gran Turismo can't overcome the cliches of its genre

★★

For decades fans have been arguing with detractors about the artistic merits of video games. Where critics see toys, simple distractions, and mindless wastes of time, gamers see a medium that can offer creative and engaging works of art. However, I don't think many have argued that gaming can drastically change a person's life until *Gran Turismo* (or *Gran Turismo: Based on a True Story* as some ads have been calling it) hit theaters. The film's premise is so ridiculous, it had to come from real life. Sadly, its presentation is riddled with so many cliches that they bog the rest of the film down.

This is the true story (did I mention it's based on a true story? Because the promos really want us to know that) of Jann Mardenborough (Archie Madekwe), an avid *Gran Turismo* player who is given a literal million-to-one shot to use his gaming skills in actual races. He must overcome competition from the other gamers, an extremely tough trainer (David Harbour), the ire of professional racers, and the disapproval of his father (Djimon Hounsou) to reach his dream of going from gamer to racer.

It's an intriguing premise but director Neill Blomkamp chooses to fill it with every trope from the "rags-to-riches" playbook. From constant montages, to villain characters who couldn't be more obvious if they wore "I'm a bad guy" signs, to descriptive text over everything, the film never seems to trust its audience's intelligence enough to tell a good story. There is a glimmer of hope here because the idea of a working class kid overcoming the elitism of pro racing is fascinating. I just wish it hadn't been delivered in such a rote way. — Forest Taylor

Directed by Neill Blomkamp // Written by Jason Hall and Zach Baylin // Starring Archie Madekwe, David Harbour, Orlando Bloom, Darren Barnet, Daniel Puig, Josha Stradowski, Thomas Kretschmann, Maeve Courtier-Lilley, Pepe Barroso, Emelia Hartford, Geri Halliwell, and Djimon Hounsou // Sony Pictures // 135 minutes // Rated PG-13

Where the Buffalo Roam

War Pony successfully walks a narrow line

★★★½

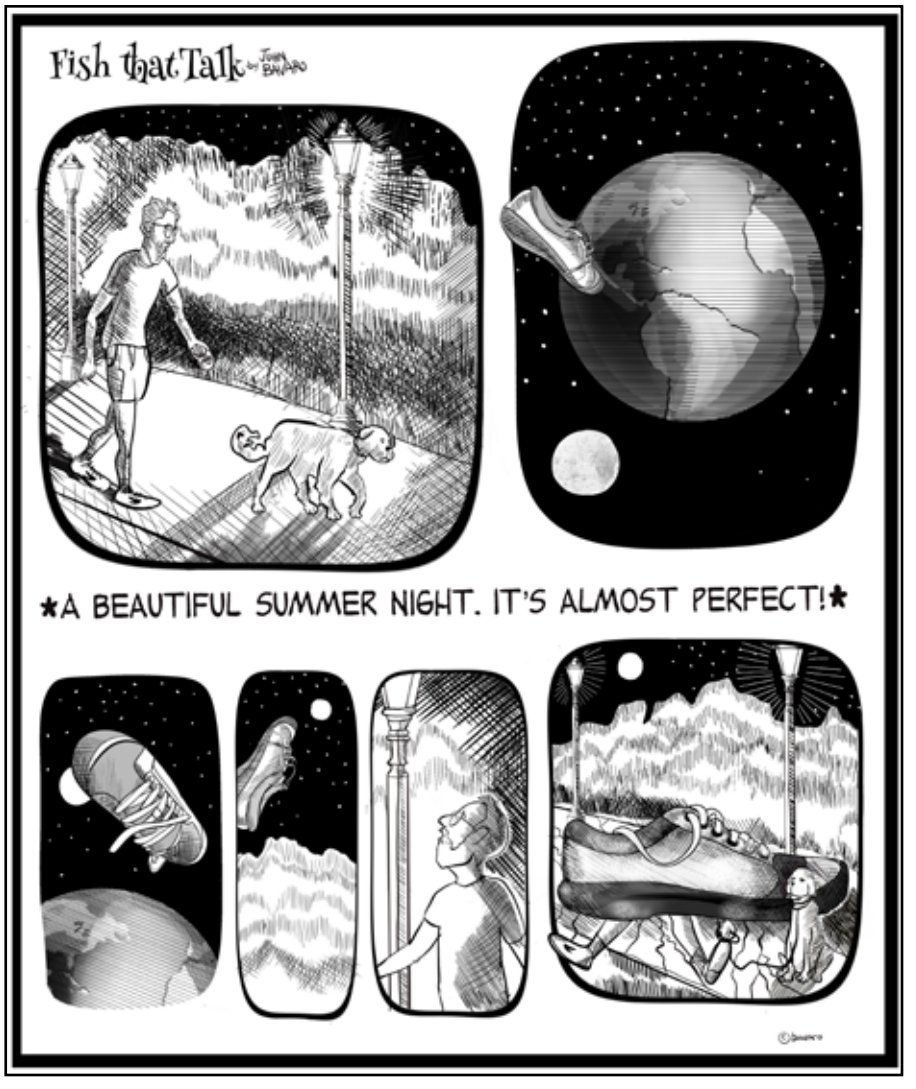
First-time directors Gina Gammell and Riley Keough have been working on their naturalistic drama *War Pony* for quite some time now and their hesitation is understandable. Other filmmakers like Sean Baker and Chloe Zhao who have tackled stories like this have been accused of "poverty tourism" or worse, exploiting a marginalized culture for awards recognition. They avoid these accusations by hiring two Lakota men whom Keough met while filming *American Honey* as co-writers for the film. The story is loosely based on their own experiences resulting in a thoughtful, humanist tale that thankfully avoids melodramatic excess.

