



EGN

Erie Gay News



Virtual Pride Fest was held June 27, 2020 and broadcast from the Erie Playhouse. Kate Neubert Lechner, Executive director of Erie Playhouse; Lovin Heart drag performer and President of NW PA Pride Alliance; Tony Gressley, entertainment director for NW PA Pride Alliance; Samiar Nefzi, reporter for Jet 24/Fox66

2020 Virtual Pridefest Held on June 27

from NW PA Pride Alliance

NW PA Pride Alliance hosted 2020 Virtual Pride Fest on Saturday, June 27. Because of COVID concerns, it was not possible to be held in person this year. Speakers/presenters included US Sen. Bob Casey Jr, County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, Leroy Oglesby, and Erie City Mayor Joe Schember. Live performers in the webcast included Misty Michaels Kall, Lovin Heart, Rebecca Mae, Priscilla Godzilla, Debbie, and Austin Kulyk. Pre-recorded performers included Snarebear, Porshaa Lejays, and various performers from the Erie Playhouse. Emcees included Samiar Nefzi, reporter for Jet 24/Fox66; Lovin Heart/Alex Sphon President of NW PA Pride Alliance; and Toney Gressley, Entertainment Director for NW PA Pride Alliance. The viewing audience over the course of the event averaged around 175, with a maximum of 250.

Various organizations hosted their own virtual chat rooms during Pride Fest, similar to organizations having info tables at Pride Fest when it is held physically. Organizations with virtual chat rooms included American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Erie VA Medical Center, Highmark, Polyanna Law / Legal Clinic; SafeNet Center, Sarah A. Reed Children's Center, UPMC Hamot, and UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor

NW PA Pride Alliance wishes to also thank our donors, who make Pride possible: Erie County Department of Health (ECDH), NWPATobacco Control Program, Andora's Bubble Tea Shop, Hospice of Metropolitan Erie, Lake Erie Counseling Associates, AFSCME Local 2666, Whole Foods Co-op, and Temple Anshe Hessed.

City of Erie Offers \$1,000 Drawing as Census Deadline Shortens to Sept. 30

Erie, Pa. - Aug. 6, 2020 - The City of Erie is promoting a \$1,000 enter-to-win contest for residents who complete the census, as the federal government pulls back the response deadline to Sept. 30, a month earlier than planned.

"We just lost an entire month," said Renee Lamis, Chief of Staff to Mayor Joe Schember. "With less time to get our response rates up, we're offering City residents a chance to win \$1,000 cash and weekly \$100 gift cards just for taking the census."

City residents who complete the census are eligible to win a \$1,000 cash grand prize as well as weekly \$100 gift cards to local businesses and restaurants. Residents can enter the contest at CensusErie.com

"We need people to take the census now more than ever," says Mayor Joe Schember. "If we do not get our response numbers up, we will lose around \$1 billion in federal funding over the next ten years."

It is estimated that the City of Erie holds about 100,000 residents. As of Aug. 4, the City of Erie's response rate was at 61.7%. In 2010, the City's re-

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Erie Gay News
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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.

EGN Rates & Data

QUARTER PAGE	FULL PAGE	HALF PAGE VERTICAL
HALF PAGE HORIZONTAL	EIGHTH PAGE	

AD SIZE	PRICE/ISSUE	DIMENSIONS
EIGHTH	\$40 - \$36 Prepaid	1 ⁵ / ₈ " high X 2 ⁷ / ₈ " wide
QUARTER	\$65 - \$58.50 Prepaid	3 ¹ / ₂ " high X 2 ⁷ / ₈ " wide
HALF VERT.	\$120 - \$108 Prepaid	3 ¹ / ₂ " high X 6" wide
HALF HORZ.	\$120 - \$108 Prepaid	7" high X 2 ⁷ / ₈ " wide
FULL PAGE	\$200 - \$180 Prepaid	7 ¹ / ₂ " high X 6" wide

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To Lake Erie Counseling Associates for hosting!
 Audrey, Johauna, Kim Conti, and Rex Apps for folding;
 Audrey, Johauna, Kim Conti, 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.

Community News

sponse rate was about 76%.

In a statement on Aug. 3, U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham announced that census door-to-door operations and self response options will end on Sept. 30.

“We’re shocked the federal government shortened the deadline instead of extending it as proposed,” said Lamis. “Because of COVID-19, census workers haven’t even been able to go door to door yet.”

The deadline to enter the weekly drawings and \$1,000 grand prize is now Sept. 30. The sooner City of Erie residents complete the census, the more chances they have to win. For full contest details and to find out how to enter, visit CensusErie.com.

