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# CONTENTS

## AUGUST 2, 2023

### Erie At Large: Endurance is more important than truth - 4

How the voice of reason is often lost within the din of extremism

### Summer Interns Keep Erie Humming - 7

Students give back as they gain experience

### The Erie Reader Gives 2023 - 10



### Artis Simmons and the Endless Road - 19

Erie's "Gem City Ace" dominated the martial arts circuit with an impeccable sense of cool

### Walks with Verity Herbs and Wellness - 23

Discovering the plants and natural medicines all around us

### Local Farmers Markets and Farm Stands in Erie - 24

Supporting local farmers and businesses never tasted so good

### Spotlight on Erie - 26

There's a party goin' on right here, a celebration to last throughout the years: Celebrate Erie! SpongeBob! Bloom Under the Moon!

### Bricks American Steakhouse - 36

A fully fleshed dining experience

### MIAC Live's 2023-2024 Season Preview - 38

Vibrant, diverse entertainment continues at Mercyhurst University

### Gem City Style: Erie Gives Day - 39

An interview with Erie Arts and Culture director Anne O'Dell

### Book Reviews - 40

\*There's No Coming Back From This and  
\*Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma

### Movie Reviews - 42

Forest Taylor completes the \*Barbenheimer meme

### Local, Original Comics - 43

From John Bavaro, Brad Pattullo, Bryan Toy, Melissa Sullivan-Shimek, and Tommy Link

### Album Reviews - 44

New cuts from Lil Uzi Vert, PJ Harvey, Bethany Cosentino, and Strange Ranger

### Crossword Puzzle - 46

The latest stumper from David Levinson Wilk

## From the Editors

### Teamwork makes the dream work

What do you do if you find an injured dog on the street? Or if your bike has a flat tire? What do you do if you want to find out the history of a building? Or if you're a young, trans kid with no family support? What do you do if you lost your job and aren't sure how to make rent? Or if your child has a disability and you need resources for them? What do you do if you have cancer and are facing rising medical costs? Or if you're in an abusive relationship and need support to leave?

Even outside of our individual needs, what do we as a community do when faced with major challenges like climate change? Homelessness? Pet overpopulation? Childhood hunger?

The answer? A nonprofit organization.

Our community nonprofits work as a safety net to the overall functioning of our society and fill in the gaps left by governments and private businesses. They help clean up the messes of humankind, while also providing the beauty we need to get through it all — with art, music, theater, and conservation.

With Erie Gives Day around the corner (on Tuesday, Aug. 8 — mark your calendars), the Erie Community Foundation is getting their team (featured in its entirety on our cover this month) ready to work toward making sure that our local nonprofits and their individual teams get a boost in revenue to allow them to continue taking care of all the little things that add up to the big picture — of making our community a better, healthier, brighter, and easier place to live for everyone.

Within this issue, we've asked our own team — our writers, editors, and artists — which nonprofits are closest to their hearts and why they've chosen those organizations to donate to this Erie Gives Day. Among our team, we've come up with charitable organizations that range from the educational, to animal welfare, to sustainability, inclusion, mental health awareness, and community wellness.

By sharing their thoughts, we hope to inspire you to really think about which nonprofits have the biggest impact in your life and your individual communities and make sure, if you're able, to toss them a little extra this time of year. Every single player on a team makes their team better, and in the same way, every little (\$25) donation makes our community better: by helping it to function more cohesively and smoothly, and by bolstering our individual ability to make a big difference by making it a true team effort.

## Erie at Large: Endurance Is More Important Than Truth

How the voice of reason is often lost within the din of extremism

By: Jim Wertz

Charles Bukowski taught us that endurance was more important than truth. He applied it to many things: writing, romance, drinking ... but it seems to hold a particular significance in our current political moment as good people, who entered into the sphere for all the right reasons, now resign in protest, sacrificing their commitment and their convictions in an attempt to preserve what they see as the truth of the matter.

Quitting in protest seems to be a more common trend than I remember.

As a kid, I remember other kids quitting the baseball or football team because they didn't get to play the position they wanted or they didn't get the playing time they thought they deserved. I'm not sure I look back on those folks any differently today than I did then. It was mostly a result of immaturity and poor parenting. I remember thinking then as I do now, "How do you get the position you want or the playing time you think you deserve if you don't stay in the game?"

I guess politics is, or should be, a different animal. It's not a game — although it's full of adults who like to play them — and the stakes are usually higher than who's on second base or who's getting the ball inside the red zone.

This year alone we've seen good people — intelligent people who entered the political fray for all the right reasons — walk away from their elected or appointed positions in protest of problems with the process of government and what they believed the long-term impact of those problems would be.

Most recently, Erie County Councilwoman Mary Rennie announced on July 24 that she decided not to continue her re-election efforts, removed herself from the November ballot, and walked away from her seat on the county's most important elected body.

"It has been observed many times that county government over the past 40+ years may not have always been pretty or perfect, but officials always came together in the end to do what was right and to protect the public interest," Rennie wrote in her resignation letter. "I don't believe the same can be said today."

She argues that the processes of county government have been "compromised and destabilized to such a degree in less than two short years [since Brenton Davis took office] that any end product will never make up for the damage done. In the final analysis, the actions of the majority of County Council do not represent me or my values."

But now she's gone and her values — and those of her constituents — have no voice in the conversation.

A month before Rennie's resignation, three members of the all-volunteer Blasco Library Advisory Board resigned in protest of the removal of a Pride month display in the children's section of the library.

The Davis administration demanded the display be "removed or relocated," according to a report by the Erie Times-News, and the library's director, Karen Pierce, complied. The advisory board was not consulted on the status of the display, and when it attempted to call an emergency meeting, its attempts were rebuffed.

Former County Councilwoman Rennie, who formerly served as executive director of the Erie County Library prior to her retirement and election to County Council, told the Times-News that she was concerned the library staff worried about retribution from the administration if they pushed back on, or spoke out about, the decision to remove the display.

"They shouldn't have to feel afraid to lose their jobs simply because they speak to someone, especially myself," Rennie told the Times-News. "I'm horribly offended that I have different people who work in the county who tell me they're not allowed to speak to me. What year are we living in?"

These are just two recent — and not disconnected — high-profile resignations in a series of resignations from city government and borough councils to advisory boards and authorities where quality individuals — whether elected by the voters in their district or appointed by municipal bodies with the power to do so — feel compelled to walk away from the problems they face instead of staying to right the wrongs they've encountered.

And while it may feel like a new prob-



**Quitting in protest happens within the political world when a representative feels that their voice is not being respected or as an attempt to retain a degree of self-truth. But where does that leave the constituents who voted for representation? And what about the future of their governing body in today's extreme political climate?**

lem to us, it's not a 21st century convention. Indeed, the New York Times asked in 1974: "Resignation in Protest: Is It Meaningful?"

The conclusion: maybe.

Bureaucrats used to see resigning in protest as a way to stifle the blind loyalty to one-man rule, particularly a powerful president or cabinet secretary. But that was an age of more reason and a more balanced government. A well-timed resignation of a respected public servant could, perhaps, have a chilling effect on the momentum of sometimes myopic and often power-hungry political climbers.

Today, while the spirit remains the same, the political sphere is one of extremists. And the more extreme the membership of a political body, or the more ideologically extreme the tendencies of a political leader, the more endurance they seem to have. The moderate factions of an institution are the people more likely to walk away in protest.

That was the conclusion of the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), which published a report on the subject in April 2020.

"Those most likely to quit are a range

of moderate bureaucrats," the report concludes.

Extremists, the authors argue, are more likely to wait out a president or policymaker of another ideological faction than are their moderate counterparts in an attempt to advance policy based on their own belief. While the NBER report is focused on presidential politics, we watch their study play out at home. All politics is local, after all.

With Rennie and the advisory board members now gone, the future of these bodies sits in the hands of an extremist four-person majority on Erie County Council. The moderate voices of reason are gone and with them goes the fight for truth.

We need good people in government. We need people who can and will endure.

There is, after all, no better prescription for the extremism of an institution than resistance from within.

*Jim Wertz is a contributing editor and Chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party. He can be reached at [jWertz@eriedems.com](mailto:jWertz@eriedems.com) and you can follow him on Twitter (or whatever its called) @jim\_wertz*



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## Summer Interns Keep Erie Humming

Students give back as they gain experience

By: Liz Allen

Tianyuan “Jamed” Dou, 26, whose family lives in the city of Zibo, China, plans to work for a National Basketball Association team in a global partnership or sponsorship capacity. He hopes that his summer internship in a different sport, with the Erie SeaWolves baseball team, will help him achieve that goal, after he receives his master’s degree in recreation, sport, and tourism from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He also has bachelor’s degrees he earned in China’s Shandong Province and from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

“I have three different countries’ cultural experiences and I feel like I can use my knowledge and experience to make some contributions to the world,” he said.

Taniah Stephens, 23, a Fairview resident and Villa Maria Academy graduate, aims to host a nationwide show — on TV, as a podcast, or in both formats — where a group of knowledgeable women can have candid conversations about sports. She is starting a master’s degree program, specializing in psychology, sports management, and strategic communications at Ohio University, where she earned her bachelor’s in the journalism news and information track.

“Women get talked down to about sports a lot,” said Stephens, who knew by fifth grade that she wanted a career in sports broadcasting. She already successfully pitched a weekly radio show and podcast idea, GenZ-Erie, to TalkErie, where she is interning. Station manager and host Joel Natalie is delighted at her initiative and drive. “We’re getting great feedback,” said Natalie. “Her numbers are incredible.”

On her live show, Stephens tackles “crucial” topics for her generation, including relationships, dating, mental health, entrepreneurship, work life after college, financial literacy, sports, and faith. The format is to invite one or two guests — usually one of her peers and an expert on that week’s topic — and to take calls from listeners. You can hear her show on Thursdays at 7 p.m. on 105.9 FM or find it on Facebook and Spotify.

How does she keep the conversations on an even keel? “We’re trying not to look at anything negatively,” Stephens said. “I’m a really optimistic person and trying to be consistent with positivity.” It helps that she is the “daughter, granddaughter, stepdaughter, niece, and goddaughter” of Christian preachers. “My foundation is on faith,” she said.

Dou and Stephens are among hundreds of college students who are enlivening workplaces in Erie and elsewhere during their summer internships. They are burnishing their resumes and championing creativity and innovation as they bolster their confidence for future employment.

Erie Insurance alone boasts 115 interns — 100 are new and 15 returned from last summer. “They represent 50 different colleges and universities and work in more than 20 departments across the company.



(Clockwise from top left) Tianyan Dou, who is interning with the Erie SeaWolves this summer, is working on his master’s degree at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Summer intern Taniah Stephens hosts a live show, GenZ-Erie, on TalkErie radio. Nathaniel Clark, a rising junior, will transfer to Penn State’s main campus this fall from Behrend. He is interning at the Hagen History Center.

The largest number of students work in the areas of IT, claims and actuarial,” said Matthew Cummings, manager of public relations and social media.

“Internships are important for both the student and the employer,” said Edwin Voll, assistant director for student employment at Gannon University. “The student is given a real-world opportunity to apply their skills and increase their knowledge and the employer benefits from evaluating interns as potential candidates for future employment,” he said. An internship can be viewed “as an extended job interview,” he said.

At PennWest University, “Internships are professional learning experiences that offer meaningful, practical work related to a student’s field of study or career interest,” said Christopher LaFuria, deputy communications officer. This summer, PennWest’s Edinboro students, for example, are working in graphic and interactive design at the Franklin Chamber of Commerce and in marketing and communications at the National Comedy Center in Jamestown, New York.

Mercyhurst University students are also interning at the Comedy Center, as well as at the Hagen History Center in Erie, at Disney, Bristol Meyers, the Buffalo Bisons AAA baseball team, Country Fair, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the FBI, and NCIS, among many other places, according to Frank Rizzone, em-

ployer relations specialist.

Thirty years ago, employers outside of Erie didn’t know where Mercyhurst was and weren’t familiar with its Intelligence Studies program. “These kids have taken the word out there,” he said. “Now, (employers) come to us looking for interns.” When Mercyhurst students are hired full-time after graduation, they recommend Mercyhurst students for internships, he said. “It helps us to build an alumni network that is unbelievable,” he said.

Lauri Enterline, associate director of career services at Penn State Behrend, said that employers encourage students to land internships as early as possible during college. Doing more than one internship is also a plus, she said. Behrend students are introduced to the internship process as freshmen, she said. “We are in front of them in their first-year seminar class,” she said. The internship process is then integrated into each academic discipline, as students can learn how to prepare a resume, write a cover letter, and practice for a job interview.

Nathaniel Clark, 20, a Fairview High School graduate, just completed his sophomore year at Behrend, as an English major in secondary education. He’s in the 2 + 2 program and will attend Penn State’s main campus for his final two undergrad years. He learned about internship opportunities at the Hagen History



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**MARKET** 10am-2pm



## NEWS & VIEWS

CONTRIBUTED



(Clockwise from top left) Aiden Hicks is a rising senior at Gannon University, and is an intern with the Erie SeaWolves this summer. Wade Williams, a rising sophomore at Behrend, is interning at the Hagen History Center where his grandfather, Howard Wright, is a volunteer. Penn State Behrend graduate Laney Douglas interned in the City of Erie's Human Resources department, where she now works full-time.

Center through Behrend's Excelerate Program, which is endowed by Erie Insurance.

"In general, history and English go hand-in-hand," said Clark. "You need to be able to craft a story to tell history." Clark originally wanted to go into mechanical engineering but his interest in media "and its consequences to society" led him to English. In middle school, a teacher introduced him to *Fahrenheit 451*, he said. "I just deeply connected with it and understood its purpose," he said. "It's crucial for people to see what can happen if you almost attempt to censor or to change a subject," he said. His internship duties have included helping to prepare for the History Center's detective and architecture camps for youngsters but he is excited about having access to all of the history center's resources. "There is so much history in Erie that is not discussed enough," he said. "I have an inspiration to tell those stories and bring them to light and communicate about them."

The best way to help bridge the divide we are witnessing today is to "talk more on how history or reading or literature acts as another way to understand people's concepts or viewpoints," he said. Such understanding is "a way for society to continue," he said.

Wade Williams, 18, graduated from high school in Texas but has family roots in Erie. "Texan blood is inside of me. I'm very much a fan of the Second Amendment. I drive a truck and wear a cowboy hat," he said. Williams just finished his freshman year at Behrend.

He is in the 4 plus 1 program, so he will earn his bachelor's and master's in education in five years.

At the Hagen History Center, he is compiling files of objects in the archives, he said. He was familiar with the history center because he often accompanies his 88-year-old grandfather, Howard Wright, who volunteers at the museum. Williams sought out the internship on his own. "I came in and said, 'Hey, let me be an intern here.'" History Center staffers have also been treated on occasion to Williams' talent as a bass singer in a barbershop quartet. The Wood-Morrison House, in turns out, has marvelous acoustics.

Rising college seniors Abi MacKrell and Jem Neumann, both 21, are interns in Erie Mayor Joe Schember's office this summer, working mostly on Celebrate Erie. MacKrell, a member of the Lion Entertainment Board at Behrend, enjoys learning about "the mechanics of getting things booked, writing professional emails and getting invoices set up." She is also working on organizing the Family District for Celebrate Erie.

A graduate of a small high school in Butler County, MacKrell is looking forward to hearing the headliners and all of the live music at CelebrateErie. She will be in familiar territory. Since age 4, she has been singing at small festivals with her guitarist dad, who is a meat cutter in his day job.

Neumann, a Gannon student, is from State College, and is also busy with two other internships this sum-



mer — one as a Gannon tour guide and another doing social media for the Erie Art Museum. The City Hall internship is appealing, Neumann said, because it's a chance to learn about public sector work, in addition to the nonprofit world.

"Erie is a really great place, the perfect size to be able to do anything you really want to do and it's still accessible," whereas in State College, "you get into this competition mindset," said Neumann, whose mother, father, two sisters, nephew, and the family's foreign exchange student from Germany are excited about visiting Erie to see Celebrate Erie headliners Flo Rida and Parmalee.

In addition to her job as an administrative assistant at Penn State, Neumann's mother does wedding planning. "I grew up helping with those a lot," Neumann said. "I always felt like I was doing it well and realized that everybody needs people to do that and that I could work in any field."

Literally being flexible about the field you choose for a summer internship helped Aiden Hicks, a rising senior at Gannon. His dream job is to work for the National Hockey League, as a general manager, scout, agent, or in management/marketing. This summer, he's working for the Erie SeaWolves baseball team.

Hicks, 21, grew up playing soccer and hockey in Coldwater, a small town in Ontario, Canada, near Barrie. He then played soccer in Spain until the pandemic hit. Now, he plays both hockey and soccer at Gannon, where he is a senior double major in sports management and marketing. "Growing up, I never competitively played baseball nor was it as popular in my area compared to the U.S.," he said. Nevertheless, as a junior associate at the SeaWolves, he is learning about many aspects of sports management by "working at the sales table, box office, concession stands, selling 50/50 tickets, jersey raffles and com-

municating with fans/consumers," he said.

"Being able to see how game days operate from opening to close is very beneficial and provides me with the experience needed." Hicks advises college students who have not yet had internships to "go out of your comfort zone."