The film is set on the Pine Ridge Reservation and follows the stories of two Lakota boys: Bill (Jojo Babteise Whiting), a young man looking for regular work to provide for his two sons, and Matho (LaDainian Crazy Thunder), a 12-year old boy who gets mixed up in criminal activity. Their intertwining stories simultaneously deal with family, loss, and their own culture in both the "Res" and the larger world that still exploits the bodies and labor of Indigenous people.

More a slice-of-life story than a traditional narrative, Gammell and Keough are interested in presenting life as-is for these characters and letting the audience connect with their circumstances naturally. The authenticity of the film says much about the co-writers' involvement and the heavy hand of directorial control is rarely felt (until the film's silly ending), letting the characters' lives just play out for us. This technique is hard to do well, and their inexperience as filmmakers sometimes shows, but these types of films are important as snapshots of a time and a people. That is what movies were made for. — Forest Taylor

War Pony is now playing in select theaters and is available on Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Google Play, Vudu, and YouTube.

Directed by Gina Gammell and Riley Keough // Written by Gammell, Keough, Franklin Sioux Bob, and Bill Reddy // Starring Jojo Babteise Whiting, LaDainian Crazy Thunder, Robert Stover, Ashley Shelton, Iona Red Bear, Ta-Yammi Long Black Cat, Wilma Colhof, Jeremy Corbin Cottier, Woodrow Lone Elk, Sprague Hollander, Jesse Schmockel, and Stanley Good Voice Elk // Momentum Pictures // 115 minutes // Rated R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OH, THE HUMIDITY!
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ALBUM REVIEWS

Jon Batiste
World Music Radio
Verve/Interscope Records

★★½

Jon Batiste's follow-up to his Grammy Awarding-winning *We Are* misses the mark on its worldly concept. Continuing the community-driven message from his previous record, Batiste uses all his industry clout to enlist a globe-spanning list of collaborators to join him on this transcendental voyage. As the name suggests, the record is for the world: crossing national, cultural, and genre barriers to unify dividing lines. This effort is worthwhile yet wasted on some very bland pop-adjacent tracks.

In an attempt to blend cultures and genres, Batiste and company break every element down to its most simplistic variants. Many of the sounds he involves, like reggaeton or Afropop, have already seen success in the U.S. Top 40. Inherently, this record is more in line with America's view of world music than from an actual global perspective.

Even with this tainted worldview, there are some excellent cultural mixes throughout the hour runtime. A major highlight is "Worship" which transitions from organ-driven melodies into bombastic Latin-tinged electro-funk with ease. *World Music Radio* spreads itself to the lowest common denominator, losing sight of the cultural unity it aims to achieve. — Nathaniel Clark

Travis Scott
UTOPIA
Epic Records

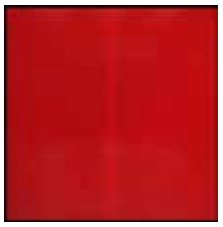
★★½

I don't think any self-respecting rap fan wants an album like *UTOPIA* to be bad, especially during a year where it feels like the genre has been in a drought. Travis Scott's long-teased follow-up to *ASTROWORLD* (and first album since the tragic crowd crush at his festival) is undeniably the biggest hip-hop release of the year so far, but as a star-studded concept album of sorts, does it work? While *UTOPIA*'s varied production makes it look and sound like the kind of landmark album it's trying to be, the star at the center of it unfortunately sounds more hollow than ever.