Northwest Alliance Mobile Unit for HIV Testing

Northwest Alliance’s mobile HIV testing unit is now available for use! The High Impact Prevention team at Northwest Alliance has been providing 2 minute rapid HIV tests. We have 2 vehicles to provide testing in NW PA but with a focus on Erie for right now. HIV testing has decreased across the country due to the focus on COVID. HIV testing for the last 5 months or so has decreased so much across the country, and we believe we are going to see the increased need for it very soon. We are flexible with where we can park the unit and are hoping to build collaborations with organizations to either host testing events or be able to park and offer testing to neighborhoods,



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clients, etc. We do have 2 units, but only utilizing one right now. We are offering \$5 Country Fair gift cards to those that would not normally get tested (homeless, youth, etc.) We weren't anticipating it to take off this quickly, but so far people have been extremely receptive. For more info, contact Emily Crofoot at ecrofoot@clarion.edu if your organization wants to collaborate on this important initiative.

Out of The Darkness Experience Sep 19

from American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-Erie

This year, due to the current circumstances, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is unable to host an in-person event on Presque Isle. Instead, we are having an Out of the Darkness Experience, which includes a number of engaging and self-care activities during the week of September 13th leading up to a radio and online ceremony on September 19th. You can see all of the activities planned and register online at <https://afsp.org/erie>.

When you participate in the Out of the Darkness Walks, you join the effort with hundreds of thousands of people to raise awareness and funds that allow the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) to invest in new research, create educational programs, advocate for public policy, and support survivors of suicide loss.

Thanks to people like you, AFSP has been able to set a bold goal to reduce the annual suicide rate 20% by 2025.

For more, please contact Nicole Moore at (860) 428-6110 or nicole.ruffo10@gmail.com

Local LGBT Nonprofits Benefit From The Region's Generosity

Tuesday, August 11, was the annual Erie Gives Day which raised \$6,287,202, surpassing last year's record of \$5,569,161. The amount will be shared among 422 nonprofits from around Erie County.

Our own LGBT community will benefit from gifts that were given for Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE)- \$10,465, LGBT Community Foundation- \$5,814, and NW PA Pride Alliance- \$970.

GEAE Youth Program

GEAE has paired with Centerlink to provide an online space for LGBTQA teens. The schedule and link can be found at: <http://greatereriealliance.com/gsa-program/>

The E3 Youth Summit will be held virtually November 20th and 21st with a drag show on the evening of the 20th.

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Tea Time with Drag Queens

by Kevin Yohn/ Alysin Wonderland (He/They)

Some people, when they think of Community, they think of their closest family, their neighbors that help out when things get rough. When I heard about a letter that was not only sent to Andora's Bubble Tea downtown I was furious. It's 2020, there's a lot more issues in the world to be concerned with and what trends to 'cancel' I posted publicly that I wanted to show my support, by painting up a mug and going to buy my FIRST Bubble Tea. I looked for assistance on who wanted to join and got the Idea to have a Tea Time event with Drag Queens. I reached out via Facebook to Andora's Bubble, to ask if they would like the support of me and my Sisters to help boost business, and show the individual who wrote the letter that "Yes, in fact that the LGBTQIA+ Community is big and strong enough to support them" So on, July 29th, Debbie, Pissi Gabune, Priscilla Godzilla, Rebecca Mae and Alysin Wonderland gathered at the shop to pose for pictures and accept donations for the NWPA Pride Alliance. The turn out was AMAZING. There were no less than 20 people at a time throughout the day. We raised over \$250 for the Alliance and when I spoke with the owners after our event ended, they said that there were TONS of new patrons, some who have never heard of the place or had Bubble Tea. Even while talking with some of the patrons, they heard about it through coverage on Erie New Now and the Facebook event. There were even a few people who stopped by to see what was with the crowd and were awestruck that we came together

for support. It was nonstop. When I spoke with a few of the patrons who attended, one woman said that while there and talking "It felt like Family" and was very thankful for us coming together and organizing a get together. The general consensus from all who participated would LOVE to have a gathering of the queens again. I spoke with one of the workers and she told me that she didn't know how much exactly they made in sales, but it was definitely the BUSIEST day they've ever experienced, and that the owners loved everything about it and would love to host the event again and maybe make it reoccurring thing. It was a great time for everyone. There were even comments made that since people couldn't interact with us at Pride this year, that this was just as amazing and fun.