For his SeaWolves' coworker Dou, pursuing a dream career also required being nimble and flexible. His father encouraged him to go to Simon Fraser Univer-

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**"Internships are important for both the student and the employer. The student is given a real-world opportunity to apply their skills and increase their knowledge and the employer benefits from evaluating interns as potential candidates for future employment." — Edwin Voll, assistant director for student employment at Gannon University**

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sity in Vancouver after attending the University of Jinan in China. "I spent 21 years in my comfort zone and doing my college degree inside of our province of Shandong, so it is like I never left home for a long distance and a long period," he said.

That's an understatement. Dou has been away

from home for four years due to COVID-19 and at first, found it difficult to make friends when he moved to Vancouver. A college professor, who became his "Canadian mom," pushed him to go to the U.S. for his master's degree. He also credits Stan, a mentor he met while working in maintenance at a driving range, with helping him reach his goals. "He asked me to write down my SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis for him and I really did. It sounds ridiculous. I worked in the labor force and someone asked me about my personality from my business knowledge." His mentor, a graduate of Stanford and Princeton universities, "taught me a lot of knowledge that I could not have learned in a book."

It seems fitting that my internship story is running in the Erie Reader's annual Erie Gives edition. Whether they are working for private businesses, nonprofits or in public service, Erie's interns give a lot to our community through their drive and personalities.

Stephens, at TalkErie, likes to banter with Natalie, the station manager, about the greatest basketball player of all time. Natalie's pick is Michael Jordan, but for Stephens, there is no competition. It's LeBron James. She has that in common with Dou, who explains why he nicknamed himself Jamed. "I named myself after LeBron James and the 'D' comes from my family name," he said. As with all of the interns, he's gaining practical experience in the workplace. But the favorite aspect of his internship? "I love communicating with different people, especially the kids and the elders, since they all give me positive motivation with a big smile on their faces, which can make my day."

*Liz Allen still keeps in touch with interns she met during her career at the Erie Times-News. You can reach her at lizerie@aol.com.*



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Pictured: Maddie Rupp  
Tipsy Bean Cafe Barista

# The Erie Reader Gives 2023

## Who we're supporting on Erie Gives Day and why

By: Erie Reader Staff

Over the last 12 years, Erie Gives Day has become so much more than an opportunity to donate to your most beloved nonprofits. Since its inception through the Erie Community Foundation in 2011, it has become a day of awareness (and, for many organizations, financial dependence) of those nonprofits making our communities richer, more fair, and more vibrant. And the folks behind the momentous day at the Erie Community Foundation (ECF) hope the day, along with the number and amount of donations, keeps on growing.

For those unaware, Erie Gives Day (this year happening on **TUESDAY, AUG. 8 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.**) is a county-wide donation event where local nonprofits can register their organizations to be included, and any donation made by anyone anywhere of \$25 or more will receive a percentage match from a pool of funding from corporate sponsors (dubbed "Bonus Bucks"), including a substantial bulk sum from ECF itself (this year in excess of \$250,000). This means that your individual donation gets a boost and your nonprofit is the beneficiary!

Erie Community Foundation President and CEO Karen Bilowith comments on the community's outpouring of support for the event, "Last year was my first Erie Gives experience. I was truly amazed at the demonstration of community generosity. The phones literally rang all day. In the end, Erie Gives raised over \$8 million and more than 11,000 individuals participated. Extraordinary results for a community our size."

Extraordinary, indeed. The numbers have been climbing steadily since the inaugural year from an initial donation total of \$776,435 to last year's astounding \$8,178,207. That's a remarkable achievement of growth and shows the genuine care and generosity of Erie's community.

Most nonprofits rely heavily on grant funding, but grants usually come with restrictions on how those funds can be spent. Bilowith comments, "We hear from participating nonprofits throughout the year that they appreciate Erie Gives as it is a way to raise critical, *unrestricted* dollars for their organization. Many nonprofits consider Erie Gives their annual fund drive. Erie Gives also provides an opportunity for the organizations to share their story with a broad audience and secure new donors."

This year, the ECF is rolling out a new donation platform via Give Gab, which will provide more efficient service and a boost in security, while helping nonprofits promote themselves through upgraded video and image services available on their individual pages. This platform will also allow donors to cover credit card processing fees, so that the nonprofits and the ECF don't need to incur those costs.

Overall, the ECF is poised to make this their most successful Erie Gives Day yet, which will in turn make their community impact greater and effect positive



**Erie Community Foundation President and CEO Karen Bilowith has been overwhelmed by the generous support of the Erie community. It is important that as many people as possible donate to their favorite nonprofit during Erie Gives Day to ensure the project's success and to provide much needed funding for participating charitable organizations.**

change in the Erie area for all involved, on both large and small scales. Bilowith concludes, "Many nonprofits tell us they are feeling the impact of the economy, which means supporting your favorite nonprofit through Erie Gives is important and timely. The needs are great. Collective giving can make an impact."

You may already have the nonprofit in mind that you feel deserves your donation, but if you're on the fence, we've provided some information from our staff, editors, writers, artists, and photographers on the nonprofits they've chosen to support this Erie Gives Day. As always, we at the Erie Reader hope to help make 2023 the best, most successful Erie Gives yet!

*To find the nonprofit closest to your heart, visit [ErieGives.org](https://ErieGives.org) on Tuesday, Aug. 8 and use the search bar to find their individual page to donate. Or you can drop off a check to the Erie Community Foundation by Aug. 7, 459 W. 6th St. or call (814) 454-0843.*

### Our Nonprofit Picks

#### Emmaus Ministries

**Who's giving:** Liz Allen, Writer

**Who they are:** Emmaus Ministries includes Emmaus Soup Kitchen, Emmaus Food Pantry, Sister Gus's Kids Café, Emmaus Grove urban farm and Listening Hearts, a monastic spiritual program for struggling women.

**Why I'm giving:** At the end of March, Sister Mary Miller and Sister Val Luckey, Erie Benedictines, invit-

ed me to do some part-time writing for Emmaus. Just as I finished a news release to announce Sister Mary's retirement as executive director of Emmaus (my first assignment) Sister Mary went into hospice care — she died days later, on May 14. Since then, I have seen firsthand the good work of Emmaus in helping Erie's most vulnerable people — those struggling with food insecurity, addictions, mental health issues, abusive relationships, layoffs, evictions, loneliness.

Dedicated staff members and legions of volunteers keep everything running smoothly; many have given of their time for decades. This year, I'm adding the Harry T. Burleigh Legacy Alliance to my growing list of Erie Gives donations. As Black history is being systematically erased, we must celebrate Burleigh's work as a composer, arranger, and singer to preserve the African-American spirituals that he learned from his Erie grandfather. Those spirituals include "There is a Balm in Gilead," promising to "make the wounded whole." Every day, Emmaus Ministries works tirelessly to make Erie's wounded whole.

**Liz previously gave to:** Urban Erie Community Development Corp (UECDC), All Aboard Erie, and the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

#### YMCA of Greater Erie

**Who's giving:** Brian Graham, Editor-in-Chief

**Who they are:** As the local chapter of this worldwide, iconic organization, the YMCA of Greater Erie has been strengthening our community for over 160 years by offering programs that "build a healthy spir-

*Why give to Mercy Center for Women?*  
**OUR RESIDENTS SAY IT BEST.**

*"I have so much to look forward to now. I found God here, I have hope." - LoriAnn*

*"I couldn't ask for a better program to be in. If it wasn't for the Mercy Center, I don't know where I would be." - Crysti*

*"This place is a Godsend. The Mercy Center has been like family." - Ashley*

*"I'm living life independently and empowered and I credit that to the Mercy Center." - Jen*



With the addition of the Mercy Anchor Community Center, the Mercy Center has **doubled** its capacity to provide housing and support services to **men, women & children** experiencing homelessness locally.



**Aug. 8th**  
**ErieGives.org**



**BIRDS • PEOPLE • HABITAT**

**Please remember Erie Bird Observatory on Erie Gives Day, August 8**



Erie Bird Observatory conducts avian research and habitat conservation in Northwestern Pennsylvania and beyond, and offers public programming that brings people and birds together for a better understanding of the natural world.

@ErieBirdObservatory @bird\_erie @bird\_erie

[www.eriebirdobservatory.org](http://www.eriebirdobservatory.org)

**Support LEAF Erie Gives 2023!**

**August 8, 2023**  
**8am-8pm**

*All proceeds support Frontier Park, the Open Markets and the ReLeaf tree planting initiative!*



[eriegives.org](http://eriegives.org)  
[leaferie.org](http://leaferie.org)

**ON AUGUST 8<sup>TH</sup>, SPONSOR A GOOD MENTAL HEALTH DAY**

For over 60 years, Stairways Behavioral Health has been serving over 6,000 adults per year in Erie County. We assist people with mental health disorders and addiction needs at any stage of life in their recovery by providing comprehensive rehabilitation, treatment and support essential for living, working, learning, and participating fully in our community.



*Please support Stairways on Erie Gives Day August 8th at [www.eriegives.org](http://www.eriegives.org)*



2185 W. 8th Street  
 Erie, PA 16505



**Donate to Stairways Behavioral Health for #ErieGives2023 at [www.eriegives.org](http://www.eriegives.org)**



## Libraries are about books and a whole lot more!

Programs funded by the Friends of the Erie County Library offer opportunities for lifelong learning and engagement such as:

- The Summer Reading Challenge for all ages
- Storytimes
- Fun arts and crafts
- Computer classes
- Skill-building classes at the Idea Lab
- Book Clubs
- And so much more!



### Support Friends of the Erie County Library on Erie Gives Day:

TUESDAY AUGUST 8, 2023

Your gift to the FRIENDS goes a long way to support the programs you love at all library branches of the Erie County Public Library, the bookmobile and outreach events.



## August 8<sup>th</sup>, please consider making a donation.

The mission of CCCAS is to provide professional counseling, adoption services, and other programs to educate, affirm and support individuals of all faiths to achieve their fullest human potential.

- Counseling
- Adoption Services
- Refugee Resettlement Program
- Drug & Alcohol Services
- Pregnancy & Parenting Services



**CATHOLIC CHARITIES**  
Counseling and Adoption Services

814-456-2091 • [www.cccas.org](http://www.cccas.org)



WHAT DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE? *It looks a lot like us.*



Please remember SafeNet on August 8.



**SafeNet**  
*reclaim your life*

Erie's only domestic violence agency



We are so grateful for the donations that make it possible for us to rescue over 500 animals each year.



**Tuesday, August 8th**  
**8 a.m. to 8 p.m.**  
**[www.eriegives.org](http://www.eriegives.org)**

it, mind, and body for all.”

**Why I'm giving:** When I recently signed up for a family membership at the YMCA, it was my first time being a member since high school. I was immediately impressed by the sense of community I felt at the Eastside location in Harborcreek. The place was bustling with people, from children to senior citizens, and all were engaged in wholesome activities: kids playing basketball after school, fathers playing racquetball with their daughters, young and old alike learning the important and possibly life-saving skill of swimming. There's an abundance of programs, activities, and equipment, and no matter what you choose to do there, it's almost certainly going to make you a stronger, healthier person.

**Bonus:** The YMCA even offers free babysitting for kids six weeks to eight years, so you can leave your little ones in good hands while you do your workout in peace.

**Brian previously gave to:** United Way Imagination Library, Friends of the Erie County Library, Meals on Wheels, Hooked on Books, and Because You Care

### Presque Isle Partnership

**Who's giving:** Jessica Hunter, Media Editor/Photographer

**Who they are:** The Presque Isle Partnership is a “Friends of Presque Isle State Park” nonprofit organization established in 1994. Their mission is to enhance the Presque Isle visitors' experience by developing, funding, and implementing projects and programs on the park — thus enhancing our beloved 3,200-acre sandy peninsula while safeguarding its natural environment.

**Why I'm giving:** Presque Isle will always be one of my favorite parts about living in Erie. Erie's backyard is a picturesque coastline with an array of recreational activities — it remains a favorite destination for residents and visitors alike. The unique blend of sandy beaches and ecological diversity makes it Pennsylvania's only “seashore” — a true gem. When you support the Partnership you're helping to fund improvements to public areas, public safety, and historical sites, and help bring more concerts, festivals, athletic events, and educational programs. These improvements will continue to enhance the way in which we enjoy our ecological treasure that is Presque Isle.

**Jessica previously gave to:** Lake Erie Region Conservancy, Inner-City Neighborhood Art House, NAMI of Erie County, and the Erie Humane Society

### Friends of the Erie County Library

**Who's giving:** Erin Phillips, Managing Editor

**Who they are:** The Friends of the Erie County Library are a totally volunteer-run nonprofit that helps to provide support to the adult, teen, and preschool programs of our public library system. These classes help adults with job readiness, resume writing, and basic computer skills, while children's programs provide young people with extracurricular enrichment opportunities like STEAM programs, teen book clubs, summer reading programs, game nights, movie nights, and educational presentations. They also hold regular book sales at the library (selling donat-



Managing Editor Erin Phillips is donating to the Friends of the Erie County Library this Erie Gives Day to help them fulfill their mission of bringing quality programming to the library — programming that Erin has utilized many times throughout her children's early years.

ed books, so you can grab quite a pile for not a lot of money) and at their can't-miss annual Great American Book Sale. Each year they raise over \$80,000 in funding for use at the library.

**Why I'm giving:** Reading is very important to me. Since I was a child, I have formative memories of visiting the old public library in Perry Square. These childhood trips to the library solidified my love of reading and so, when I had children of my own, visiting the library naturally became part of our weekly routine. Our daughter went through every childhood program there, from toddler storytime on up, and she still enjoys the tween book clubs (run by the incomparable Ms. Amberlee) and summer reading programs. Our younger son has followed in her footsteps, as he is about to age out of storytime programs when he enters kindergarten (this is very hard for me to accept). They are both early readers who love getting into a new book, and we have these programs, supported by the Friends of the Erie County Library, to thank for that.

The librarians at Blasco often feel like part of our family — they remember our children and will go out of their way to talk with them about the books they've chosen, engage them in an activity, or help them find a book. Any support we can give to them is the least we can do. Miss Amy (Daugherty), who passed away last year, was a shining light within those childhood programs for us. She was always so happy to see our kids when we visited, and we will be donating this Erie Gives Day in her memory.

**Erin previously gave to:** Erie Arts & Culture, Asbury Woods, and Our West Bayfront

### NWPA Pride Alliance, Inc.

**Who's giving:** Dan Schank, Writer

**Who they are:** Over the past decade, the annual Erie Pridefest has transformed from a tight-knit, grassroots gathering into a massive downtown celebration

with thousands of participants and 110 vendors. Plenty of local organizations deserve credit for its growing scale, but the NWPA Pride Alliance has been at the very core of this momentum.

Since 2012, the Pride Alliance has hosted dozens of events celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community in the greater Erie area, including food drives, awareness campaigns, picnics, and happy hours in addition to June's Pride celebration.

**Why I'm giving:** One of the things I'm most proud of as an Erieite is our increasing dedication to LGBTQIA+ visibility. As I type this, our city council just voted to designate our city as a sanctuary for LGBTQIA+ individuals, for example. Still, reactionary rhetoric is seeping back into our politics (and libraries), so it's important to remain vigilant. NWPA Pride Alliance provides crucial support to anyone envisioning an accepting, diverse, fun, and fearless future in our community.

**Dan previously gave to:** Compton's Table, Inc., The Erie County Community College of PA, and The Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC)

### L'Arche

**Who's giving:** Ben Speggen, Contributing Editor

**Who they are:** L'Arche is an international network of communities for people with and without disabilities to share life together. L'Arche Erie — which turned 50 last year! — is the oldest and largest L'Arche community in the United States.

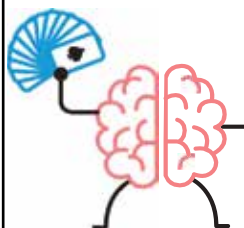
**Why I'm giving:** I am giving because I have seen the power of L'Arche firsthand. I began my journey with L'Arche back in 2007 when I served as an assistant until we launched the Erie Reader in 2011. When I became eligible to volunteer on the board of directors, I immediately applied. I have been a part of the board since 2015 and am currently serving as the board's chair.

L'Arche has helped me gain a better, deeper perspec-

# BOOST

YOUR BRAIN POWER

Challenge your mental muscles and make friends. Learn the game of bridge!



**Beginner classes start:**  
Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>  
at 1pm &

Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>  
at 6:30pm

**Bridge Lab Classes:**  
Mondays at 1:30pm (beginner)  
Starting September 11<sup>th</sup>

Fridays at 1:30pm (intermediate)  
Starting September 15<sup>th</sup>

**Contact:**

Steven Grzegorzewski (814) 573-4743  
steven.grzegorzewski@eriebridgeclub.org

OR

Rick Klapthor (814) 566-1396  
clubmanager@eriebridgeclub.org

**Where:**

Erie Bridge Club  
1221 Grant Avenue  
Erie, PA 16505  
(814) 833-1706  
(Just east of Erie International Airport)

[eriebridgeclub.org](http://eriebridgeclub.org)



## ROGER'S BIRD-DAY BASH



**MICHAEL GLABICKI**

OF **RUSTED ROOT** WITH **DIRK MILLER**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 19** | **DOORS OPEN AT 12:00 PM**

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT [RTPI.ORG](http://RTPI.ORG)

Roger Tory Peterson  
INSTITUTE 

JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK

SPONSORED BY:



## FEATURE

© JESSICA HUNTER PHOTOS



Contributing writer Larry Wheaton is choosing to give to the ANNA Shelter this Erie Gives Day. Their mission of caring for the needy and neglected animals of Erie is personal to him, as he adopted his beloved cat Miles from their shelter eight years ago.

tive of the world and my place in it through shared moments with a rich and vibrant community. The work of this organization serves as a constant reminder that although we may not always be in a world that is just, we must endeavor to make the world a more just place.

