

Erie Gay News

Statewide LGBT Zoom Meetings

by Michael Mahler

Beginning in mid-March, there have been Zoom meetings for LGBTQIA+ leaders across Pennsylvania. The meetings are held at 5 PM weekdays. Monday through Thursday, the format is introductions, followed by a presenter on a particular topic, and then a sharing of information, including requests and offers of help. Past presenters have included Dr. Rachel Levine, Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Rep. Brian Sims, openly gay State Assemblymember; Reggie Shuford, Executive Director for ACLU of PA; and many others. Fridays are self-care happy hour, and a recent self-care Friday featured a guided meditation. Many participants find that being able to have face to face contact with community member, even virtually, is helpful.

The term "leader" is loosely defined. If you are interested in participating, then email Chris Bartlett, Executive Director of the William Way Center in Philadelphia at bartlett.cd@gmail.com

Register to Vote and Mail in Ballots

by Michael Mahler

Pennsylvania's Primary Election has been rescheduled to Tuesday, June 2. This also moved up the last day to register to vote to May 18. There were already changes to how Pennsylvania votes that were actually planned before COVID-19. New this year is that the deadline to register to vote is now 15 days before an election, as opposed to 30 days before.

Also new this year for Pennsylvania voters is that **everyone** can vote by mail-in ballot if they apply! Before this year, people had to provide a reason that they couldn't vote in person at their polling place, but now getting a ballot mailed to you that must be mailed back and received on or before election is open to ALL registered voters. Erie County will even be paying the postage, so this will cost you nothing!

Given the uncertainty for how the pandemic will progress, please visit https://www.votespa.com/to register to vote and apply for a mail-in ballot!



Moderator speaking at statewide Community Leadership Zoom meeting on March 14. Screen cap by Mike Mahler.

MSM vs COVID-19

by Gary Snyder, HIV Disease Intervention Specialist at the Erie County Department of Health

Here we are amid the COVID-19 Pandemic with how we interact having vastly changed. But what about our hookup behaviors? Well, that gets a little tricky now doesn't it. For MSMs [Men having Sex with Men], physical interactions provide many benefits; chief of which is stress release. Sex gives us a rush of hormones. Testosterone increases libido while norepinephrine keeps us alert. Dopamine boosts energy with feelings of desire, motivation, and pleasure. And then we have oxytocin [aka the cuddle hormone] which floods our bodies in significant quantities making us feel close to others, thereby promoting affection.

But when we're keeping physically distant to reduce/stop the spread of COVID-19, we also decrease these hormones by having less sex. So, it's no surprise that MSM are struggling because of a lack of connection physically. While video recordings/calls can help us stay in touch with each other, they don't exactly give us an outlet for frustration. They also do not meet our human touch 'needs', even if

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Camera ready art or manuscript and/or photos, illustrations and logos must be received by the 15th of the month. Photos and Illustrations should be PDF or TIFF and HIRES. All hardcopy ads submitted will be reproduced as close as possible.



Erie Gay News Erie Gay News 1115 West 7th St. Erie PA 16502-1105 (814) 456-9833

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The *Erie Gay News* is published monthly as a source of news, events, information, and support for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people (GLBTs), their families, friends, and supporters in the Erie PA area

We welcome and encourage all readers to submit timely news, comments, and opinions of interest to local GLBTs for publication in these pages. Please include your contact information with any piece you submit.



THANKS From Your Friends at Frie Gay News

To Lake Erie Counseling Associates for hosting! Andrea Shaffer, Audrey, Bobbie Fenno, Gwen, Johauna, Kim Conti, Lyxi Adamaszek, Michelle Rivero, Molly Rose, Paxton Dillon, and Rex Apps for folding; Audrey, Gwen, Johauna, Kim Conti, Lyxi Adamaszek, Melina Harden, Michelle Rivero, and Rex Apps for distribution; Mike Lipiec for ad layout & etc. If you're interested in helping out, contact Michael Mahler at (814) 456-9833 or info@eriegaynews.com.

it is for a brief 10 to 20 minutes. No shade here, but I'm referring to the MSM among us who have an understandable goal of an orgasm, not necessarily making love.