No Such Thing as Just Emotional Abuse

from SafeNet Erie

Have you ever walked on eggshells? Probably not literally, but when you hear the expression "walking on eggshells," you know exactly what it means. In an intimate relationship, walking on eggshells is that feeling you get when you must choose your words carefully, worry about giving offense, or keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself for fear of angering your partner.

Many people think that as long as they haven't been physically attacked by their partner, they are not the victim of intimate partner violence. But survivors of relationship violence often say the slaps and bruises don't hurt as much or last as long as the scars



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of emotional despair. The perpetrator who thrives on power and control will barrage their partner with constant put-downs, name-calling, and mind games. They make their partner feel worthless and guilty. They question their partner's "real" sexual desires and identity. They may reinforce internalized homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia. Then they dismiss their partner's hurt feelings because, after all, it was just an argument. They were just words.

This is emotional abuse, and there is nothing just about it. There is no such thing as just emotional abuse.

If you feel anxious or numb because you live under relentless emotional attack, call SafeNet at 455-1774 and ask to speak with a counselor. If the need to talk strikes in the middle of the night, you can call SafeNet's hotline at 454-8161. All services are free and confidential.



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Jamestown Pride Planning Update

Jamestown Pride, organized through Mental Health Association in Chautauqua County, is moving ahead with the event for National Coming Out Day on Sunday, October 11th! We're looking at ways to make this a safe event for all of us while still being a fun, supportive community event.

You can help by adding your story to the Fenton History Center's exhibit about Jamestown and Chautauqua County's local LGBTQIA+ community.

Physical donations of items, permanent or loaned, can now be dropped off to the Fenton History Center at 67 Washington Street in the City of Jamestown. You also can submit items digitally through a Google doc prepared by the Fenton History Center.

If you feel more comfortable emailing, you also may send your story or items to Fenton History Center's Executive Director Noah Goodling at director@fentonhistorycenter.org.

Thanks again to the New York State Council on the Arts and the Greater Hudson Heritage Network for their support in making this exhibit possible!

Our next planning meeting is Tuesday, September 15th at 6 p.m. We'll send more information on the meeting location, whether in person or on Zoom, when we get closer to that date.

Lake Erie Gala Postponed to 2021

from Kara Ritchie and the Gala Management Team

The planning committee for Erie Sisters and Brothers Support Group's annual Lake Erie Gala, had a big discussion about the event. After much deliberation, it is with a heavy heart that they have decided the Lake Erie Gala 2020 has been cancelled.

We are now going to focus all our efforts to one hell of a Gala 2021! We have decided to do a second Cabin Fever type event in its place. It will be this November, the same Friday-Sunday of the original Gala on November 20-22. Anyone who wants to come, can make the trip and just have fun and no structure or schedule. We will be having our official Cabin Fever this February 19th-21st.

Please stay safe and healthy and hope to see everyone soon!

Mayor's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council Meeting on August 6

The Mayor's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council held their quarterly meeting via Zoom on Thursday, August 6. It was the consensus that creating agendas for upcoming meetings would be by a committee of a facilitator, a note taker, and the heads of the action teams. The current action teams are Health Care; Aging; Youth; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Marketing; and Education/Policy. Although action team leads should be advisory council members,



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participation on action teams are open to members of the community.

There was an update on the City of Erie's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) score with the Human Rights Campaign. There was also an update on efforts to raise the response rate for the 2020 US Census, which had its deadline moved up to September 20, 2020. The City of Erie is sponsoring giveaways to improve the response rate. Erie could lose up to a billion dollars in Federal funding over the course of the next decade if the return rate is low. The City of Erie is also working with United Clergy of Erie and the Minority Community Investment Coalition, as well as other community partners to limit the spread of COVID-19.

There was also an update about the previous PA Commission on LGBTQ+ Affairs meeting. Erie County Department of Health was recognized at the state level for being one of the first PA regional health departments to provide sexual health guidance that reflected the needs and concerns of the LGBTQ community during COVID-19.

Tammie Johnson, head of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion action team reported that she and Leroy Oglesby are now serving on the Strengthening Police and Community Partnership (SPCP) Council, and also participated in a mask giveaway thanks to UPMC Foundation. They also participated in an ice cream social with the Erie Police Department. The action team is also working on an RFP to have a policy to mandate all city contractors have an anti-discrimination policy. The City of Erie will also be sending out job openings with hopes of more LGBTQ+ applicants.

Currently, the next Mayors LGBTQIA+ Advisory Council meeting will be in early November.