**Bonus:** Because LArche goes beyond Erie, you can see the work LArche USA is doing on their website, and consider making an additional donation with nationwide and global impact.

**Ben previously gave to:** WQLN Public Media

### Foundation for Sustainable Forests

**Who's giving:** Melissa Sullivan-Shimek, Comic Artist/Writer

**Who they are:** The nonprofit Foundation for Sustainable Forests not only protects thousands of forested acres through stewardship of the ecosystems, but also supports local rural economies who benefit from their logging practices. They commit themselves to the health of the woodlands through considerations of sustainability and restoration, mindful of diversity, and resilience over value. Their commitment to community education and recreation is as impressive as their proactive devotion to biotic communities.

**Why I'm giving:** See that beautiful 150-year-old home on your block? Remember seeing the greedy landlord chop it up into three or four separate units — drywalling over doorways, turning closets into kitchens, and slapping flat white paint over hardwood floors and built-ins? Now think of thousands of wooded acres, filled with 150+ year old trees being parceled into crops, prefab homes, and another Dollar General. The group Foundation for Sustainable Forests is reactive to the needs of our Pennsylvania woodlands. Creative, committed management and education are our strongest weapons against human and biological threats to

our forests.

**Bonus:** Other local conservation efforts involved with Erie Gives Day include Asbury Woods, LEAF, French Creek Council, PennFuture, and Lake Erie Region Conservancy (among others).

### Erie Arts & Music Festival

(d/b/a Erie Blues & Jazz Festival)

**Who's giving:** Matt Swanseger, Copy Editor

**Who they are:** Synonymous with Erie Augusts, the Erie Blues & Jazz Festival welcomed world-class musicians to Frontier Park for 30 years running, with the exception of the pandemic year in 2020. Unfortunately, due to complications in planning and funding the event, it was canceled in 2023. Free for the community to enjoy each year, it had been an almost guaranteed slam dunk summer weekend that many were sad to see go.

**Why I'm giving:** What are the sultriest days of the Erie summer without the sultry sax solos to match? The blues and jazz genres are both foundational to my musical tastes, and continue to feature some of the most extraordinarily gifted musicians in the world. With things like artificial intelligence encroaching on humanity's most sacred territory, I believe it is vital to champion real artists and real art any chance we can get. I feel the Erie Blues & Jazz Festival always exemplified that, and I hope for a strong resurgence in 2024.

**Matt previously gave to:** Erie Food Rescue, The Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA), Erie Together, Bayfront Maritime Center, Asbury Woods, and the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center

### National Alliance on Mental Illness

(NAMI) Erie County

**Who's Giving:** Nick Warren, Contributing Editor

**Who they are:** The National Alliance on Mental

Illness (NAMI) Erie County is a branch of the nation's largest mental health organization. Their mission statement is simple, being "dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with mental health challenges and their families through support, education and advocacy." Through awareness campaigns and ongoing programs, NAMI seeks to break the social stigma around mental illness, and push for increased funding for their treatment.

**Why I'm giving:** As someone who has struggled with depression and anxiety (as well as ADHD) all my life, this is an important subject to me. Mental illness touches nearly every important person in my life as well, mostly on a direct level. Being able to talk about our mental health struggles is essential these days, and doing anything to break the stigma around that is a cause worth joining.

**Nick previously gave to:** Community Access Media (CAM) Erie, Erie Latino Leadership Association, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE), Erie Animal Network, Dramashop, and the Performing Arts Collective Alliance (PACA)

**The Jefferson Educational Society**

**Who's giving:** Adam Welsh, Editor-in-Chief

**Who they are:** Founded in 2008, the mission of the Jefferson Educational Society (JES) is to "promote civic enlightenment and drive community progress for the Erie Region through the study, research, and discussion of ideas and events that



Editor-in-Chief Adam Welsh is choosing to give to the Jefferson Educational Society in their first year participating in Erie Gives Day.

have influenced the human condition." In addition to their annual signature event, the always-impressive Global Summit, they offer a wide variety

of courses, seminars, and lectures throughout Erie County with a focus on explaining the ideas that have formed our past, assisting in exploring the

# Brevillier Village

"When Quality of Life Matters!"



Thank You, for your support this Erie Gives Day!



Brevillier is a nonprofit specializing in housing and healthcare for older adults.



[www.brevillier.org](http://www.brevillier.org)



present, and offering guidance to enhance the civic future of the Erie region.

**Why I'm giving:** Erie's think tank celebrated their 15th anniversary this summer, and has grown over those years into one of our most important resources. The Reader has partnered with them as far back as the Perry 200 celebration in 2012, and we watched with great interest as they became the launching pad for so many of our community's most vital and transformational discussions. My collaboration with the JES grew further when I became the program coordinator of the Jefferson Civic Leadership Academy (JCLA) after completing the program in 2021. That experience has given me a new perspective and a renewed sense of engagement with the community, and that's something that I feel speaks to the heart of what the JES gives to us all.

**Adam previously gave to:** Career and Dreams, Erie Women's Fund, Film Society of Northwest Pennsylvania, Lake Erie Region Conservancy, and LifeThruMusic

**Luther Memorial Academy**

**Who's giving:** Jim Wertz, Contributing Editor

**Who they are:** Luther Memorial Academy is a small private K-8 school tucked away on West 11th Street in Downtown Erie. Founded in 1976 as a mission of the Luther Memorial Church, the school

provides a strong education that helps students grow academically and socially throughout their elementary and middle school experience.

**Why I'm giving:** Luther Memorial Academy (LMA) celebrates one of the most socially and economically diverse school environments in Erie County. Students there come from families within the City of Erie and throughout Erie County. Strong academic programs are reinforced with extracurricular programs like athletics and its award-winning Lego League team. The majority of LMA graduates attend Erie Collegiate Academy upon graduation. Its low tuition rates make the school affordable for most, and its scholarship programs make sure it is accessible to all. Contributions to Luther Memorial Academy on Erie Gives Day will help support those academic and scholarship programs that have made the school one of the many bright spots in the Gem City.

**Jim previously gave to:** The Erie Philharmonic, The Erie Police Athletic League, The Urban Erie Economic Development Corporation, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, and The League of Women Voters

**The ANNA Shelter**

**Who's giving:** Larry Wheaton, Writer

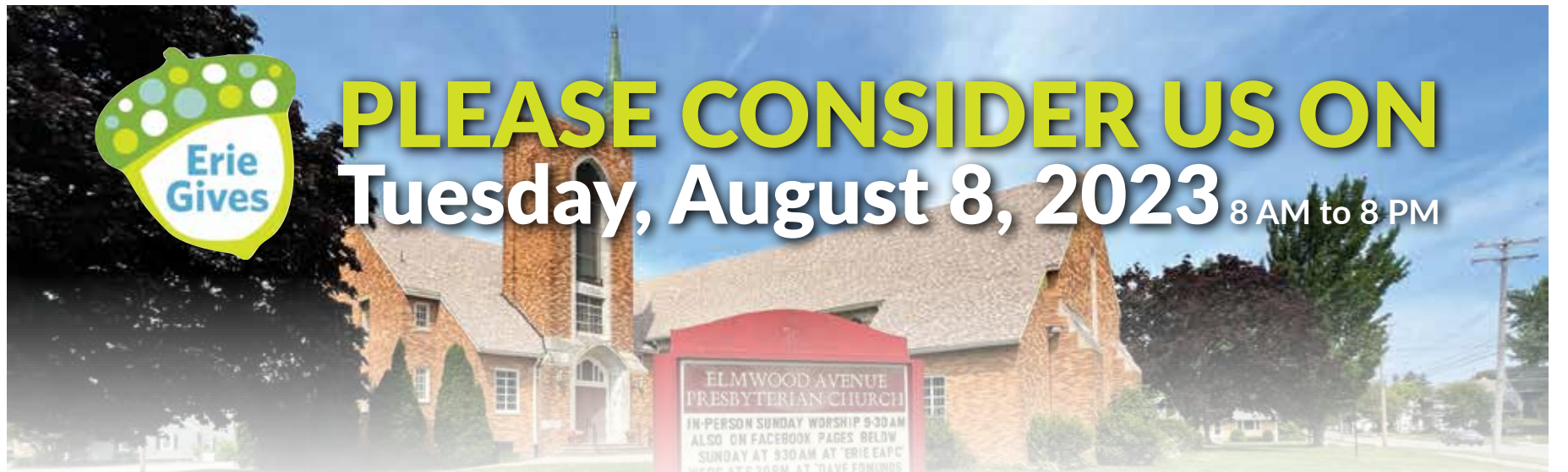
**Who they are:** The ANNA Shelter was founded in June 2004 by Ruth Thompson, with the goal

of giving a warm and loving home to unwanted, stray, abused, or neglected animals. The Association for Needy Animals is a nonprofit with a no kill policy that provides a nurturing and loving environment for animals where they can either be reunited with their owners or placed into new forever homes.

**Why I'm giving:** While working as a news producer one of my duties was to schedule the Adopt-a-Pet segment; this is where I got to meet not just Ruth from the ANNA Shelter, but many of their residents. I would hear the tragic tales of these animals along with the uplifting stories of the people who rescued them. So when I was ready to adopt a cat in 2015, I went to the ANNA shelter, where I met my Miles, a tabby cat. He was badly injured with part of his front paw missing, had a torn ear, and was very skinny. The care they provided saved his life and helped get him into a caring home where he has become a very loving and social cat. Since adopting Miles over eight years ago, I have donated annually to the ANNA Shelter on Erie Gives Day.

**Bonus:** Animal rescue takes a village. In addition to the ANNA Shelter, the following animal welfare nonprofits are participating in Erie Gives Day: Because You Care, Erie Area Rabbit Society and Rescue, Erie Humane Society, and Happy Bark.

*"Previously gave to" notes only reflect previous write-ups that appeared in the Erie Reader.*



**Your generosity allows EAPC to provide these services throughout the year!**

- **Sunday mornings** at 9:30am in-person in our sanctuary or on Facebook (facebook.com/@ErieEAPC).
- **Wednesday Live!** Informal devotion time at 6:30pm on 'Dave Edmunds' Facebook page (facebook.com/dave.edmunds.5/).
- **Elmwood Food Pantry** 3rd Thursday of the month 11:00 to 12:30pm
- **Erie Free Store** open Mondays from 4:30 to 7:00pm.
- **"RESET" events** (1st & 3rd Wednesdays each month) @ 5:45 - 7pm (lite dinner followed by a 30 min. conversation with God).



2816 Elmwood Ave.  
Erie PA, 16508  
814-864-4809

- **Adult study group** focused on I Corinthians, each Tuesday at 10:30am.
- **Sunday School programming** for adults and children: each Sunday (September thru May) @ 9:30am (kids) and 10:30am (adults).
- **Men's & Women's Fellowship groups** meet monthly.
- **Youth Fellowship**, October thru May, Thursdays @ 5:30pm.
- Helping to serve those less fortunate at **The Sunday Suppers events** (@ 1st Covenant Church downtown), and **The Upper Room Sunday Luncheon events** (@ St. Paul's UCC downtown).

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





**ERIE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
RESCUE • REHABILITATE • REHOME





This Erie Gives Day, we graciously ask for your support in helping the Erie Humane Society continue answering the call for homeless pets in our community!


**ERIE GIVES DAY**  
AUGUST 8 | 8AM TO 8PM  
[eriegives.org](http://eriegives.org)



# Support Play-Based Learning




expERIENCE  
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM  
Create. Explore. Imagine. Play!




**ERIE GIVES DAY**  
August 8, 2023 | 8 am - 8 pm  
[www.eriegives.org](http://www.eriegives.org)

**“Play gives children the chance to practice what they are learning”**  
- Fred Rogers



2022 marked our 100th Year Anniversary for Saint George Church. We celebrate over 30 ministries that continue to serve our parish families. A sense of community and commitment describe the men and women who built our church. We now continue this commitment for our future generations. Please join us as we begin our second century of faith and service in the Erie community!



# meals on wheels erie




For over 50 years, we have delivered nutritious chef-prepared meals every day to our homebound Veterans and Seniors.

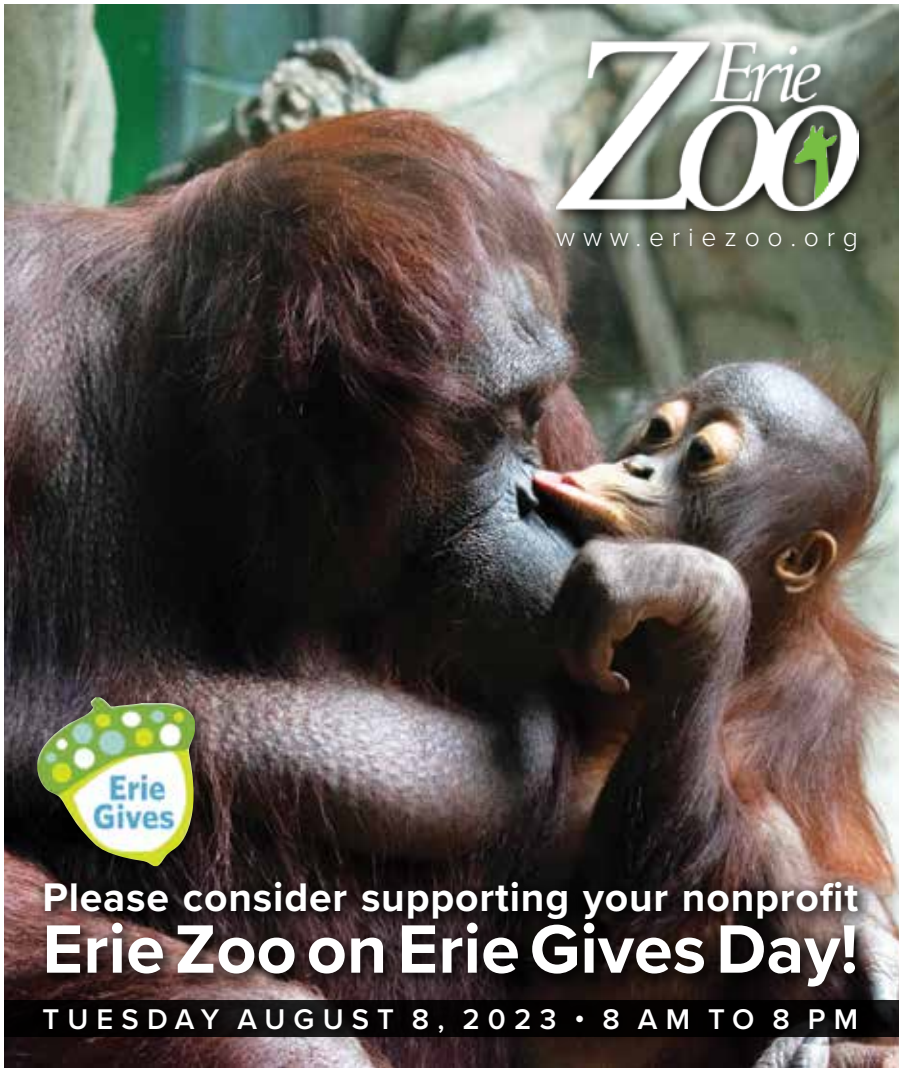
Grocery shopping & delivery is available throughout Erie County!



For more information about our programs or volunteering, please visit us at: [mealsonwheelserie.org](http://mealsonwheelserie.org)

**PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING OUR MISSION CONTINUE ON ERIE GIVES DAY AUGUST 8TH**





**Erie Zoo**  
www.eriezoo.org

**Erie Gives**

Please consider supporting your nonprofit  
**Erie Zoo on Erie Gives Day!**  
TUESDAY AUGUST 8, 2023 • 8 AM TO 8 PM



**Autism Society**  
Northwestern Pennsylvania

*Will you help us*  
**BUILD DREAMS?**

[bit.ly/ErieGivesAutismSocietyNWP23](https://bit.ly/ErieGivesAutismSocietyNWP23)

**Erie Gives** **Tuesday, August 8, 2023**  
**8 AM to 8 PM**




3308 State St Erie PA 16508 | (814) 455-3540 | autismnwpa.org | info@autismnwpa.org



**HARBORCREEK YOUTH SERVICES**

Kids can't always talk about what happened.  
We give them back their voices.

**Erie Gives** **YOUR GIFT HELPS US DO WHAT WE DO BEST.**



**MULTI-SENSORY THERAPIES**

When there just aren't words, there are other ways to work through trauma: Art, Music, Movement, Writing, and Nature-based programs are just a few.