Built like a Kendrick album, produced like a Kanye album, but lacking the impact either artist has had in their prime, *UTOPIA* makes Travis Scott sound more like a producer lending his tracks to more interesting featured artists (including Beyonce, 21 Savage, and Westside Gunn) than mainstream hip-hop's new savior. Speaking of Ye, Scott not only repurposes several of the rapper's demos and flows for his own purpose here ("GOD'S COUNTRY," "TELEKINESIS"), but declares his loyalty to the disgraced public figure on "SKITZO." And much like Ye's post-2016 output, the instrumentals often flourish while a boardroom-style writer's room leaves listeners wondering if Scott has an original creative thought in his head. — Aaron Mook

Genesis Owusu
STRUGGLER
Ourness

★★★★½



If you've never listened to Genesis Owusu, do it immediately. If you have — particularly if you were a fan of his landmark debut *Smiling with No Teeth* — you still need to listen to *STRUGGLER* (styled in all caps), because quite simply, it rips. Kofi Owusu-Ansah, better known as Genesis Owusu, is a Ghana-born Australian who can seemingly blend any genre he wants into gold. On *STRUGGLER*, this versatility is again on full display. From the video-game like intro of "Leaving the Light" as it morphs into an uptempo dance cut (that's welcomingly reminiscent of Girl Talk, of all things), to the lo-fi neo-soul of the closer "Stuck to the Fan," this album doesn't relent. It's refreshing, fun, emotionally evocative, and pretty much everything someone would want — combining hip-hop, rock, and EDM. Despite all the sonic peregrinations, *STRUGGLER* is remarkably cohesive, held together by its central narrative about "The Roach." Highlights for me include the aforementioned opening track, "The Old Man," and the side two hat trick of "Balthazar," "Stay Blessed," and "What Comes Will Come." For an album this accomplished and innovative, the crazy part is that his debut might be even better. So do yourself a favor and listen to *STRUGGLER* first, and treat yourself to more later. — Nick Warren

Shamir
Homo Anxietatem
Kill Rock Stars

★★★★½

Shamir is a gift, and has been from day one. For someone who has released both songs and albums at a startling pace (this is his ninth LP since 2015), the quality of the content has always been consistently impressive — this prolificacy despite a serious bout with bipolar disorder that at one point nearly caused him to quit his career. Shamir Bailey, the Las Vegas native known better by the mononym, is a brilliant, queer countertenor vocalist and musician who has always been difficult to define. On this album, he showcases a penchant for '90s indie pop, perfectly fitting for his new label, Kill Rock Stars. The catchy opening track "Oversized Sweater" starts the album off at an interesting place, a shimmering, distorted breakup anthem. Then there's "Our Song" and its Guided By Voices-esque openness serving as another highpoint. While "Calloused" and "Crime" have a more morose, modern bent, the unbridled fun of "The Beginning" could be Third Eye Blind from an alternate dimension. Then you have the dark dance hit "Obsession" and the aptly titled Delta sounds of "The Devil Said the Blues is All I'll Know" to close the album out. Shamir is reconsidering pop music in new ways, and I can't wait to see what he does next. — Nick Warren