PA Commission on LGBTQIA Affairs meeting on August 7

On Friday, August 7, the Pennsylvania Commission on LGBTQ Affairs held their quarterly meeting via Zoom.

With advocacy from commission members, PA Department of Health is now collecting sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data when tracking COVID-19 infections.

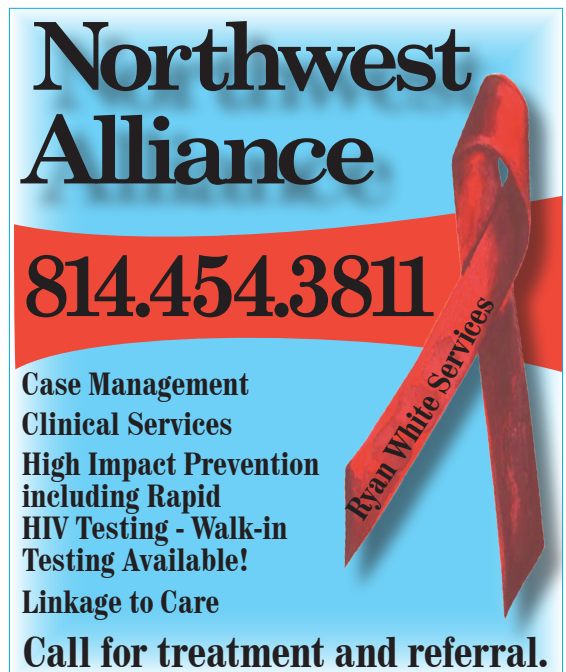
On June 4, there was a joint statement issued by Pennsylvania Commissions on African American, Latino, Asian Pacific American, Women and LGBTQ Affairs honoring the memory of George Floyd and other Americans of color who have lost their lives to police violence, and denouncing indoctrinated racism, bigotry and sanctioned violence.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is now issuing driver's licenses with a gender non-binary marker. This does NOT require documentation from a doctor or social worker.

On June 5, the commission issued a statement defending Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine and denouncing transphobia in the Commonwealth.

The PA Department of Aging (PDA) is working on their four year plan, a regularly recurring task. On July 15, the PDA held a virtual town hall about the proposed plan specifically targeting the LGBTQ community. About 150 people participated.

Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data is not being collected by the 2020 US Census, but



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LGBTQ people are strongly encouraged to complete the census, as it directly ties into Federal funding for the next decade for the communities that we live in. Co-vice-chair Ciora Thomas and executive director Rafael Alvarez Febo are working on an LGBTQ Census Initiative to gather data for our Commonwealth. This is an opportunity for engagement while getting data for advocacy.

We will probably have to wait until the next legislative session to push the non-discrimination act. Although the recent US Supreme Court decision on Title VII extended anti-discrimination to employment, it still should be in state law explicitly, and the SCOTUS ruling does not address housing or public accommodations, or smaller employers. The PA Human Relations Commission is currently accepting claims related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Pennsylvania needs comprehensive legislation that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

The SCOTUS Title VII ruling's implications for Title XI, which would affect queer youth in school is not clear. It is hoped that the ruling will encourage school districts to create policy addressing queer youth.

The Commonwealth's collection of SOGI data for COVID-19 is a step forward, as Pennsylvania was the first in the nation to take this step. However, data collection for COVID-19 is only collected regarding infection, but not hospitalization or mortality. The PA Department of Health is still looking for contact tracing staff.

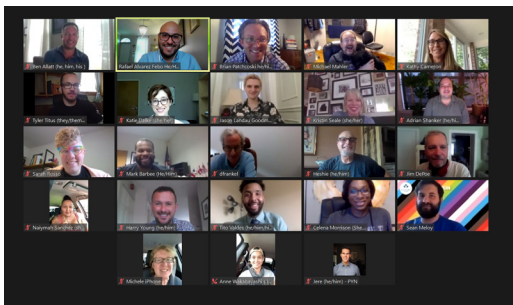
Aging committee discussed the submission of the PDA four-year plan for review. While waiting for the plan to be formally adopted in September,

the next task is to review the web site for the PA Department of aging and also regional area agencies on aging for cultural competence.


The Education committee is working with the Department of Human Services to support queer youth and finding out resource gaps for youth. There are internet inequities with marginalized communities within the LGBTQ youth population being able to access resources, which is particularly critical during the current COVID crisis. In addition to locating resources, we also need to focus on ways to get info to consumers.

Health committee continues to work on sexual health guidelines for the PA Dept of Health, also education for Intersex Awareness Day on Oct 26.