**THERAPEUTIC CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT**

There's plenty to do all four seasons on our beautiful 60-acre campus, including two gyms, an Olympic-sized pool, bike trails, a Therapy Garden, and so much more.



**PROVEN TREATMENTS**

We're dedicated to supporting therapies that no one else is offering yet because we have the privilege to see them change kids' lives again and again.



**WHOLE-BODY WELLNESS**

Our Wellness Champions program helps kids learn to care for themselves inside and out through holistic self-care, physical fitness coaching, and nutritional counseling.


**ERIE GIVES DAY is August 8th at www.ErieGives.org. Thank you for your support!**

**THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA**



Partner with us to continue our good work to unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.

**Please remember us on Erie Gives Day, August 8, 8AM -8 PM.**

[www.eriegives.org](http://www.eriegives.org)



SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
*Connecting with God + Connecting with You*

## Artis Simmons and the Endless Road

Erie's "Gem City Ace" dominated the martial arts circuit with an impeccable sense of cool

By: Jonathan Burdick

The martial art of karate has an extensive and complex history. Within that history are various styles and schools and federations and backstories. Sometimes there are competing versions of origin stories surrounding a style or a founding figure. For many, their sole karate knowledge, likely generation-dependent, is the more mythological form from watching 1970s martial arts movies, the 1980s blockbuster *The Karate Kid*, or the more recent *Cobra Kai* series.

However one was exposed to it, the attraction to karate is often not merely the martial art itself, but what it represents: humbleness and humility, focus and self-control, discipline and perseverance, restraint and integrity. Gichin Funakoshi, the Okinawan "father of modern karate" who founded Shotokan karate-do, wrote in 1938 that karate wasn't purely about fighting or self-defense. Karate was, he believed, an "endless road" in the pursuit of becoming a better person. "The objective of karate-do is to polish and nurture both the mind and body," he stressed. "[T]his should continue outside the dojo, in our daily routine."

In Erie, one of the young men who decided to pursue this endless road was Artis Simmons. Born in Laurel, Mississippi in the 1930s, he moved with family to Erie in 1943. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the military and was stationed in South Korea. It was while on leave that he traveled to Japan and was exposed to karate for the first time.

After leaving the military, Simmons returned to Erie. He secured a job at Erie City Iron Works and in 1959 married Ethel M. Pierce, who lived down the block on East 19th Street. The following year, Simmons began his formal karate training under Sandy Scotch, a World War II veteran and one of only two karate instructors in Erie at the time. Fellow students (each of which have their own fascinating stories) included Bob Servidio, Arthur "Sonny" Sykes, Jerry Durant, Richard Lopez, Ray Cunningham, and Tom Handest.

When Scotch left the following year for California, his students continued the school and renamed it Goshin Jut-

su Kyo Jujo. Before long, they reached out to Willem "Bill" Reeders, a legendary martial arts master of Chinese and Dutch descent who at the time was teaching in nearby Jamestown, New York. The Indonesian-raised Reeders might have appeared to be a quiet and unimposing man at first glance, but he was a brilliant and ferocious martial artist and teacher. Reeders began traveling to Erie on weekends and soon was head of their school.

Servidio explained in later years that Reeders was unlike anyone else in martial arts at the time. He wasn't at all interested in structure, rankings, or even a specific karate curriculum, instead teaching his "real warrior art" that emphasized honor, respect, and practicality. In *Indo-Malay Martial Traditions Vol. 2*, Michael A. DeMarco wrote that his particular hybrid kuntao-silat style, sometimes referred to as the Liu Seong system, was "a stunning contrast" to what was popular then. "[His teachings] had one objective, which was to devastate an opponent or opponents as quickly and severely as possible," DeMarco describes. The idea was if it were a *real* confrontation, to end the fight as quickly as possible — evade and incapacitate.

By late 1963, there were some regional karate tournaments being held in Erie. At the Erie Open Karate Tournament held at St. Joseph Community Center, Artis Simmons (competing as a first degree black belt) made it to the finals. Meanwhile though, tensions were growing at the school. According to former Reeders student Gary Galvin, conflict arose between Reeders and student Jerry Durant, allegedly erupting into a physical confrontation.

Reeders resigned and returned to New York. The remaining Erie students splintered off, some forming their own schools. Durant kept the Goshin Jutsu Kyo Jujo name. Bob Servidio opened up Meadville Karate Club (later renamed Meadville School of Kung Fu). Lopez started a school behind Cunningham's home. Handest opened his operation in Warren. As for Simmons, he joined Art Sykes in establishing the Modern School of Self Defense located at 1616 Parade St.

Training continued. In October 1964, Simmons placed third in the All-Can-



In 1969, local karate champ Artis Simmons won the United States Karate Association's National Award presented to him by Robert Trias at the annual awards banquet in Anderson, Indiana.

nadian Tournament. In December, he placed second in the Pittsburgh Karate Tournament, defeating the very well-respected fourth degree black belt Zenpo Shimabukuro — one of the first Okinawans to teach karate in the United States.

Simmons returned to the All-Canadian Tournament the following year. This earned him his first mention in *Black Belt Magazine* for his second place performance, in which he defeated the previous year's winner, Shane Higashi of Toronto (today, a very well-respected martial artist in Ontario). Simmons was complimented for his "overall martial art attitude and sportsmanship" along with his "beautiful counter-punches that had the former champ reeling."

By January 1966, Simmons (now a second degree black belt) and Sykes (third degree) were training with 10 others at their school. The 12 traveled to Cincinnati to compete in the first All-American International Open Karate Championships. Simmons placed first while also earning a second place trophy for best technique.

Around this time, Simmons founded the Shuto Karate Club at Penn State Behrend. "To protect yourself from such an unpleasant gift [as a punch]," the editors of the student newspaper wrote, "invest in track shoes or take up the art of karate, as many Behrend stu-

dents are doing."

Simmons was making a name for himself nationally as a member of the United States Karate Association (USKA) while also balancing a growing family and his day job. He was also busy organizing a national tournament for Erie. On March 19, 1966, that became a reality when Erie's first national tournament was held at the Behrend campus gymnasium. Simmons was tournament director. High-profile competitors included Thomas LaPuppet of New York, Joe Pennywell of Pittsburgh, and Willie Adams of Detroit. Reeders returned as a referee. The tournament was a success.

Now a third degree black belt, Simmons competed the following month in the All-American International Karate Championship. He won the crown and then took another first place title at the All Dojo Karate tournament in Erie involving competitors from the tri-state area.

He also expanded his classes in Erie to both the Downtown YMCA and the Booker T. Washington Center. One of his students, a teenager named Willie Carr (another who could be the subject of his own story), attained his first degree black belt and the two traveled to Toronto's All-Canadian Tournament in 1967, the same event Simmons had placed second in the previous year. It

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**FEATURE**

was Carr's first competition at that level — and it should be noted that this period of tournament karate is described as the “blood and guts” era due to the fierceness of the fighting.

Simmons and Carr worked their way towards the finals. Simmons, described as a “great favorite of Canadian fans,” met Thomas LaPuppet in the semi-finals. LaPuppet, known for his “flashy hit-and-run style,” was a Brooklyn-raised U.S. Marine and New York City firefighter. He'd previously won the All-American Championship at Madison Square Garden (he's been described as New York City's greatest fighter and would later train Ralph Macchio for *The Karate Kid*). Simmons landed a solid front kick during their match, but it was returned with a counterkick and a roundhouse kick to his midsection. LaPuppet took the match.

Meanwhile, Carr had won his semi-final match, leading to a dramatic showdown with LaPuppet, who had just defeated his teacher. Indeed, LaPuppet's experience proved to be too much, but *Black Belt Magazine* described the young and impressive Carr as the “top choreographer” of their “dance routine,” noting a comedic mo-

**Artis Simmons Named Fifth Best In Country In Karate**



**Artis Simmons appeared in the Erie Times-News in 1970 upon being named fifth best in the country in karate. In the photo he is shown with a 5-foot tall trophy he received when he was named USKA Best Tournament Champion of the Year.**

representative for karate. He also began instructing under the name Erie Karate Club while continuing to win tournaments throughout that summer. The Erie Daily Times gave him the nickname “Gem City Ace,” while *Black Belt Magazine* monickered him “Slammin’ Artis Simmons.”

It was clear by 1968 that Simmons and the other Readers-trained stu-

**Gichin Funakoshi, the Okinawan “father of modern karate” who founded Shotokan karate-do, wrote in 1938 that karate wasn’t purely about fighting or self-defense. Karate was, he believed, an “endless road” in the pursuit of becoming a better person.”**

ment during the match when he “stole the spotlight” by nonchalantly placing his hands on his hips to “survey” LaPuppet.

The second annual Erie Karate Championship was that spring. Simmons opened the competition to women. Many, such as Kathy Caylor and Bonnie Grossman, were already training under him. “They are good,” Simmons warned doubters, “darn good.” LaPuppet returned as did many other prominent fighters while Readers again refereed and conducted a solo karate demonstration.

Around this period, USKA promoted Simmons as a Pennsylvania state

dents had helped build a vibrant karate infrastructure throughout the Erie region. His Erie tournament continued to grow with over 200 competitors for the third year. Big names like Victor Moore of Cincinnati were present, the women's field grew, and demonstrations in judo, jiu jitsu, and karate were expanded.

Simmons kept collecting trophies too. Throughout 1968, he won first place at tournaments in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Lakewood. In a Seattle tournament that fall, he worked his way explosively through the field, winning a semifinal match with a dramatic kick that pitted him in the finals



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ment didn't hurt his ability one bit."

Simmons was still ranked in the top 10 nationally, but his lack of competing over the previous months dropped his ranking to eight. Throughout 1971, he continued hosting tournaments and expanding his karate classes throughout Erie, offering a grant-funded three month program completely free to city residents. He entered the Cleveland Karate Grand Championship that March, which was televised by NBC, and he prevailed as Grand Champion among 400 competitors.

As the next few years passed, he continued to compete and teach. In 1974, now a fifth degree black belt, he opened the Simmons Karate Academy at 206 W. 11th St. He began offering self-defense classes for women and volunteered at community events where he put on demonstrations. Local high school football players trained with him during their offseasons.

In an event at Penn State Behrend, where he still held lessons once a week, Simmons told students that while karate was about self-defense, it was also about self-confidence. It was about "co-

ordinating the mind and the muscles." This assurance in oneself, Simmons said, is why so many karate students can walk away from real-world fights. They don't feel the need to prove themselves to anyone.

Although still performing well at tournaments, Simmons retired from competition for good the following year to focus on family, teaching, refereeing, and his job at Zurn Energy Division. With his over 200 total trophies, he was soon inducted in the USKA's Hall of Fame and then the National Karate Hall of Fame in 1985. His plaque contained the karate creed: "I come to you with only karate, empty hands. I have no weapons, but should I be forced to defend myself, my principles, or my honor, should it be a matter of life or death, of right or wrong, then here are my weapons, karate, my empty hands."

In 1990, columnist Dave Richards wrote that, for a region the size of Erie, we had a reputation as a "martial arts hotbed." Simmons undoubtedly played a role in that. The man who the USKA referred to as "Kara-

te's finest gentleman" and "one of the most respected both in and out of the ring" also had the respect of his peers. LaPuppet, for instance, called him a "fantastic man." Former students have showered him with praise. And while his calmness and lack of anger in the face of adversity was once implied to be a weakness, for Simmons, those traits were clearly of extreme importance to him and his personal karate philosophy.

"To a person who firmly believes that attitude plays an important part in martial training, he could find no better example than Artis," praised the USKA. They added that Artis Simmons was one of the few karate competitors at his level who truly believed in "humbleness and humility."

Humbleness and humility. Focus and self-control. Discipline and perseverance. Restraint and integrity. Artis Simmons continued — and continues — down the endless road.

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



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## Walks with Verity Herbs and Wellness

Discovering the plants and natural medicines all around us

By: Amy VanScoter

If you've ever been on a walk and noticed all the plants and berries that grow wild around us and wondered about eating them or using them as medicine, you are not alone. Foraging, growing food, and using plants as medicine have become popular topics as more Americans seek relief from rising food costs, long to discover more ways to become closer to the Earth, and treat their health issues naturally and holistically.

"There are so many sidewalk plants and herbs that we step over every day and we don't even see them but they are such potent medicinals and such good food for us, too. That's what a lot of people don't realize," said Kristy Baird, owner of Verity Herbs and Wellness. After meeting Baird, who provides holistic wellness coaching, customized herbal blends, plant walks, and workshops, you may never look at the sidewalk — or plants — the same way again.

Baird conducts guided plant walks at Asbury Woods, The Erie Bluffs State Park, and privately. She says she has always loved plants, nature, and camping in the woods, but it was during her pregnancy when she said her interest was really sparked. "I wanted to look toward natural products when I was pregnant. I was reading everything I could and ended up growing plants and herbs while opening an Etsy store making herbal products for the past six to seven years. I started working at Chicory Hill Herbs and learned a lot there. I was researching herbs for customers and decided to really get into it by mentoring with other herbalists, taking online courses, and then later, I opened a clinical practice."

Baird says many of her clients want to try more natural solutions. She commonly treats digestive and nervous system issues, anxiety, and depression, but also sees clients for overall wellness.

She encourages people to develop relationships with plants. "Being around plants has such a calming effect on our nervous systems," Baird suggests. "I always tell people: no matter what issues we are working on, to also just go out in nature and be around plants. It's a lot different to take a tincture or drink a tea than to actually be around the plants and experience them."

When Baird conducts her plant walks she especially enjoys talking to gardeners. "They are pulling out ground ivy because it just grows all over their gardens but it's a wonderful decongestant," she explains. "I see a lot of purslane which grows in the sidewalk cracks and people used to grow that in their gardens. It was such a highly prized plant they would grow it with their broccoli and now it's in the sidewalks. Burdock root is expensive in the Asian marketplace and we can find it on the roadside. The root can get four feet long and is really helpful for the liver and digestive system," she said.

Although many plants are so commonly found, being cautious is important, especially when starting



**Kristy Baird, owner of Verity Herbs and Wellness, and holistic wellness coach, leads guided plant walks all around Erie to help participants learn to identify wild, edible plants and herbs that can contribute to one's overall health.**

out, Baird suggests. "If you are interested in foraging it's really important to have someone show you and have a really good app or two on your phone. Check multiple sources and multiple pictures to be sure of the accuracy and also get some field guides," said Baird. Peterson Field Guides have been a staple to many naturalists for more than 65 years, and are a great option for someone starting out. "You don't have to be an expert in botany to identify most of these plants, a lot of the common ones you see everywhere. Just takes getting comfortable with the shape of the leaves and the flowers. It's almost like a stranger that you see out and about but once you know them you'll recognize them in any setting."

Foundations of Herb Crafting is a series of workshops that Baird has been giving recently on topics such as foraging, wildcrafting ethics, drying herbs and blending tea, tinctures, vinegars, salves, and flower essences. She says that plants are vital to our well-being and stresses the importance of also learning the ethics and history behind these crafts, "A lot of plant knowledge was handed down through generations and now it's coming back around," said Baird. She cautions new foragers to "always leave one third of whatever you are propagating behind."

"Whether you are growing a garden or going to a park you know is safe and isn't being sprayed, it's free food medicine for the taking. Humans, for thousands of years, have used plants as medicine and we have a very deep understanding of these plants written into our DNA. Once people start looking into herbs it's funny how easily it clicks and then they become a plant person because it's in there inside of us already. It just needs to be brought out and we need to shift our awareness."

*Kristy Baird, Clinical Herbalist, can be found at verityherbsandwellness.com or at (814) 580-9222. Verity Herbs and Wellness sees clients at Presque Isle Mind-Body, 2500 Palermo Dr.*

*Amy VanScoter can often be found in nature or teaching yoga and meditation at School House Yoga. She can be reached at avanscoter@gmail.com.*

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## FEATURE

# Local Farmers Markets and Farm Stands in Erie

Supporting local farmers and businesses never tasted so good

By: Alana Sabol

There are few greater pleasures than cutting into a fresh tomato, taking home blueberries at their peak, or biting into a local ear of sweet corn slathered in butter. Though the growing season in Erie is brief, it makes these moments all the more exciting. As August arrives, so does the summer harvest. It is the perfect time to take advantage of all the fresh produce local farmers and gardeners have to offer. Luckily, the city and surrounding county offer many farmers markets and farm stands for a variety of budgets, as well as other activities and live music for everyone to enjoy.

### LEAF's Open Market

Lake Erie Arboretum hosts the LEAF Open Market biweekly on Saturdays from June through September on the Eighth Street side of Frontier Park. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. visitors can check out a wide range of diverse fruits and vegetables, oils, honey, baked goods, art, and other locally-made products. Werner Books, one of the local businesses vending at the market, also presents a storytime for kids at 11 a.m. and noon.

### Downtown Farmers Market

The Downtown Farmers Market provides residents with fresh fruits and vegetables every Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Perry Square (601 State St.), with a chance to enjoy performances by local musicians at noon. Patrons are encouraged to use their SNAP/EBT and FMNP vouchers as well. David Tamulonis of Erie Downtown Partnership describes the market as part of their mission "to utilize our public spaces to their fullest potential and make Downtown Erie a safe, fun, and welcoming place for all to enjoy." The market will continue to showcase a variety of local businesses and farmers through Labor Day.