And yes, this means the struggle is real because MSMs are starving for connection. Yet we have a responsibility to not spread COVID-19 to the vulnerable in our communities. Here's a quick list of options to peruse for some 'fun' while staying apart. First, HSPs are enjoyably safe! Household Sex Partners that are not ill are tops on the list. Use good hygiene (handwashing, mouthwash, showering) and look no further than the one(s) you live with today. Next up, Digital Playland incorporates old and new adventures. Old School = Phone Sex while New School = Sexting. Old School = Print Porn uploaded alongside New School = XXX Selfies that Turn You On and Others. Old School = Chat Rooms now integrated into New School = Live Stream Cam Sites. And let's not forget one the longest surviving methods in humanity, masturbating. Be solo, with toys, even HSPs, our bodies are a wonderland so go exploring to see what new things turn you on! [Thanks to the San Diego LGBT Community Center for ideas and concepts incorporated into this article.]

"The Apocalypse of COVID-19"

by Rev. Dr. Rich McCarty

"Do you think that this is the end of the world?" As a Christian minister I have been asked this question on a number of occasions, and now more recently about COVID-19. Sure enough, a quick media search finds certain preachers proclaiming that this pandemic is a sign of the End Times. But you live long enough and you can reliably anticipate when the "endtimers" will show up in a crisis to make their scary predictions. (None of them have ever come true.) So my short and public answer to the end-times question is: "No! COVID-19 is not the harbinger of some supernatural end of the world." I remind people in my faith tradition that Christ himself said that he did not know the day or the hour of the end. It's a bit odd, then, for a follower of Christ to claim more esoteric knowledge than their Messiah possessed. That said, I do have another answer to the question. Namely, "it may not be the end of the world, but COVID-19 is an apocalypse." Let me explain. The word apocalypse

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means "to reveal"—and so anything that reveals deep truth and ultimate reality is an apocalyptic event. Seen this way, COVID-19 is an apocalypse—not of God, but of natural causes—and it is revealing so much. This apocalypse has revealed the strengths of human community in our caring for one another. But it is also revealing deep deficiencies in our economic systems and our access to adequate healthcare. But there is hope. When apocalyptic events pass—and they do—we have the chance to create a better world. That will be up to us—all of us, together.

The Rev. Dr. Richard W. McCarty (Ph.D.) is ordained in the United Church of Christ and serves as the senior pastor at Community United Church—an Open and Affirming Christian congregation in Erie, PA (1011 West 38th Street).

Deadline for Next EGN issue May 11



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How has COVID19 impacted the Asexual community?

from Marshall John Blount

How has COVID19 impacted the Asexual community? Pretty much like everyone else, A lot of us fear the unknown of what's to come and how long this will impact our lives. I have spoken to a couple of people who are caregivers and they are worried about their patients and their families, I have also spoken to someone who was planning something big for Asexual awareness, visibility, and representation in their local pride, Sadly social distancing and the unknowns surrounding the duration of this lockdown has put a damper on those plans this year. The full scale of the impact on our community will not be known for sometime, However something tells me that we (the activist and advocates within the community) should continue to keep up with the treatment of our fellow Ace folk by non-Ace people in the medical field, family spaces, work, cyberspace, etc etc now more than ever. That is going to require a lot of surveys and conversation within the community especially once we process this crisis even more. That will take months if not years to do.

Asexual Visibility & Education Network (Website): https://www.asexuality.org/

Asexual Visibility & Education Network (Twitter):

https://twitter.com/asexuality

Gentle Giant Ace (me) (Twitter):

https://twitter.com/AceGentle

Marshall John Blount (My youtube channel):

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsw6z-zoKlskACsfRs0sZ20g





This project was funded through a grant from the Pa. Department of Health

Baking with Bears - Salted Nut Butter Cookies

by JR Snyder

In trying times, why not have some salty nut butter?