Legislative and Policy committee is planning strategies around comprehensive non-discrimination legislation. They need help with collecting stories of the impact of currently not having this legislation.



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http://gayellowpages.com

Calendar

For latest updates, see www.eriegaynews.com

Aug 23 (Sat) - TransFamily of NWP (Erie) Transgender Support Group meets (Zoom) 2 PM. Currently meeting via Zoom. Please message via Facebook page for meeting info.

Sep 4 - 7 (Fri - Mon) - Labor Day Weekend (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park, 9835 Old State Rd, Angelica, NY 14709-8729)

Sep 4 - 7 (Fri - Mon) - Labor Day Weekend at Camp Davis (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

Sep 6 & 20 (Sun) - Full Spectrum Youth Social & Support Group meets (Full Spectrum Community Outreach Center, 5060 Youngstown Poland Rd, Youngstown, OH 44514) 3 PM - 5 PM. Ages 14 & up, under 14 with guardian consent. Meets in person at Full Spectrum and also streams via Zoom.

Sep 10 - 14 (Thu - Mon) - Friends & Family Weekend (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park, 9835 Old State Rd, Angelica, NY 14709-8729) .

Sep 12 (Sat) - Camp-O-Con Weekend at Camp Davis (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

Sep 12 (Sat) - Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE) Virtual 5K Fun Run and Walk 8 AM - 2 PM. Grab a friend and get ready to run (or walk) in your favorite spot! All donations and proceeds benefit GEAE's mission to create a safe and welcoming community for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Your \$25 registration fee includes a T-shirt and a donation to GEAE. Walk/Run Packages will be available for pickup on Sept. 10 & 11 from 10 am to 12 pm at the GEAE office at 301 W. 10th Street in Erie. While you're there, take a chance on a cool raffle basket and grab some pride swag! Phone: (866) 229-1974. Email: GEAEinfo@gmail.com. Browse to <http://greatereriealliance.com/>. RSVP/Register/Tickets at <https://www.facebook.com/events/261412931617639/>.

Sep 13 & 27 (Sun) - Full Spectrum Gender Support Group meets (Full Spectrum Community Outreach Center) 9th: 6-8PM, 23: 3-5PM 18+. Meets in person at Full Spectrum and also streams via Zoom.

Sep 13 & 27 (Sun) - Full Spectrum Sexuality Support-Group meets (Full Spectrum Community Outreach Center) 3-5PM 18+. Meets in person at Full Spectrum and also streams via Zoom.

Sep 14 (Mon) - Erie County Democratic Party LGBTQIA+ Caucus meets (Zoom) 7 PM. General

meeting on Zoom. Contact Michael Mahler at (814) 456-9833 or mmahler@eriedems.com.

Sep 14 (Mon) - Deadline for Erie Gay News October 2020 print edition (#297) (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, Sep 22

Sep 18 - 20 (Fri - Sun) - Halloween Weekend (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park).

Sep 18 (Fri) - National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day This day brings attention to the growing number of people living long and full lives with HIV and to their health and social needs. #NHAAAD #HIVandAging Browse to <http://www.theaidsinstitute.org/programs/education/national-hiv-aids-and-aging-awareness-nhaaa>.

Sep 19 (Sat) - Fall Festival Weekend at Camp Davis Sep 19 (Sat) - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Out of the Darkness Erie Experience (Online) 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM.

Sep 20 (Sun) - Full Spectrum Friends & Family of Gender-Variant Individuals Support Group meets (Full Spectrum Community Outreach Center) 3 PM - 5 PM. Ages 14 & up, under 14 with guardian consent. Meets in person at Full Spectrum and also streams via Zoom.

Sep 22 (Tue) - Erie Gay News folding/distribution work party (Lake Erie Counseling Associates, 301 W 10th St, Erie, PA 16502) 7 PM. Limited number of volunteers welcome. You must wear a mask and practice social distancing.

Sep 25 - 27 (Fri - Sun) - Bear Weekend #2 (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park).

Sep 26 (Sat) - Country Cow Poke Weekend at Camp Davis

Sep 26 (Sat) - TransFamily of NWP (Erie) Transgender Support Group meets (Zoom) 2 PM. Currently meeting via Zoom. Please message via Facebook page for meeting info.

Sep 27 (Sun) - National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day In 2008 the National Association of People with AIDS launched this observance day to recognize the disproportionate impact of the epidemic on gay men. #NGMHAAD Browse to <https://www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days/gay-mens>.

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