### North East's Gibson Park Open Market

This farmers market in North East is a great option for residents outside of the city. Vendors and local farmers gather at Gibson Park (at the intersection of Lake and Main streets) from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays to showcase

ERIN PHILLIPS



Nothing says summer like the food harvested in the warmest months, and Erie provides a number of local farmers markets to help make the most of the fleeting season.

fresh fruits and vegetables, dry goods, artisanal crafts, and art. They often host special events like flea markets and book swaps alongside the regular farmers market.

### Little Italy Farmers Market

The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) holds this market every Monday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at 331 W. 18th St. in the Little Italy neighborhood. The goal of the market is to "incentivize healthy eating and help stretch food budgets for individuals and families," according to their website. From the end of June to the end of September, the market provides fruits and vegetables from the SSJNN Urban Farm Project, grown by teenagers from the neighborhood, as well as goods from other local farms. On the last Monday of each month they offer special events including music, children's activities, and other non-food vendors. The market provides dollar-to-dollar matches for vouchers such as SNAP, WIC, and FMNP (Farmers Market Nutrition Program).

### Bayview Park Farmers Market

The folks from Our West Bayfront are continuing the farmers market aspect of their weekly July West Bayfit events at Bayview Park (West Second and Cherry) through August. Local produce from Burch Farms will be available on Wednesdays through Aug. 30 from 6 to 8 p.m. A free \$5 voucher is available to anyone 18 and over each week. Visit the Our West Bayfront tent

during the markets to learn more and sign up for the voucher.

### Parade Street Fresh Food Farm Stand

A budget-friendly option is the Parade Street Fresh Food Farm Stand, run by co-founders and local farmers Stephanie Ciner and Stephanie Thauer. The farmstand opens every Tuesday through October from noon to 3 p.m. on East 15th and Parade streets. The farmstand employs a Pay-What-You-Can model, accepts FMNP vouchers, and provides produce from local farms and gardens, including the founders' own Wild Field Urban Farm and Rain-tree Farms. Ciner states that the farm stand was created to mitigate the lack of access to fresh and healthy foods in the neighborhood. "Wealth shouldn't be the only entryway to having good food."

### ECAT East Avenue Market

This pop-up market will be held on Aug. 2, 16, and 30 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at 650 East Ave., featuring local produce from farms and gardens. This stand also operates through a Pay-What-You-Can model. According to their website, the market was created to provide the neighborhood with better access to fresh food.

### Grow and Glow Urban Collective

This Pay-What-You-Can stand will provide locally-grown produce to residents every other Thursday from noon. to 2 p.m. starting Aug. 10 at 2304 Parade St.





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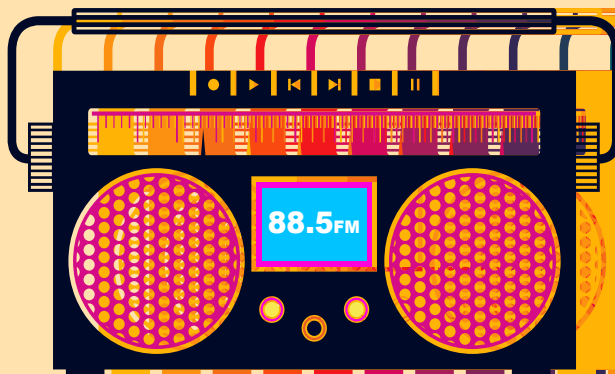
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## EVENTS

### From Bikini Bottom to the Erie Playhouse

*The SpongeBob Musical* is fun for the whole family

**CONTINUING FRIDAY, AUG. 4**

Pretty much everyone, from Millennials to Gen Alpha and (if we're being totally honest) their parents alike, have chuckled aloud to an episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants*. And it is that multi-generational enjoyment that the Erie Playhouse is hoping to evoke with their current production of *The SpongeBob Musical*, playing through Aug. 13.

Artistic director of the Erie Playhouse Richard Davis comments: "SpongeBob continues to speak to the generation who grew up with the show and now they are sharing the show with their children. *The SpongeBob Musical* is a spectacle of a show — from the orchestra, which uses five computers to make the music, an on-stage foley artist who creates all the sound effects, bubbles, con-fetti, a volcano, pirates, tap dancing sea anemones, and even a gospel chorus of sardines. *The SpongeBob Musical* is a show you don't want to miss."

The plot, adapted from the much-

loved, long-running Nickelodeon animated television series, follows the main character SpongeBob SquarePants as he goes about his normal, underwater day working at the Krusty Krab. He was just rejected for a promotion when a nearby volcano erupts which throws the whole town of Bikini Bottom into chaos. At its core, the story is about friendship, teamwork, optimism, and holding on to hope — themes that are touching, thrilling, and generally relatable. The story is multi-layered for kids and adults, so the whole family will enjoy tapping their feet to the beat and rooting for everyone's favorite characters.

The musical itself earned a Tony, along with awards from 6 Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle, and features a soundtrack written by elite, well-known rock and rollers including Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith, The Flaming Lips, They Might Be Giants, and Brian Eno (among many, many others).

The Erie Playhouse cast consists of



**Catch (from left) Casey Conrad-Medvis as Patrick Star, Michael Graham as SpongeBob SquarePants, and Zayna Darres as Sandy Cheeks in the upcoming Erie Playhouse production of the Tony Award winning *SpongeBob Musical*.**

Michael Graham, Casey Conrad-Medvis, Zayna Darres, Ryan Ingram, Dan Bainbridge, Myles Bruce, as well as a supporting cast of Playhouse veterans and several actors making their Playhouse

debut. — Erin Phillips

*Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. // Aug. 4 - 13 // The Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // \$17.49 - \$27.40 // For tickets and info: erieplayhouse.org*

### Erie Downtown Partnership Brings August Concerts to Perry Square

Slake your thirst for live music on Thursday nights

**CONTINUING THURSDAY, AUG. 10**

The Erie Downtown Partnership is continuing its Summer Concert Series at Perry Square in August. Featuring headliners Hellz Bellz, The Stephen Trohoske Ensemble, First to Eleven, and The Breeze Band with special guests Odd Atrocity, Optimistic Apocalypse, Brooke Surgener, and LifeThruMusic, the performances span several genres and have been enjoyable for both the musicians and audiences.

"We've always done community events, and the goal of our events is to draw people downtown and make Downtown Erie a safe, fun, and welcoming place for all to enjoy," said Dave Tamulonis, events and marketing coordinator for Erie Downtown Partnership. The nonprofit started the summer concert series last year, which became "the big marquee music event of the summer" for the organization, resulting in an expanded lineup for this year.

Tamulonis, who is a musician himself, used his familiarity with the Erie music scene to reach out to local groups to book. "A lot of the groups that we've booked this year we've either booked before or were connected to other bands that we've booked before. Some

of them are people who I've met personally going out to local open mics, other local concerts, or are musicians that I've collaborated with in the past. Oftentimes, people will reach out to me and message the Downtown Partnership and ask how they can perform as part of the summer concert series."

The featured bands specialize in everything from heavy metal and rock to jazz and Motown. No matter the style or instruments, they all have one connection to Erie, as every single act is locally based in the area. For the Erie Downtown Partnership, this is important to them, as the concert series highlights local talent from original bands.

"This year, we have two bands per week, and we pair an older established act with a younger act to open up. All of the younger artists are original and have performed with us in the past, but are paired with established acts," Tamulonis explained, listing Odd Atrocity, Optimistic Apocalypse, Brooke Surgener, and LifeThruMusic as the opening acts. "There's a ton of music here in Erie. There's a huge music scene; tons of local talent to pull from. It's important to me to not only showcase that talent but also give those local musicians experi-



**Perry Square comes alive with free local musical acts on Thursday nights through August 31. Upcoming performances include Hellz Bellz, The Stephen Trohoske Ensemble, First to Eleven, and The Breeze Band.**

ence performing at a high production level with professional sound, staging, and lighting."

It was extremely important to the Erie Downtown Partnership for the acts to represent the diverse community of Erie. "We go to great lengths to make sure the community that is coming down to the concerts sees themselves reflected in the programming," Tamulonis said. "Not only are we drawing a diverse audience for our performers, but also our vendors, crafters, and small businesses that are represented in our events. In our artist contracts, we have a minimum compensation clause

— ensuring all artists performing at our events are compensated fairly and equally for their time, which is a big factor behind the scenes to help diverse, equitable, and inclusive programming move forward."

Tamulonis and everyone at the Erie Downtown Partnership is looking forward to the upcoming concerts. They have a message for anyone interested in coming to Perry Square to listen: "It's always going to be a great show." — Thomas Taylor

*Thursdays through Aug. 31 // Perry Square, 601 State St. // 7 to 10 p.m. // Free // For more info: eriedowntown.com*



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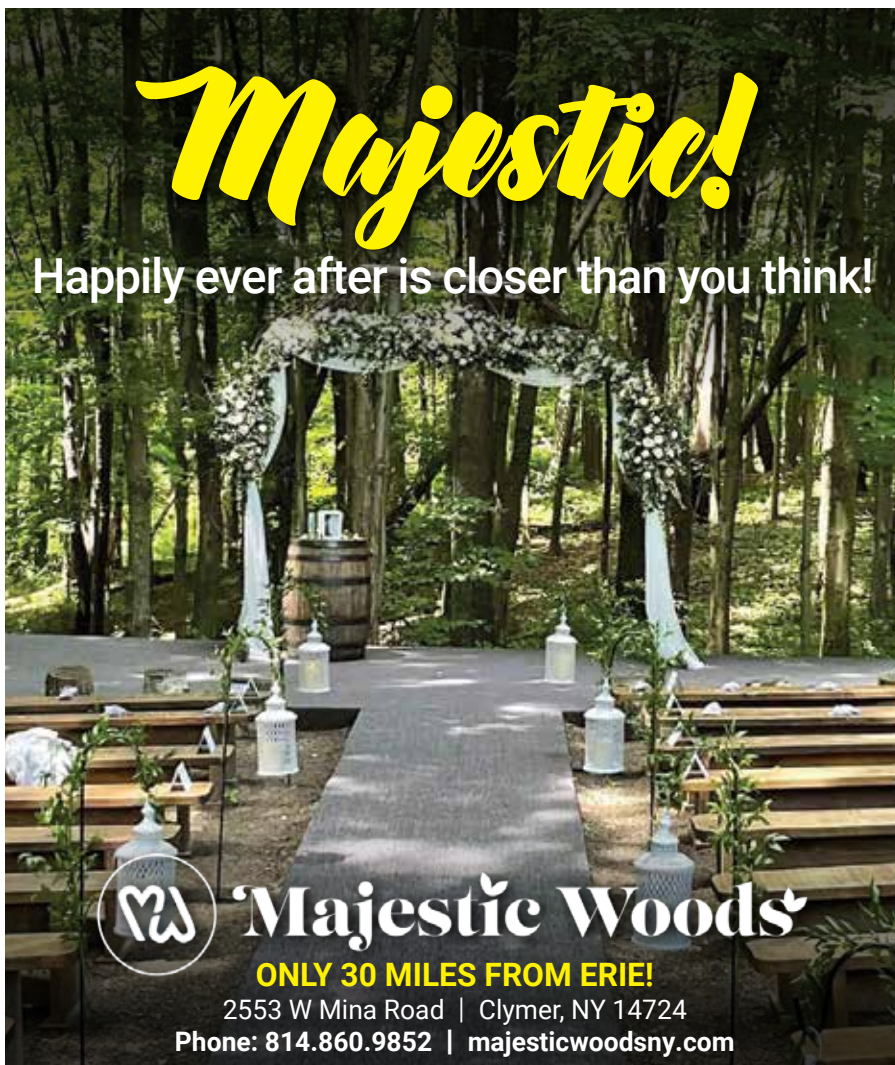
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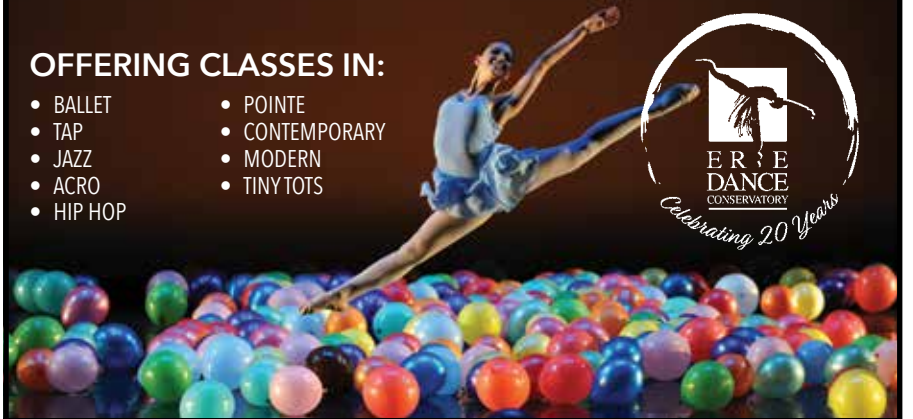
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## Bloom Under the Moon at SafeNet's Annual Garden Party

Kellar's, Breeze Band, and Sundae Vegan Desserts add to the fun this year

FRIDAY, AUG. 11

Hidden away in Downtown Erie, there's a beautiful garden of flowers and greenery, weeping willows, and a waterfall with a pond, located in a private fenced-in space known affectionately as SafeNet's "Big Backyard." The area was created as a safe space for residents of SafeNet's safe housing services and their children to play, relax, and experience a peaceful retreat from the world. Each year, it serves as the location of SafeNet's fundraiser, The Garden Party, and this year is no exception. On Friday, Aug. 11 at 6 p.m., the garden will be transformed for Bloom Under the Moon.

The event will feature exciting entertainment this year, including sleight of hand magic from Kellar's Magic and Comedy Club, and music by The Breeze Band. Purchasing a reservation to attend also includes a full menu of delicious food options served at various stations, catered by Sabella's, as well as an open bar, and vegan ice cream from Sundae Vegan Desserts.

One in three women and one in four individuals will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. "Since the pandemic, SafeNet has continually seen

cases of domestic violence rising in our area. We are seeing victims in more life-threatening circumstances. Add to that the increasing costs of food, shelter, and other living expenses – increased funding is crucial to the support of our mission," said Robyn Young, executive director of SafeNet. Funds raised from the Garden Party are used to benefit SafeNet's programs and services which are provided to all abuse victims and their children, completely free of charge and confidentially.

SafeNet's services include a 24/7 local crisis hotline (814) 454-8161, safe housing services, transitional housing programs, individual and group counseling, safety planning, legal advocacy, education, and children's programs, as well as a medical outreach team. SafeNet serves approximately 2,000 individuals annually. Of the individuals served each year in safe housing, half are children under the age of 12. In addition to the children who accompany their parents, SafeNet also provides counseling services to children under the age of 17 and has an additional transitional housing program for teen mothers.

Honorary chairs for 2023 Kristy Gni-

JESSICA HUNTER



Enjoy an evening of magic, music, and libations in a clandestine garden nestled in the heart of Erie, all while supporting the mission and work of Safenet through their Bloom Under the Moon fundraiser.

bus and Seth Trott have been working with SafeNet staff and a committee to plan this year's event. Gnibus serves on SafeNet's Board of Directors and has been an outspoken advocate against domestic violence. Gnibus is one of SafeNet's three local women featured in an outreach campaign titled "What Does Domestic Violence Look Like?" She often speaks of her own experiences with domestic violence and how SafeNet helped her reclaim her

life with legal advocacy years ago. This year's committee includes volunteer community members Mary Boldt, Jessica Donahue, Lynette Hughes, Nathan Koble, Lisa Masi, Davina Pacley, Melissa Robison, Rachael Sebesta, Amy Simonsen, and Linda Terella. – Amy VanScoter

6 to 10 p.m. // SafeNet's Big Backyard, 254 E. 10th St. // \$125 (includes food, drinks, and entertainment) // For tickets and info: safeneterie.org

## Erie's Boutique Nights: A Love Letter to Art and Culture

See art in process in the heart of Downtown Erie

FRIDAY, AUG. 11

Downtown Erie will light up during the summer season's Boutique Nights, every second Friday of the month through September. Since June, Boutique Nights have been engaging the Erie community with live music, food, shopping, art demonstrations, and more in an appealing open air setting. Sponsored by the Erie Downtown Development Cooperation (EDDC), these creativity-filled summer evenings are meant to inspire the community with local art and culture.

Glass Growers Gallery has worked to bring recognition to local Erie creatives and during Boutique Nights, the block of Fifth and State is lined with artists from the area demonstrating their live multi-media art processes. All of the artwork being demonstrated during the event will be for sale within the Glass Growers tent. After being inspired by the talent on display, attendees are invited to participate in a free, interactive paint-by-numbers activity on the sidewalk

near the Shops at 5th and State.

In addition to the live art demonstrations, the Shops at 5th and State (including She Vintage, Primo Tailoring, The Dollhouse at Pointe Foure, and City Supply) open their doors. Everyone is welcome to pop into the unique stores between the artist's tents for a bit of shopping. In the spirit of artistic appreciation, the stores have built displays and shopping experiences around inspired themes. According to the owner of The Dollhouse at Pointe Foure Emily George, "The Dollhouse at Pointe Foure's inspiration for Boutique Nights came from San Jose Del Cabos and Naples Art Walks." The Boutique Nights are truly meant to blend creative fields, like fashion and art, to create a sense of energy that flourishes along the streets of Downtown Erie.