I can tell by the market shelves, nude and exposed where things like flour and yeast should be, that I'm not the only one looking to do a little comfort baking these days. It's the perfect kind of grounding, homey activity that soothes the soul. And who doesn't like cookies, cakes, and breads? Here's a recipe that's easy and tasty. It fancies up nicely for those who like it fancy but keeps it simple for those not in the market for a technical challenge. It doesn't even need any flour, although you will need at least one egg. It scales nicely, can be stirred up a day or two ahead and kept in the fridge, and has enough tasty nut butter for just about anybody.

This is a riff on the three-ingredient peanut butter cookie recipe that you'll find in lots of places. You can use anything from store-brand smooth PB to organic maple almond butter and it will work nicely, although results will vary slightly. Cashew butter feels softer at room temp, but bakes firmer, whereas almond butter spreads more in the oven, for example. A little spice can be a nice addition, but don't let your main flavor become too diluted. Note that if your nut butter doesn't have any added salt, you might need to add a pinch to the dough or be generous with the garnish. Don't skip chilling the dough (you can also put it in the fridge for an hour, or even a day or two, if there's no room in your freezer) or the cookies will spread too much in the oven.



Salted Nut Butter Cookies (adapted from Edd Kimber, theboywhobakes. co.uk)

Makes 12 cookies using a 2 ounce ice cream

1 3/4 cup packed light brown sugar

2 large eggs, preferably at room temperature

1/2 tsp vanilla extract

1 3/4 cups nut butter, preferably at room temperature, stirred if needed

Flaked sea salt or kosher salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a medium bowl, beat egg, sugar, and vanilla together until well combined.

Add nut butter and stir until smooth and completely combined.

Chill cookie dough until firm and scoopable; about 15 minutes in the freezer or an hour (or a day ro two, if you're busy) in the fridge.

Portion dough onto a parchment lined baking sheet using an ice-cream scoop. Sprinkle generously with sea salt or kosher salt.

Bake until edges are golden, but centers are still pale, approximately 20 minutes. Let cool on wire rack at least ten minutes before serving.

Enjoy!

Bears Do Dinner on May 13

Bears Do Dinner #82 will be on Wednesday, May 13 at 6:30 PM at Samurai Kitchen + Sushi, 2767 W 12th St, Erie PA 16505. Join the Bears for a casual dinner of food and conversation! Dinner is on your own. This is dependent on lockdown being over by then.

Pride Fest Postponed

from NW PA Pride Alliance

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and current prohibitions on public gatherings as per CDC/PA Department of Health guidance, we have decided to err on the side of caution and officially postpone the 2020 PrideFest and Parade scheduled for June 27th. Please know this decision was not an easy one but we have to keep everyone's safety in mind.

We are currently in discussions with the city and other officials for a new date, potentially later

in 2020. We will continue to follow CDC/PA DoH guidance as we move forward and will announce the rescheduled date when we are able to do so. We look forward to being able to celebrate our community—but only when it is safe for large public gatherings.

To vendors who purchased table space: your table will carry over to the new date in 2020. Should you be unable to attend the rescheduled date, we will honor your space in 2021. Please direct any questions to tables@nwpapride.org

Adagio Health Update

Adagio Health will be operating Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9 am to 2pm by appointment only. We will be serving the community on Tuesday and Friday via Telehealth. Staff will be answering the phones from 8am to 4pm on that day. These hours will remain in place until further notice with one exception. Our Erie office is re-locating on 4/27 and 4/28, our Erie office will be closed on those days.

COVID-19 info for Erie County

Get the most up-to-date information about CO-VID-19: https://eriecountypa.gov/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19/

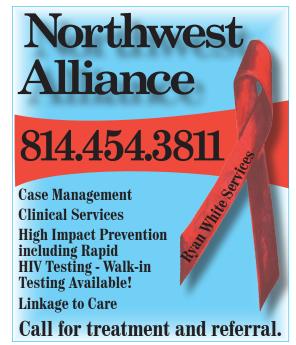
PA LGBTQIA Health Conference Postponed to 2021

Due to COVID-19, the 4th Annual PA LG-BTQIA Health Conference, originally scheduled for June 2 in Erie, has ben postponed to 2021. The event will still be taking place in Erie.