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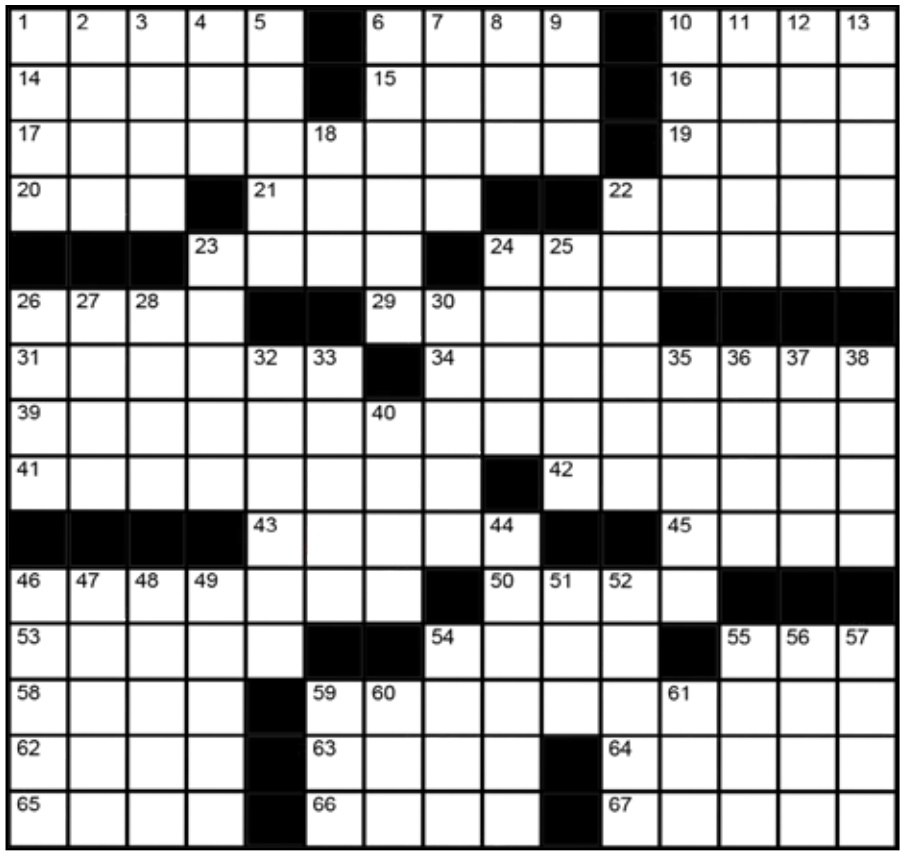
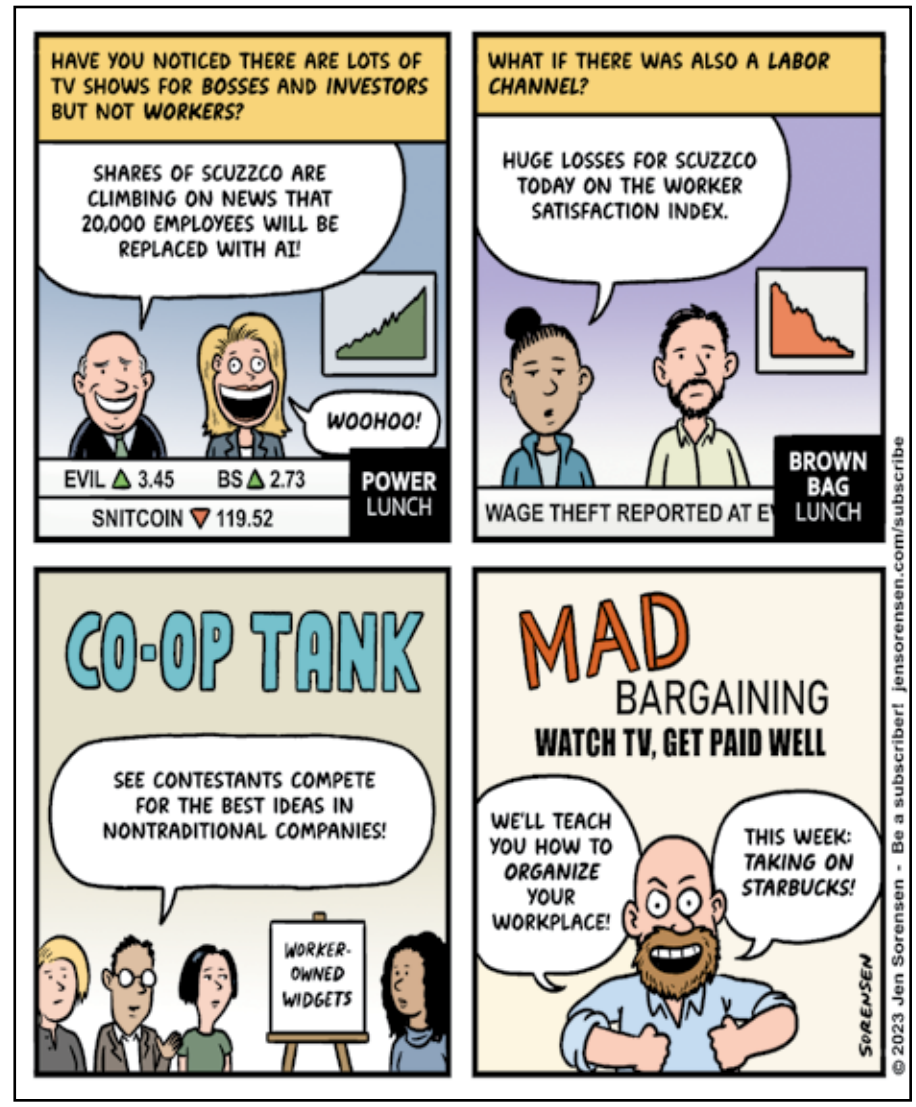