Delicious fare is also available at the many established food hubs in the area such as Rita's, The Flagship City Food Hall, Bricks American Steakhouse, and Flagship City Public Market. Grab a bite to-go and listen to the live musicians who

EDDC



The block of Fifth and State will be lined with artists and musicians during the Erie Downtown Development Corporation's Boutique Nights, happening on the second Friday of each month through the summer.

will be playing on the steps of the Erie Art Museum throughout the evening.

The upcoming Boutique Night on Aug. 11 will also include the State Street Car Show where classic car lovers can spot their favorite hot rods in downtown Erie. There are two more Boutique Nights to attend this summer, so make a plan to

experience the art and culture of Downtown Erie. — Sarah Beck

5 to 9 p.m., Aug. 11 and Sept. 8 // The Shops at 5th and State, 431 State St. // Free // For more info: flagshipcitydistrict.com

Erie artists who would like to be involved in Boutique Night should reach out to emily@glassgrowersgallery.com to register

## EVENTS

### We Have a 'Good Feeling' About CelebrateErie 2023

This free weekend set to feature Flo Rida, Parmalee, and Erie All Stars

#### BEGINNING FRIDAY AUG. 18

After a huge comeback post-pandemic in 2022, CelebrateErie is gearing up for another successful year, thanks to both national and local talent. Running August 18-20 this year, the civic celebration will feature some big names from the music charts, and some hometown favorites as well, completely free of charge.

The Erie All Stars are set to provide Friday night's entertainment with a tribute to Fleetwood Mac, a follow up to their unforgettable homage to Queen from 2019's weekend. Openers for the group include local favorite Mambo and Stephen Trohoske's Dance JoneZz.

On Saturday, traditionally the biggest night of the celebration, Flo Rida will bring his renown to the CelebrateErie stage. With well-known hits like "Low," "My House," and "Good Feeling," the rapper-singer is sure to draw an impressive crowd. Locals LifeThruMusic and The LEC are set to open the show.

The party doesn't end there, though.

Sunday's musical talent is North Carolina natives Parmalee, a chart-topping country group with hits that include "Just the Way," "Take My Name," and "Girl In Mine." Opening for the group will be Blue Sky and Refuge.

"These concerts close out each day's events and bring tens of thousands of people downtown," said Adrienne Nannen, events manager for the City of Erie. "We're thrilled that we can provide them for free to our CelebrateErie visitors."

CelebrateErie is more than just music — each day will be packed with other activities to enjoy prior to the main attraction, offering a fun-filled time for attendees. CelebrateErie will be divided into different districts to highlight the diversity and culture Erie has to offer.

**The Family District** will include entertainment that can be enjoyed by kids and adults alike, including hands-on activities that engage through wellness, learning, and the arts. **The Business District** will be a block dedicated to the shops, entrepreneurs, and other busi-

nesses from our area, showcasing their products and services that are produced or performed in our area. **The Art District** will include all kinds of artwork from local artists, including live demonstrations alongside artwork displays from artists and artisan vendors. This district is adjacent to the Chalk Walk, a CelebrateErie favorite, where more than 40 chalk murals will be represented this year.

**The Culture District**, created to celebrate the diverse communities in Erie, will feature a marketplace of international food, artisans, and performances. Nearby will be **the Food District**, showcasing Erie's best food and drinks from local food trucks, restaurants, distilleries, wineries, breweries, and more.

Entertainment will be provided throughout the weekend, with four District Stages featuring local talent set up throughout the area. Performances will include local musicians, dancers, and other performing artists. There will also be interactive, walk-up drum circles for

JESSICA HUNTER



The City of Erie's annual Celebrate Erie is back in 2023 with tons of local music alongside national acts, with plenty of local art, food, and family activities to help us celebrate all that we love about Erie.

those wanting to get in on the action. — Ally Kutz

Friday through Sunday // Various locations throughout Downtown Erie // For more info: [celebrateerie.com](http://celebrateerie.com)

29th Annual

September 7-9, 2023



#### 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  
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Tug O War  
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Student Contests and Games  
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Closing Ceremony/Massed Bands  
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## EVENTS

### Revisit the 'Golden' Years with All An Act's *On Golden Pond*

Decorated play explores themes of aging and unconditional love

PREMIERES FRIDAY, AUG. 18

In 1982, the 10-time nominated *On Golden Pond* scooped up three Oscars — for Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. This beautiful, moving film actually had its start in the theater — as a beautiful, moving play written by Ernest Thompson (who did the adaptation of the screenplay for the movie).

And now All An Act Theater in Erie's Little Italy neighborhood is bringing the play to the stage for local audiences to enjoy. Starring Michael DeCorte, Lisa Simonian, Josh Gardner, Kerrylee Hinkson, and Chad Santos, it sees David W. Mitchell, All An Act's artistic director, doing double duty as both cast member and director.

The play follows elderly couple Norman and Ethel Thayer as they make their annual trek to a summer home on Golden Pond. For 48 years they've been coming to this house, but as sharp-tongued Norman shows early signs of dementia, including memory loss and an ailing heart, this trip could perhaps — as Norman himself points out acerbically — be their last.

Their idyllic summer peace is disrupted when his daughter Chelsea, who doesn't see eye to eye with her father, comes for a visit for Norman's 80th birthday, bringing along her new boy-



**The Oscar award-winning film adapted from the play *On Golden Pond* is coming to All an Act Theatre in August. With its touching themes of aging and unconditional love, *On Golden Pond* is sure to be a moving experience.**

friend and his teenage son. When she asks her parents to watch Billy Ray Jr. for a month while she whisks off to Europe, Norman and the child strike up a friendship, as the former teaches the latter to fish and cultivate a love of literature. Yet both Norman and Ethel gain something in return, too.

It's a classic play that has been nominated for three Tony Awards, as it deals with themes of aging and unconditional love. — Cara Suppa

*Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, Aug. 18 through Sept. 3 // 7:30 p.m. or 2 p.m. // All an Act Theatre, 652 W. 17th St. // \$5-\$18 // Tickets and info: [allanact.net/now-playing](http://allanact.net/now-playing)*

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## Beer-ly Beloved, We Gather for the Second Annual PA Homebrew Invitational

Regional homebrewers compete for best brew

SATURDAY, AUG. 19

Plato once said, "He was a wise man who invented beer." Perhaps Plato would have been surprised to have learned that when the home brewing of beer became a regular activity, it was mostly women who did the brewing. And in those early days, many recipes were passed down through song and poetry. Today, though, it seems we can share the craft of craft beer more easily and deliciously than ever.

The ingredients to brew beer — barley, hops, water, and yeast — have been a part of and important to many cultures throughout history and are still held in high regard today. We have built business empires around it. When Prohibition began, brewing from home became more popular, but was still illegal until good old Jimmy Carter made homebrewing legal again in October of 1978.

Cue Charlie Papazian in December of that same year, when he founded the American Homebrewers Association. By 1979, the first homebrewing conference was born. Today, the group Breweries In PA is hosting the second annual state-



Over 20 hobbyist homebrewers will gather at Lavery Brewing Company for the second annual PA Homebrew Invitational, at which visitors will be able to taste and vote for their favorite homemade brews.

The ingredients to brew beer — barley, hops, water, and yeast — have been a part of and important to many cultures throughout history and are still held in high regard today. We have built business empires around it.

wide competition for homebrewing and Erie is lucky enough to be one of the regional hosts with Lavery Brewing Company. The co-owner of Lavery actually started out as a homebrewer — Jason Lavery successfully turned his passion into a living, and now has the opportunity to give back to local homebrewers who may be chasing that same dream.

"Homebrewing is where I started, so to be able to host this event at mine and (my wife) Nikki's brewpub that came as a result of that hobby is very exciting and humbling," Lavery, the only board member of the American Homebrewers Association representing Pennsylvania, commented. "I'm looking forward to

meeting brewers and tasting as much beer as possible. Events like these really give homebrewers a chance to showcase just how well they can make beer."

The event will be 21+ and there will be no underage entrants, without exception. Guests will be able to enjoy unlimited samples from over 20+ homebrewers. Each guest will also be able to help determine the fate of one lucky competitor by voting for the People's Choice. The People's Choice winner will then be sent to compete in the PA State Homebrewers Championship. The overall winner will receive a pretty sweet trophy belt and \$2,000. — Jordan Coon

Noon to 3 p.m. // Lavery Brewing Co., 128 W. 12th St. // 21+ // \$35 // For tickets and information visit: [breweriesinpa.com/homebrew](http://breweriesinpa.com/homebrew)

The writer would like to share the memory of her uncle, Tony "The Beer Man" Knipling, who was an inspiration to so many homebrewers and craft breweries all throughout Pennsylvania and beyond. He would have loved this invitational and would have been proud of his niece for being a beer snob.

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## EVENTS

### Portrait of a Universe Blends a Rich Tableau

The latest short from Oddity Productions premieres at the Erie Playhouse

**SATURDAY, AUG. 26**

The worlds of fine art, the cosmos, and artificial intelligence all come together in *Portrait of a Universe*. This short film, the latest work from Erie's own Oddity Productions, will be the centerpiece of an interactive premiere experience taking place at the Erie Playhouse.

The film centers around a painter, Rodney (played by Bostonian Paul Kandarian) adrift on a voyage through space. As Rodney nears the end of his life, he's made it his mission to commit to canvas the spectacular interstellar vistas his spacecraft has to offer. Though he's the only person on his ship, he's not alone, being accompanied by Alice (voiced by Olyvia Rose), his artificial intelligence co-pilot. The relationship between Alice and Rodney deepens as their journey continues. As he recalls his life on earth, she gradually learns what it means to be human.

Along with insights about the nature of art and its role in the human condition, the film brings to focus a new

technology that threatens art itself. "The practical use of AI in our industry and the arts as a whole is becoming more and more of a reality," Oddity described in a press release. "There's a lot of fear around where it could lead and what it could mean for artists getting employed. This film tells the story of a different outlook on AI. One where it's curious and seeks to learn about the human experience and all its bitter-sweet moments."

Written and directed by Danny Pa-kulski, executively produced by Liam O'Brien, with Simon Yahn serving as the director of photography, the short was shot at MAGIC Spell Studios at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Upstate New York. Using the innovative technique of virtual production, actors are realistically immersed in a film's vision via a giant LED background screen.

The premiere, held at the Erie Playhouse, will be a fully immersive experience involving virtual reality painting, on-camera miniature ship exhibit,



ODDITY PRODUCTIONS

Local filmmakers at Oddity Productions will premiere their film *Portrait of a Universe* at the Erie Playhouse. *Portrait of a Universe* tells the story of a painter and his A.I. making a futuristic connection.

cocktails, food, and a screening of the short film. A VIP option is available for the evening as well, featuring live music, hors d'oeuvres, professional photography, and a private VR painting set

up. — Nick Warren

Doors and reception at 5 p.m., event at 7 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // \$25, \$40 VIP // For tickets and info: [oddiyproductions.com](http://oddiyproductions.com)




**Tuesday**  
**August 8, 2023**  
8 AM to 8 PM

This Erie Gives Day, please consider the JAM Team Foundation, and together, we can support a vibrant community and productive workforce by providing access to holistic early learning environments.



Funds from Erie Gives Day will be used to create Miracle Spaces at local early childhood education providers, helping small business owners provide a more enriching, STEAM-based curriculum for the children and families they serve.





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**The Premiere of  
Portrait of a  
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August 26 @ 5pm  
Erie Playhouse

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## Bricks American Steakhouse

A fully fleshed dining experience

By: Spencer Cadden

Erie continues to surprise me — amidst the construction, noise, and life of State Street is a hidden gem in the truest sense. A new restaurant, Bricks, is making magic in the Gem City. Housed in a building that transcends time, I had an unforgettable meal and one of the best dining experiences I've had in this town. Bricks American Steakhouse at the Cashiers House combines exciting new flavors with classics in a peaceful, comfortable atmosphere.

After walking past and noticing the sign, I suggested to my wife that we celebrate our 10-year anniversary somewhere new. We made our reservations and when we arrived at the Cashiers House, we met chef and co-owner Justin Stull who welcomed us in. We got our first glimpse of a menu that included dry-aged ribeye, tomahawk pork chops, and a risotto that was more than promising.

Bricks is the brainchild of Stull and Chris Adams — two friends who have spent the past 15 years honing their craft and growing their relationship. Both previously working at Edinboro University, the two went on to open stalls in the Flagship City Food Hall (both North Row Philly and Straw Hat Ice Cream Shop) where their culinary talents were immediately recognized. After their success, they were offered the opportunity to live out their vision and create a restaurant inside the historic Cashiers House. In only a few short months they had turned the blank canvas of one of Erie's most recognizable buildings into Erie's best new restaurant.

The first thing guests to Bricks notice is the building. The Cashiers House is one of the oldest buildings in Erie, dating back to 1839 and built before State Street had its current name. It was constructed, as the name implies, to house the cashier of Erie's first bank. Today it houses something wholly new while shining as a testament to historic preservation, dripping with the kind of detail and character that can only be found in historic buildings.

After being escorted to our table it was impossible not to be impressed and comforted by the building itself. The dark green dining room with a marble fireplace, 16-foot-tall ceilings, 10-foot-tall wavy glass windows, and three-foot baseboards setting off the shining hardwood floors and tasteful period furniture. The walls are decorated with artwork provided in collaboration with Glass Growers Gallery, which evokes a sense of natural beauty and shifts with the seasons.

The dining room is captivating, and we certainly chose the right time of day — as the golden hour sun streamed through the windows, it shifted and danced around the dining room. Light jazz was playing and as I was taking in the charm of this historic building, we were greeted by our server, Shay. Enough good things cannot be said about Shay who was delightful, accommodating, and answered every question I had about the bar selections and dry-aged beef. Shay brought me their signature "Money Vault Mojito" that featured local spirits provided in an exclusive partnership with Altered State Distillery — a drink that was, by all ac-

counts, excellent.

I skipped the appetizer while my wife opted for French onion soup. A deceptive dish, I have never had a French onion soup where the bread did not dissolve into a soggy mess within minutes into the meal. Somehow, the chefs at Bricks had achieved what I thought was unachievable — perfectly crispy bread, toasted cheese, and fresh microgreens. For dinner she ordered a filet mignon which was "the most tender steak" she'd ever had, paired with a decadent caramelized onion risotto.

I ordered a dry-aged ribeye, and I must admit I was a skeptic. At its core, the process of dry-aging meat is exactly what it sounds like: aging meat for a lengthy period usually in a refrigerated environment. According to Justin, my steak had aged over 40 days and most of the dry-aged steaks served at Bricks are aged 35 days or more. The flavor imparted to the meat through this process was unlike anything I have experienced before. The aroma from the flavorful crust was garlic and campfire smoke. It was tender and cooked to a perfect medium. The flavor was at once salty and buttery with

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**There is magic in a good meal and Bricks sells magic, but this type of an experience isn't found — it's earned. It's earned through the tireless work of two friends who have poured everything into creating a unique experience in Erie. The duo's passion is on full display, as is their goal: to provide their guests with the best dining experience Erie has to offer.**

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just the smallest hint of nuttiness and a gamey quality that created a singular experience. I was so taken by my meal that I had to order a second drink, a whisky sour, that had just the right amount of acid to balance out my meal.

I'm normally not one for dessert, but after the meal, the service, and the atmosphere, it was only fitting that we shared a slice of peanut butter pie. Another locally sourced element, the pie was made fresh, right across the street at the Erie favorite Ye Olde Sweet Shoppe. Justin and Chris tell me they have plans to feature new desserts from the Sweet Shoppe and I look forward to the pairing.

In fact, as of this summer, Bricks has unveiled a host of new dishes in their seasonal menu. Their offerings now include delightful summer choices such as the Honey Nectarine Salad, a refreshing blend of sweet nectarines and crisp greens drizzled with honey, a true celebration of the season's flavors. For carnivores, a tomahawk pork chop makes for a unique dining oppor-

CONTRIBUTED



**Owners of the latest downtown restaurant Bricks American Steakhouse, Chris Adams (left) and Justin Stull, got their start in the Flagship City Food Hall and are now bringing an upscale dining experience to the historic Cashier's House on State Street.**

tunity. Of course, the heart of Bricks will always remain in their signature steaks.

There is magic in a good meal and Bricks sells magic, but this type of an experience isn't found — it's earned. It's earned through the tireless work of two friends who have poured everything into creating a unique experience in Erie. The duo's passion is on full display, as is their goal: to provide their guests with the best dining experience Erie has to offer. For my money, they have achieved that goal.

Bricks American Steakhouse is more than a restaurant; it is a testament to Erie's history and its changing present. It invites visitors into its beautiful historic surroundings while showcasing new and innovative takes on old favorites.