TransFamily of NW PA Zoom Meetings

TransFamily of NW PA will be having their meetings via Zoom starting Saturday, April 25 at 2 PM. Event details are on their Facebook page. As EGN went to press there was discussion about having virtual meetings more than the usual 4th Saturday of the month. See their Facebook page for updates.





LBT Women Virtual Meetings

LBT Women of Erie are now having virtual meetings via Google Hangouts Meet. Find them on Facebook to see how you can hang out with Beans!

SAGE Launches SAGEConnect for LGBT Elders

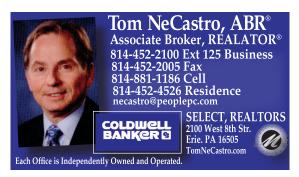
[New York, NY - April 3, 2020] Today, SAGE, the world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT elders, launched SAGEConnect, a program that matches LGBT elders with volunteer community members and allies in the midst of the national pandemic. For many of our LGBT pioneers, the heightened need for social isolation has left them homebound with severely limited support networks. The one-to-one contact offered through SAGEConnect will help combat feelings of loneliness and disconnection during this unprecedented time of COVID-19, and ensure that elders are linked to resources if they are in need of help.

Because of the limited resources available to LGBT elders during this time, SAGE is utilizing its connection to the greater community to offer help and support where it is needed most. Matching volunteers with members of the SAGE community will not only provide companionship during a time of isolation, but the program will also serve as an opportunity for folks to tap into the numerous resources SAGE is continuing to offer LGBT elders. SAGE's network of eager volunteers is especially pivotal for those dealing with obstacles due to COVID-19, whether those challenges manifest physically, emotionally, or mentally. Through SAGEConnect, volunteers not only offer a social connection, but can also direct LGBT elders to other resources, like SAGE's National LGBT Elder Hotline, its National Resource Center on LGBT Aging or local SAGE affiliates.

SAGE's commitment to LGBT elders continues to have profound impact on members of the community. As Julia, SAGE member stated, "you're letting people know that they're not invisible. That



someone does care about you in the middle of this crazy crisis really makes me feel a heck of a lot better." For Julia, and many others, SAGE is counting on SAGEConnect as a tool to strengthen community bonds and remind folks that LGBT elders refuse to be invisible, even during times of crisis. Those interested in participating can sign up on SAGE's website at sageusa.org/sageconnect.







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Calendar

As we went to press, lockdown was tentatively scheduled to end April 30. Please check out our online calendar. Some events/meetings may be held online. For latest updates, see www.eriegaynews.com

May 11 (Mon) - Deadline for Erie Gay News June 2020 issue (#295) (Erie Gay News, 1115 W 7th St, Erie, PA 16502-1105) Please have all articles, ads, and submissions in by this date. This issue will be released the evening of Tuesday, May 19.

Awareness Days May 3 (Sun) - International Family Equality Day (IFED) Celebrates the Diversity of Families globally. The Council of Europe recognises the IFED as an important tool to combat homophobia and transphobia and to promote a tolerant and cohesive society. Browse to http://internationalfamilyequalityday.org/.

May 17 (Sun) - International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia First celebrated in 2005, the main purpose of the May 17 mobilizations is to raise awareness of violence, discrimination, and repression of LGBT communities worldwide. Browse to https:// dayagainsthomophobia.org/.

May 18 (Mon) - HIV Vaccine Awareness Day This day is a chance to thank the volunteers, community members, health professionals, and scientists working together to find a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. It is also a time to educate communities about the importance of preventive HIV vaccine research. National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) leads this observance. #HVAD Browse to https://www.niaid.nih.gov/.

May 19 (Tue) - National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day A national campaign to end silence and shame about HIV/AIDS in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. #APIMay19 Browse to http://www.banyantreeproject.org/.

May 22 (Fri) - Harvey Milk Day Celebrated to honor Harvey Milk, assassinated politician, on his birthday, it is celebrated officially in California, Milk's home state. Browse to http://milkfoundation.org/.

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