Across

1. Teeming throng
6. Fargo's state: Abbr.
10. Result of branching out?
14. Unfamiliar
15. East Indies tourist destination
16. "I feel pretty, ____ pretty" ("West Side Story" lyric)
17. Zed?
19. What sirens do
20. Lombardi Trophy org.
21. Dish next to stuffing and cranberry sauce
22. You might sleep on it
23. Security guard's viewing, for short
24. Ornamental projection on some 1950s cars
26. Classic name for a poodle
29. Kitchen doohickey
31. Lacking scruples, say
34. Ladies' man
39. AI?
41. It might get under your skin
42. "____ the Spider" (classic African folk tale)
43. Watering holes in deserts
45. They're heard in herds
46. Stop patronizing
50. "Let's ... never do that"
53. Gabrielle of "Being Mary Jane"
54. "Hamilton" won one in 2015
55. 401(k) kin
58. Treats with a cold pack
59. Nelson?
62. ____ classic
63. Hammock support
64. 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature winner
65. Converse alternative
66. "Race Matters" writer Cornel
67. 1865 and 1945, e.g.

Down

1. Kathryn of "WandaVision"
2. Singing snowman in Disney's "Frozen"
3. Small stream
4. 100%, in slang
5. Britannica, for one: Abbr.
6. Award won twice by Giannis Antetokounmpo
7. Häagen-____
8. Pub pick
9. Josh
10. Spa handout
11. Fisherman's spot
12. Three-word question from Judas
13. Mideast's ____ Heights
18. Tell (on)
22. When repeated, name in 1968 news
23. Wispy clouds
24. Picard's counselor
25. Health insurance giant
26. Website help sections
27. Sleepyhead's response
28. Young horse
30. Emmy winner Woodard
32. When some do lunch
33. Unleash upon
35. Hertz competitor
36. What a GOP member might call their pro-immigrant, pro-choice colleague, for short
37. "This ____ unfair!"
38. Redding in the Memphis Music Hall of Fame
40. Take five
44. Rent what you've rented
46. General Motors brand
47. Promptly
48. Defer (to)
49. Expenses
51. 60 secs.
52. High-maintenance
54. Flamenco cheers
55. Fisher of "Wedding Crashers"
56. 2013 Katy Perry hit
57. St. ____ Bay, Jamaica
59. Online initialism of rejoicing
60. Suffix with text or fail
61. Ingredient in soapmaking



Answers to last puzzle

H	G	T	S	■	B	L	A	B	■	K	E	A	C	H
A	R	I	A	■	I	O	N	E	■	G	A	L	L	O
R	E	A	M	■	G	U	T	S	■	B	R	A	I	N
P	E	R	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	S	L	I	P	■
O	K	A	Y	G	U	Y	■	■	O	P	S	■	■	■
■	■	■	S	L	R	■	F	U	R	Y	■	T	L	C
M	E	T	O	O	■	D	I	N	A	■	C	H	O	U
P	E	R	S	O	N	O	F	T	H	E	Y	E	A	R
A	L	I	A	■	O	R	E	O	■	T	B	O	N	E
A	Y	S	■	B	O	Y	D	■	L	U	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	P	A	S	■	■	D	A	D	R	O	C	K
■	P	E	R	C	E	N	T	A	G	E	P	L	A	Y
C	L	O	A	K	■	U	H	N	O	■	U	S	S	R
H	I	N	D	U	■	T	A	Z	O	■	N	O	T	I
A	E	S	O	P	■	S	W	A	N	■	K	N	E	E

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