*Bricks American Steakhouse // 417 State St. // (814) 464-0175*

*Spencer Cadden is a full-time bureaucrat, father, and perennial student. He can be reached at [spencer@cad-denclassic.com](mailto:spencer@cad-denclassic.com)*

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## MIAC Live's 2023-2024 Season Preview

Vibrant, diverse entertainment continues at Mercyhurst University

By: Erin Phillips

The staff at Mercyhurst's Institute for Arts and Culture (MIAC) are constantly working to bring premier performing arts events to the people of Erie, and their 2023-2024 season may feature some of their most diverse, interesting, and talented acts yet. According to MIAC's artistic director Brett Johnson, "The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture strengthens the vibrancy of the Erie region by presenting world-class performing arts experiences that lift the spirit, galvanize the intellect, stimulate the imagination, and encourage the free exchange of ideas."

And they do this by bringing in interna-

tional performances that are affordable for a wide audience throughout the Erie region. Johnson continues, "By making these programs available and accessible to the broadest possible audience, the institute strives to create an environment of richly varied, inclusive cultural experiences."

Kicking off the season in September is Broadway star and Tony award winner, **Sutton Foster**, followed by a unique comedic and thought-provoking Cabaret performance from **Alan Cumming** and **Ari Shapiro**. The holidays this year will bring a New Orleans Jazz vibe, when the **Preservation Hall Jazz Band** presents their Creole Christmas ensemble, which is led by the founder of The Preservation Hall's son, Ben Jaffe. He reflects, "People come to Preservation Hall and have transformative experiences, and that's part of our mission: to go out in the world and make that experience available to people."

Transformative experiences are what

"The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture strengthens the vibrancy of the Erie region by presenting world-class performing arts experiences that lift the spirit, galvanize the intellect, stimulate the imagination, and encourage the free exchange of ideas." — Dr. Brett Johnson, MIAC artistic director

MIAC strives for — providing entertainment that might not normally be available in Erie. Johnson comments, "Our upcoming season offers more of what patrons have come to expect: dynamic performers, both familiar and new, in a beautiful venue that enhances the energy and intimacy of live performance."

After the new year, expect more show-stopping, diverse performances from Broadway stars **Jessica Vosk** and **Betty Buckley**, underground soul superstar **Sy Smith**, a stomping romp with **Step Afrika!**, and Tony Award winner **Gavin Creel**.



The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture is planning an exciting and diverse slate of performances for their upcoming 2023-2024 season, including Broadway stars, jazz ensembles, cabaret acts, and more.

It's important that the community continue to support these cultural programs so that their inspirational performances can continue well into the future. According to Johnson, that support can come in the form of donations, promotion, or simply enjoying the events, "Theaters nationwide are struggling to balance ever-increasing production costs with significantly reduced box office revenues, subscriptions, and

donations. We can protect these cultural assets, which enrich our communities in countless ways by buying a ticket, purchasing a subscription, or making a donation."

Season tickets are available to purchase now, and individual event tickets will be available on Aug. 15 by visiting [miac.mercyhurst.edu](http://miac.mercyhurst.edu)

- Sutton Foster: Sept. 21
- Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro: Oct. 25
- Preservation Hall Jazz Band: Nov. 28
- Jessica Vosk: Feb. 29
- Sy Smith: Mar. 12
- Step Afrika!: Apr. 9
- Betty Buckley: Apr. 19
- Gavin Creel: May 1

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## Gem City Style: Erie Gives Day

An interview with Erie Arts & Culture director Anne O'Dell

By: Jessica Hunter

**Jessica Hunter (JH):** Hi, Anne! Welcome to Erie! For those who haven't had the pleasure to meet you, can you share a little bit about yourself and your new role at Erie Arts & Culture (EAC).

**Anne O'Dell (AOD):** As the executive director, I steward resources so people thrive. I'm originally from West Virginia, grew up in Appalachia, and after being in the Washington D.C. region for 15 years, decided it was time to step into the next chapter of my life and career and move to a smaller city where I could work in service to the community and live a more balanced life. I love to cook, I am a yogi, and reading and listening to podcasts are some of my favorite things to do as well. I love keeping up with my family and friends and seeing all the great things they are doing in their lives, too.

**JH:** It's a pretty important job to be an ambassador to the many different artists and organizations that rely on EAC. Do you have any big plans for the organization or for your position, specifically?

**AOD:** It's most important to me that Erie Arts & Culture is sustainable beyond my time leading the organization. And, for an organization to be sustainable, it must be responsive to the community and nimble in how it evolves while holding true to its purpose. EAC is about to undergo a strategic planning phase, and the information we gather from people will determine the next five years of priorities and actions.

It's important that we [treat] endowments as [intended when] they were established, that we maintain our partnership with Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and that the programs we create and lead are sustainable both financially and personnel-wise. The role of executive director will be to engage fully with the six counties EAC serves through its partnership with Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and to fully connect and sustain this local ecosystem of arts, culture, and creative leaders here in the City of Erie.

**JH:** As the mural project was a larger vision (both literally and figuratively), what sort of long-term projects are on the horizon next?

**AOD:** The long-term projects will be determined by the strategic planning process. The mural project has been a great source of learning for EAC in its capacity and what it's capable of doing, as well as pushing the organization to ask, "How do we ensure sustainability of projects after they are launched and implemented? How do we plan for the future of these projects so that they serve the community for years to come?" We have to look at and fully understand what a very small team — we only have three full-time staff, one part-time staff, and two part-time contractors — is capable of doing so that the team stays vibrant and those we engage with in the projects are fully supported.

**JH:** Upon beginning your new role, what has the response been from Erie's artistic community?

**AOD:** I've been very welcomed by Erie's artistic community, as well as artists in the region. I am so excited to continue connecting with people and making my way through the six counties (Erie, Crawford, Mercer,



The new executive director of Erie Arts and Culture speaks with Jessica Hunter about relocating cities, securing the region's creative future, her vision for the future of Erie's arts scene, and a recent passion for boba tea.

Venango, Warren, and Lawrence) EAC serves. It's very inspiring for me to see how much fun people are having creating and sharing their work and the excitement

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**"It's most important to me that Erie Arts and Culture is sustainable beyond my time leading the organization. And, for an organization to be sustainable, it must be responsive to the community and nimble in how it evolves while holding true to its purpose." — Anne O'Dell, new executive director of Erie Arts and Culture**

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that they feel is contagious. It's really awesome to see so many people creating opportunities and continuing to share their work with the world in big ways.

**JH:** What similarities and what differences have you noticed between Erie and Alexandria, Virginia?

**AOD:** Oh, wow, very little traffic compared to Alexan-

dria and the D.C. region — also it feels lighter to live here. There's a lot of pressure in the D.C. region because it's such a center for international, national, regional, and local politics and business. It's also refreshing to be in a place where people have known each other for years. Your social circle will change about every four years in Northern Virginia/D.C. because people move in and out for work so often.

Similarities, though, people love their local coffee shops and restaurants, they value supporting local businesses, there's an expansion of downtown living just like Northern Virginia and D.C. have gone through, and people enjoy being out and about doing things.

**JH:** Erie is definitely a quirky and unique place. How are you finding it here? Do you have any favorite places or activities yet?

**AOD:** Every place is quirky and unique! I like being here, and I think it's one of the friendliest places I've moved to. I love Andora's Bubble Tea Shop — can't get enough boba tea! I'm also having fun discovering the local coffee shops. I very much enjoy walking Presque Isle because being out in nature and moving in it with the sun and water is very grounding for me. I feel very fortunate to be here. I also think the possibilities for doing things are endless — there's a lot to discover!

*Consider making a donation to Erie Arts & Culture on Erie Gives Day at [ErieGives.org](http://ErieGives.org)*

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

## There's No Coming Back From This

Ann Garvin's latest will have you rooting for the underdog

When Poppy Lively's accountant disappears with her life savings without paying the business taxes, the IRS comes knocking on — or nearly pounding down — her door. Newly bankrupt, on the verge of losing her home, and facing the possibility of federal prison, Poppy hopes that sending her daughter to New York will prevent everything from falling apart while she figures out this financial mess.

By a twist of fate she runs into an old flame, Three, who just might have the solution to her financial woes. Now a big-time movie producer, he sets her up with a job in wardrobe on a Hollywood film set, where she'll quickly make enough money to begin paying her debts and send her daughter to college. What could go wrong?

When she makes it to Hollywood, though, things do not turn out how she expected. There are no housing

accommodations like Three implied, leaving Poppy sneaking around set at night to sleep in trailers and dressing rooms. Add in a coworker who seems out to get her, and Poppy finds herself questioning her decision to pack everything up and drive to L.A. for this job.

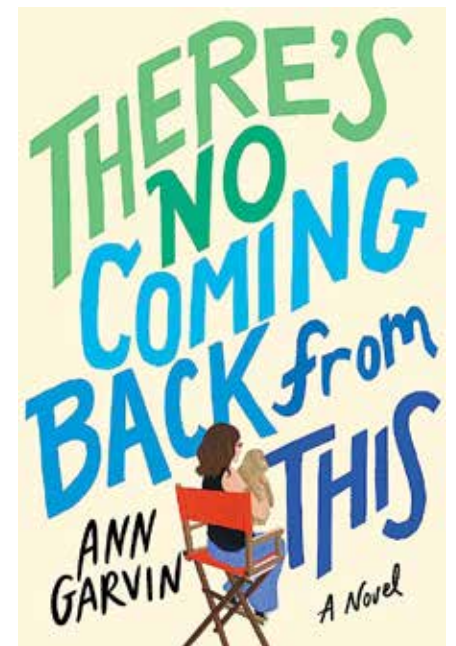
When things seemingly can't get any worse, Poppy discovers some deep corruption on set, rattling her belief in everything she knows. She must now not only come to terms with this new information, but decide how she will move forward. Will she keep out of it and let it continue to ruin people and their careers, or speak up and bring the culprit to some form of justice?

Ann Garvin is a master of characters, infusing them with such personality that the reader feels compelled to root for each of them in turn, no matter how large or small a role they play.

Even those not completely present within the story — Poppy's mother, for example (only featured in flashbacks and musings) — are so vibrant and relatable that it is easy to picture them.

While Poppy may be the leading lady, the real hero of the story is Kevin (the director's dog, whom Poppy is tasked with tending), which is a testament to Garvin's mastery. She (yes, Kevin is a girl) absolutely jumps off the page, stealing your heart the moment you begin to read about her. A calm, cool, and collected small "washcloth" of a dog, even the iciest of hearts will melt when introduced to her and her vibrant character. It is not a simple feat to give such personality and agency to a dog, but Garvin does so with ease.

Overall, *There's No Coming Back From This* offers something for everybody — a bit of romance, a bit of mystery, a bit of humor, and a whole lot



of immensely talented storytelling by one of the most relatable contemporary literature writers of today. — Ally Kutz

Lake Union Publishing // 300 pages // Contemporary Fiction

## Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma

Reconciling talent vs. character

It's the late '90s in Chicago. While browsing at a record shop, I hear a voice like a divine gift. I walk over to ask the clerk, "Who is this?" The answer: Bill Withers. Listening to him felt like standing in the cathedral of Notre Dame. Sadly, years later I read he was a domestic abuser. Not a rumor, a fact. Not an angel, a monster. If I don't stop listening, how do I defend my choice without excuses?

Genius exists unbridled within the artists who matter. True muses inspire without rules or mores. If artists are given complete license to create without boundaries, how do we hold them accountable for monstrousness exhibited in their private lives? Are we able to reconcile our love for their art and the horror of their crimes? Where do we place our private disappointment and collective outrage? The book addresses Roman Polanski and Michael Jackson, the former convicted and the latter accused of sexual abuse of children. Richard Wagner and C.S. Lewis, anti-Semites. Pablo Picasso and John Lennon, serial abusers. Willa Cather and Laura Ingalls-Wilder, racists. Other women monsters like Anne Sexton, Doris Lessing, and Joni Mitchell — guilty in their abandonments and refusals of motherhood. These crimes feel like betrayals.

Claire Dederer, Gen-X essayist and critic,

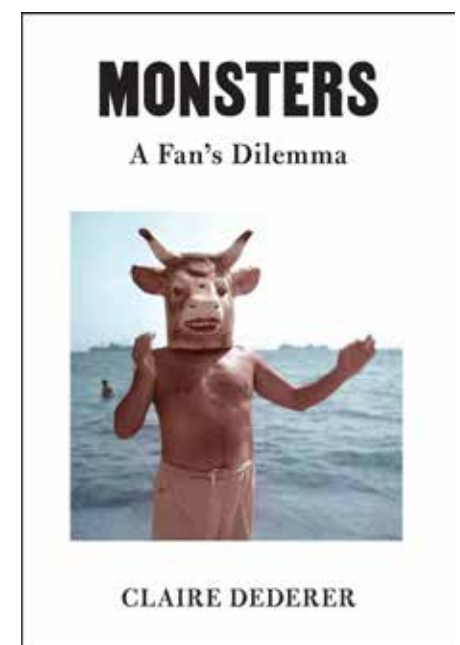
holds our hands as we navigate the slickness of these ethical dilemmas. As much as she guides us, she also pushes us into her tiger traps dug along the way. She waits until we crawl out with our fandom bruised by our own morals. Her memoirist approach to this minefield spins one like a corkscrew. We love the work, we loathe the maker. Does the beauty of the work outweigh the heft of the crime? The knots binding these complexities tightened in the wake of

Genius exists unbridled within the artists who matter. True muses inspire without rules or mores. If artists are given complete license to create without boundaries, how do we hold them accountable for monstrousness exhibited in their private lives? Are we able to reconcile our love for their art and the horror of their crimes?

#metoo and Trump's election. As we sidestep the swinging pendulum, we need to understand Cancel Culture is no better than book burning. Who decides what to do? The audience or the individual consumer?

For decades, we've been asked to separate the art from the artist. Don't think of Hemingway when reading Hemingway. Is that even possible? It was much easier to do when we didn't have com-

plete access to everyone's biography. Now with unlimited resources tucked into our back pockets, we shine an unforgiving flashlight into all the dark corners of those we admire. Technology has given us greater opportunities to poke at atrocities and infractions. The powerful inspiration experienced by my youthful embrace of David Bowie's music now buckles under the post-mortem weight of Laurie Maddox's reveal (that she lost her virginity to Bowie when she was just



tuned my focus beyond the aberrations. The creator's stain doesn't leave the creation. It irrevocably changes our perceptions. Yet it does not hide, overshadow, or cancel the work. Dederer doesn't provide any concrete answers. She emphasizes the importance of the questions and the many possible considerations — just like the best essays should. — Melissa Sullivan Shimek

Knopf // 257 pages // Art, Criticism, Philosophy, Feminism



# #DefendThePress: Erie Reader Legal Defense Fund



Help defend the First Amendment and Freedom of the Press! The Erie Reader, Erie's only independent, locally-owned alternative newspaper, and its contributing editor, Jim Wertz, were sued for defamation by PA State Senator Dan Laughlin, who filed a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the Reader and Wertz.

The lawsuit alleges that Wertz defamed Laughlin in an opinion piece outlining actions connected to attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 Election and the events of January 6. This lawsuit is an attempt to silence the media from publishing critical political commentary and analysis.

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#DefendThePress: Erie Reader Legal Defense Fund

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## MOVIE REVIEWS

### The Destroyer of Worlds

*Oppenheimer* may be Christopher Nolan's masterpiece

★★★★★

For many years now it has been agreed upon, by detractors and fans alike, that while Christopher Nolan's films are technical marvels, they tend to lack warmth and humanity. With the exception of *Interstellar*, the characters in his films don't have very rich emotional lives outside of the basic necessities of the plot. That makes it doubly miraculous that his newest film *Oppenheimer*, while still maintaining his technical mastery, also displays a deep emotional maturity resulting in not only Nolan's best film since *Memento*, but an interesting new path for a talented filmmaker.

This is the story of J. Robert Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy), the physicist chosen by the U.S. military to lead the project designed to beat Nazi Germany in the development of an atomic bomb. The result, he hopes will bring humanity into a new era of peace but he fears it may actually sow the seeds of the world's destruction.

The story is told out of order, alternating from the Manhattan Project to years later when Oppenheimer's association



with the Communist Party brings heavy scrutiny from the government. Like all of Nolan's films, this is full of plenty of mind-blowing technical brilliance (how the Trinity Test was pulled off practically is astounding), but it is also a showcase for so many talented actors at the height of their abilities. It is a bit of a miracle that in the middle of a SAG-AFTRA strike, studios can witness firsthand such a performance-heavy film becoming so successful. In many ways, this is

Nolan's most mature film and at long last a film that leaves much for the brain to chew on while still keeping its heart. — Forest Taylor

Written and directed by Christopher Nolan // Starring Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt, Matt Damon, Robert Downey Jr., Florence Pugh, Benny Safdie, Michael Angarano, Josh Hartnett, Rami Malek, Alden Ehrenreich, Matthew Modine, Alex Wolff, Casey Affleck, Tom Conti, and Kenneth Branagh // Universal Pictures // 181 minutes // Rated R

### Let's Go Party!

*Barbie* is hilarious and ambitious

★★★★★

Has there ever been a more controversial and discussed toy than Barbie? Since her invention in 1959, she has been praised as a role model and condemned as an anti-feminist stereotype of femininity. Some have claimed her literally impossible physical features to be inspiring, others the cause of issues of self-esteem and body dysmorphia. Amazingly, Greta Gerwig is able to address all these issues and more with her film *Barbie*, a far more ambitious, intelligent, and laugh-out-loud funny movie than I ever could have thought a toy advertisement could be.

The film follows Barbie (Margot Robbie) on a typical day in BarbieLand, which is great like every other day. But her endless positivity is slowly being eroded by grim thoughts of dying, prompting Barbie and her best buddy Ken (Ryan Gosling, in a show-stopping performance) to venture into the real world to find the source of her malaise. However, this has an effect on BarbieLand when Ken brings some of the more troublesome ideals of the real world back with him.



The film is ambitious (any film that opens with a parody of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is going for something grand), perhaps a little too ambitious as it tries to make critiques of Barbie as an inspiration/impossible ideal as well as comment on modern womanhood, the constrictions of patriarchy, and the pain of growing up. It's a lot to tackle, but I'm happy the film is more than the simple nostalgia-bait it could have been

(looking at you, Mario). Barbie doesn't hit all its marks perfectly, but when it does, few films are more entertaining. — Forest Taylor

Directed by Greta Gerwig // Written by Gerwig and Noah Baumbach // Starring Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling, America Ferrera, Ariana Greenblatt, Michael Cera, Kate McKinnon, Issa Rae, Simu Liu, Rhea Perlman, Will Ferrell, and Helen Mirren // 114 minutes // Rated PG-13 // Warner Bros. Pictures

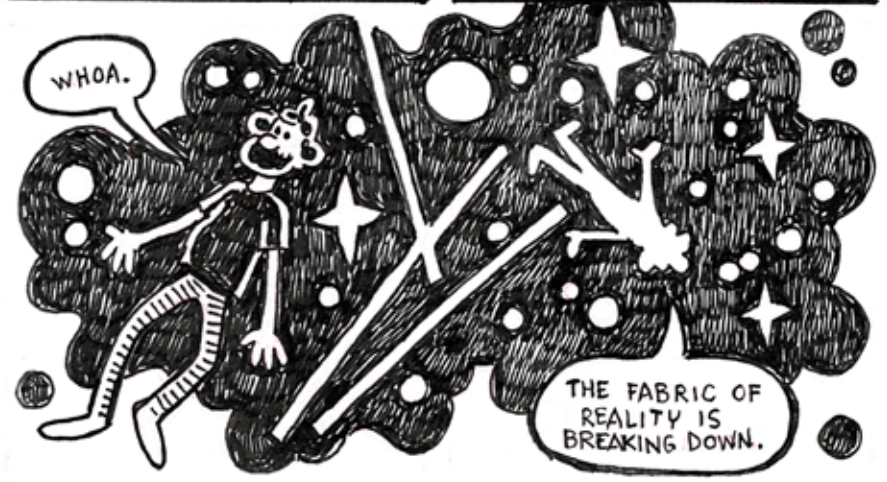


(To keep the music out of their eyes)

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BY BRAD PATTULLO  
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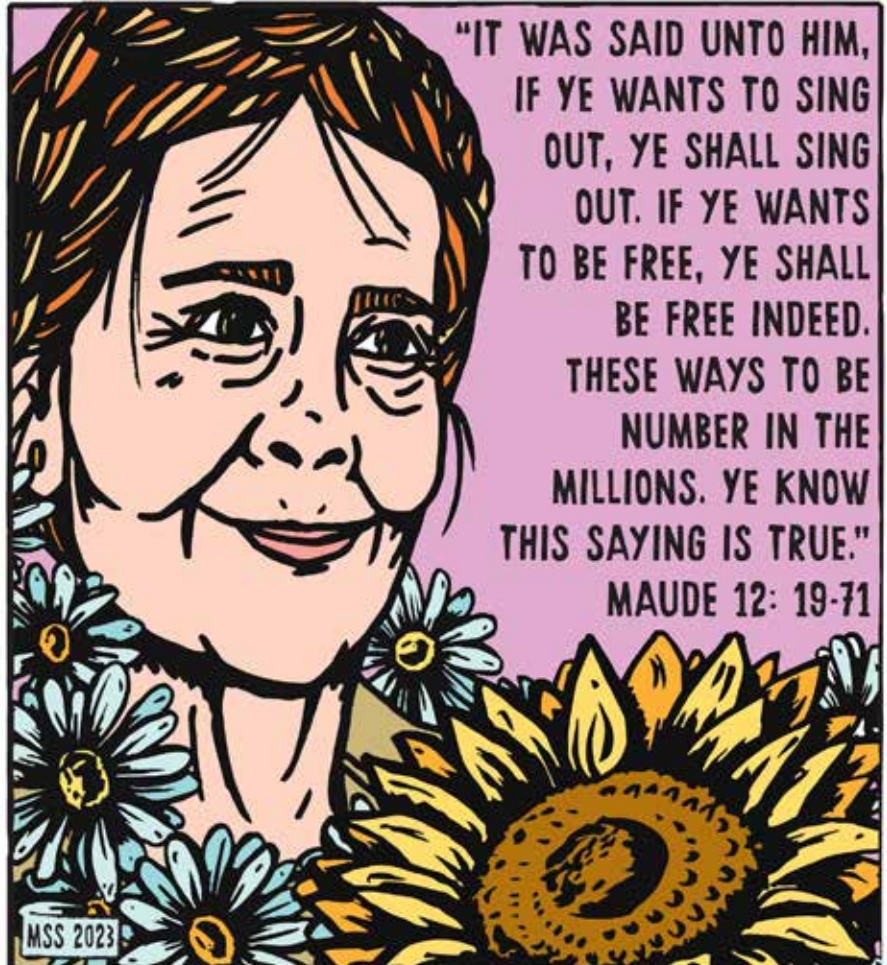
## JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY



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## ALBUM REVIEWS

### Lil Uzi Vert

*Pink Tape*  
Atlantic Records



More than a name, Lil Uzi Vert has created an *image* for themselves. The gender-nonconforming rapper



appears on the cover of their latest project, *Pink Tape*, against a pink American flag with a matching jacket and spiked hair. They once had a diamond implanted in their forehead until doctors said they could *die* if it was not removed properly. They've crafted a career out of blending genres, teaching a generation of fans to create without boundaries; they've also been charged with felony assault against their ex-girlfriend. With all of this in mind, *Pink Tape* feels like an extension of Vert's public persona: it truly is a collection of the good ("Flooded the Face"), the bad ("CS"), and the ugly ("Endless Fashion").

Vert's penchant for creating without concern is charming in theory, but unfortunately, the album's "rap-rock" elements fall apart the moment you hear their laughable growl, appearing on several tracks including a glorified karaoke cover of System of a Down's "Chop Suey." Vert is at their best when they ride cosmic beats similar to those found on 2020's *Eternal Atake*, and in that sense, *Pink Tape* is lacking the intrigue to sway the minds of prior fans or skeptics. When the best they can offer is more of the same, it's hard to see *Pink Tape* as anything but an admirable failure. — Aaron Mook

### PJ Harvey

*I Inside the Old Year Dying*  
Partisan Records



PJ Harvey's tenth studio album blends the lo-fi style of her early recordings with her later use of



samples and ambient sounds to create an album that encompasses her 30+ years of making music for the indie music masses into one record. This is a rare album that sounds better when listened to from start to finish — it doesn't have the same impact when listening to it casually in bits and pieces. Nonetheless, there are standout tracks like "Lwonesome Tonight" and "I Inside the Old Year Dying," and album closers "A Child's Question, July" and "A Noiseless Noise" which wrap things up in such an energetic way that it leaves you wanting more. The use of folk melodies with samples gives a modern juxtaposition to lyrics that are emotional and sometimes bleak, which seems to be a comfortable place for the English singer-songwriter. In some ways this album feels like a companion piece to her 2022 book *Orlam*, which was a lengthy narrative poem telling a coming-of-age tale, and the first publication written in the Dorset dialect for many decades. The samples used in these recordings were field sounds from Dorset — the area that Harvey calls home — adding to the intimacy of the record.

—Larry Wheaton

### Bethany Cosentino

*Natural Disaster*  
Concord Records



Do you happen to love Best Coast and Liz Phair and Kacey Musgraves? Though the millennial/Gen X



generation gap doesn't exactly line up, perhaps you've been meaning to check one of them out. Either way, do I have an album for you. *Natural Disaster* is the debut solo album from Bethany Cosentino, longtime leader of the duo Best Coast (sorry, Bobb!). This album finds the thirtysomething Californian abandoning the layered shoegaze and pop-punk of Best Coast's glory days for a mostly clean and chiming acoustic guitar tone and upbeat tempos.

For longtime Best Coast fans, this musical transition to a more mature and accessible sound comes as little surprise. While there's a strong pop and country influence throughout, between the instrumentation, frankly sardonic lyricism, and actual vocal timbre, Cosentino has done a remarkable job channeling an *Exile in Guyville*-era Liz Phair. Since that happens to be one of the greatest albums ever made, that's no bad thing at all. Cosentino's snarky soprano glows in each of these dozen tracks, and thankfully her personality shines through. Her expert ability at hook-crafting is working overtime, with some fundamentally catchy phrases in every track.

—Nick Warren

### Strange Ranger

*Pure Music*  
Fire Talk



A gorgeous work that surrounds the listener with a chillingly beautiful aura from start to finish,



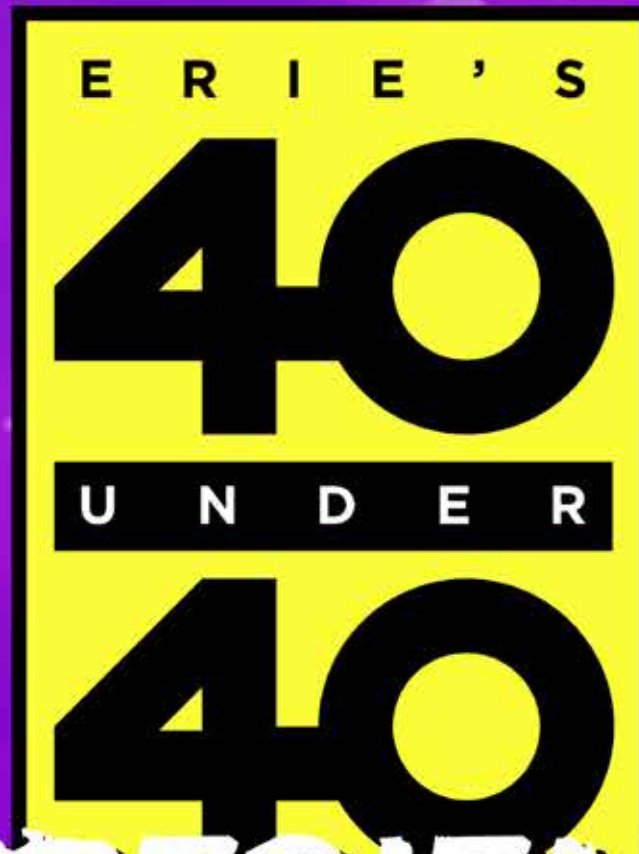
Strange Ranger's fourth LP, *Pure Music* might be one of the most underrated albums of the year. Formerly known as Sioux Falls, the Portland, Oregon quartet have crafted 10 tracks that are both experimental and beautifully accessible. While their remarkable 2021 album *No Light In Heaven* followed a slightly more punk-bent course, this record is a feast of dream pop and neo-psychedelia living somewhere between the synthy explorations of recent The 1975 releases, the post-emo ruminations of bands like waveform\* and Greet Death, the expansive ethereal mysticism of the Weather Station and Cassandra Jenkins, the deadpan expressionism of '90s britpop, and shoegaze icons My Bloody Valentine. It's spacey, it's wonderful, and it contains multitudes. The added saxophone by drummer Nathan Tucker is perfect, and helps transcend *Pure Music* to the next level. Entirely chill, and made for nighttime listening sessions, when you're ready to give it your full attention, their bandcamp noted that this "was made to be heard in private moments between where you've been and where you're going."

—Nick Warren

## TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



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**EXPERIENCE**

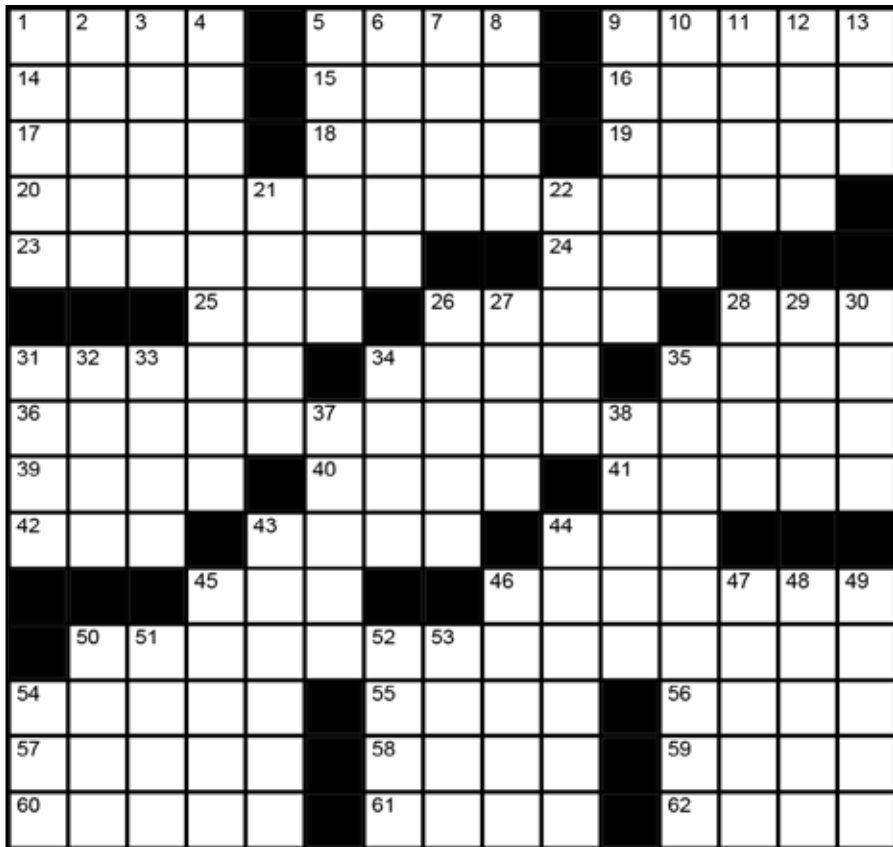
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**FRIDAY, OCT. 13**



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# CROSSWORD



## Across

1. 5'4" and 6'2": Abbr.
5. Spill the beans
9. Stacy who played Mike Hammer on TV
14. Song that might prompt a "Brava!"
15. Skye of "Say Anything ..."
16. Ernest or Julio of wine fame
17. 500 sheets of paper
18. "No \_\_\_\_, no glory"
19. It has two hemispheres
20. "About that thing that went wrong on Apollo 13 ..."
23. Nice enough fellow
24. Special \_\_\_\_ (military activities)
25. 35mm camera type
26. Rage
28. "CrazySexyCool" trio
31. Movement founded by Tarana Burke
34. Actress Meyer of "Starship Troopers"
35. "Mon petit \_\_\_\_" (French endearment)
36. "About that honorific given to one's superior male offspring ..."
39. Shawkat of "Arrested Development"
40. Cookie with a wasabi flavor in China
41. Steakhouse order
42. Exclamations of regret
43. Woody \_\_\_\_, bartender on "Cheers"
44. Tyronn who coached

- the Cleveland Cavaliers to an NBA title in 2016
45. Faux \_\_\_\_
46. Genre for Dire Straits and Steely Dan, facetiously
50. "About that theater production that explains how old the penny is ..."
54. Dagger's partner
55. "Hmm ... I doubt that"
56. Name in a noted '90s breakup
57. Diwali celebrant
58. Tea brand with Wild Sweet Orange and Refresh Mint flavors
59. "Moi? Never!"
60. Fabulous writer?
61. Bird symbolizing grace
62. Meniscus location

## Down

1. Brother of Groucho, Chico, Gummo and Zeppo
2. Origin of the word "alphabet"
3. Bit of pageant wear
4. 600 Home Run Club member
5. California state park south of Monterey
6. Replete (with)
7. Voting no
8. "Why you gotta \_\_\_\_ rude?" (lyric from the 2014 Magic! hit "Rude")
9. Cold war mole
10. Some noblemen
11. Jai \_\_\_\_
12. Snippet from a film
13. Sweet pea

21. Qaanaaq dwelling
22. "Don't Know Why" singer Jones
26. Played a high wind
27. "Do \_\_\_\_ others ..."
28. Bro of van Gogh
29. Mortgage, e.g.
30. It's good for what ails you
31. Org. featured in the documentary "This Film Is Not Yet Rated"
32. Hard to handle, in a way
33. Baseball Hall of Famer Speaker
34. She helped Marlin find Nemo
35. Science fiction subgenre
37. Calf-roping loop
38. Assignment from a piano teacher
43. Kind of dancer
44. Coral reef enclosure
45. Madrid museum
46. "Hold Me Closer, Tony \_\_\_\_: And Other Misheard Lyrics" (2007 humor book)
47. Johnny who used to cry "Come on down!"
48. Social stratum
49. Hit 1986 Mr. Mister song named after a prayer
50. Ballerina's bend
51. Forever, seemingly
52. "Fiddlesticks!"
53. Defrost
54. When tripled, a dance move



## Answers to last puzzle





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