



Rebecca Mae at The Zone, 133 W 18th St, Erie PA for February 12 RuPaul's Drag Race viewing party. Photo by Andrea Shaffer.

The Zone is Never a Drag

by Michael Mongera

The Zone Dance Club is wading through lockdown restrictions with the help of RuPaul's Drag Race. Erie's flagship gay bar is open for business again. After a string of openings and closings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the bar is experiencing a promising new year. The Zone has been holding viewing parties for weekly episodes of the new season of RuPaul's Drag Race season.

Since New Years, VH1 has been airing a new season of the pop culture juggernaut RuPaul's Drag Race to keep customers entertained. While the bar has had to change its layout to adhere to prevent COVID-19 measures. There's now expansive seating to enjoy a meal, while drag entertainer, Rebecca Mae's hosts viewing parties each Friday.

Patrons can expect a new episode of RuPaul's Drag Race, followed by live performances from local queens like Shea D'Heaux and Alysia Wonderland. Erie allies can join in on the party on Fridays. Doors open at 5 pm with no cover, and new episodes start at 8pm.

Before the pandemic, The Zone has hosted viewing parties for previous seasons. You can follow their social media for updates at @zonedanceclub on Instagram or Facebook.

Food Drive on March 20

from NW PA Pride Alliance

On March 20th from 10 am-2 pm, NWPA Pride Alliance and Greater Erie Alliance for Equality will continue their Give Back Events with Food Drive Benefiting the Second Harvest Book Bank of NWPA. They have also teamed up with Erie Gay News and Northwest Alliance, and other Erie LGBTQIA+ groups for this event. A donation of non-perishable food items can be made by just driving up to the parking lot of Greater Erie Alliance for Equality at 301 W 10th Street in Erie. (corner of W10 and Myrtle) If you are unable to donate and would rather make a monetary donation, please visit <https://nwpafoodbank.org>

Create Your Own Podcast - Queer Youth Event on Mar 9

from Compton's Table

Join us with on March 9, 2021 from 6:00pm - 7:30pm as Dr. Jamie Muskopf (she/her) shows us the power within a podcast. Dr. Jamie is an experienced creator who will lend her skills in using technology and platform to empower and elevate our lived experiences! Register for this virtual event for queer youth at Compton's Table web site at <https://comptonstable.org/>

City of Erie LGBTQIA+ Council urges Congress to pass the Equality Act

Other Erie LGBTQIA+ organizations also support passage

Feb 18, 2021 - The City of Erie LGBTQIA+ Council announces today that it has joined other LGBTQIA+ organizations from all US state and territories to urge Congress to pass the Equality Act, which was reintroduced today. The Equality Act is

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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
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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
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FULL PAGE	\$200 - \$180 Prepaid	7 ¹ / ₂ " high X 6" wide

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 is now included in **The EBSCO *LGBT Life***® with Full Text Index & Six LGBT Archives **WORLDWIDE!**

THANKS

From Your Friends at Erie Gay News

To Lake Erie Counseling Associates for hosting! Andrea Shaffer, Jeff Hill, Johauna, Kim Conti, and Rex Apps for folding; Jeff Hill, 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

bipartisan legislation that would update federal law to include express and enduring nondiscrimination protections for 13 million LGBTQIA+ Americans across virtually every area of daily life. Other Erie regional LGBTQIA+ organizations signing on as supporters include Erie County Democratic Party LGBTQIA+ Caucus, Erie Sisters and Brothers, Erie Gay News, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE), NWPA Pride Alliance, Pennsylvania Equality Project, and TransFamily of NWPA

Fifty percent of LGBTQIA+ people live in the 29 states that lack comprehensive and consistent statewide laws explicitly prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people. While 21 states and over 350 cities have passed LGBTQIA+ nondiscrimination protections, including the County of Erie, this patchwork of protections is unsustainable and leaves too many people behind.

Our nation's civil rights laws protect people on the basis of race, color, national origin, and in most cases, sex, disability, and religion. But federal law does not explicitly provide non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The need for these protections is clear-nearly two-thirds of LGBTQIA+ Americans report having experienced discrimination in their personal lives.

The Equality Act would amend existing civil rights law-including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Jury Selection and Services Act, and several laws regarding employment with the federal government-to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics. The legislation also amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination in public spaces and services and federally funded programs on the basis of sex.

Additionally, the Equality Act would update the public spaces and services covered in current law to include retail stores, services such as banks and legal services, and transportation services. These important updates would strengthen existing protections for everyone.

The nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute recently found that national public support for the Equality Act is around 83 percent. This is the strongest level of support the bill has ever seen. Congress will take up the Equality Act next week and the

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City of Erie LGBTQIA+ urges its swift passage an enactment into law.

COVID-19 Vaccinations at Central Outreach Wellness Center

On Tuesday, February 16, Central Outreach Wellness Center, 3104 State St, Erie, PA, vaccinated about 60 people with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. There had been an online sign-up announced the preceding Thursday. It is hoped that there will be another round of vaccines available soon. Please check Central Outreach Wellness Center's website at <https://www.centraloutreach.com/> for more details. The phone for the Erie office is (814) 619-4009. Additionally, Erie Gay News and other local LGBTQ websites and social media will help get the word out when COVID-19 vaccines are available.

Drenched Fur 16 Wonderland Awaits in 2022

by Gary Snyder

A year ago we were unaware of the COVID-19 pandemic that would turn things upside down and inside out. As the world begins to see advances in vaccines improving public health, the safety and welfare of our event attendees continues to be the primary driver of our decision making processes. Many events have adjusted in various ways and Drenched Fur is not much different. The coming months will be critical for the future of social events.

Initially the Drenched Fur Committee made plans to host the event one year later, in April of 2021. However events of size are facing limitations along with new government guidelines to follow. Drenched Fur continues working toward our goal to host an

event that attendees will not only enjoy, but can do so within safe environments. The DF Committee is working with our contract partners to host DF16 next year during the weekend of March 31 - April 3, 2022.

We understand that folks wanting to attend DF16 this year on April 8-11 2021 will have questions. The DF Committee is currently planning transition steps to to cement initial details for next year's event as we continue our new experience of hosting Drenched Fur for the Bear community in a global pandemic. Registered attendees will be sent follow-up communication with details in the coming weeks. Please continue following steps to prevent/limit the spread of COVID-19. Thank you for the continuous support and belief in our desire to create a space of fun and frolic.

Tyler Titus announces bid for Erie County Executive

by Rex Apps

Tyler Titus (they/them/their) the first openly

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transgender person elected to public office in Pennsylvania, and the current Erie School Board President announced February 10 on Zoom their candidacy for the Democratic nomination for Erie County Executive.

Current County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper announced on December 15 that she would not be running for election in 2021.

Titus grew up in Titusville, Pennsylvania and later moved to Erie in 2003 when they attended Mercyhurst University graduating with a Bachelor of Art's degree in Marriage and Family Studies. After an internship with the Erie County Office of Children and Youth (ECOCY) they were hired as a case worker in 2007. In 2012, they earned a Master's degree in Community Counseling. Most recently in 2020, Titus received their Doctorate in social work. They are also a licensed professional mental health counselor in private practice.

Tyler is the founder and CEO of Compton's Table, an organization for queer youth. They serve

as the Vice-Chair of the Pennsylvania Commission of LGBT Affairs as well as on the Advisory Counsel for the Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE).

Currently, only fellow Democrat Carl Anderson and Republican Brenton Davis have announced they are also seeking the county's top job.

The Primary election for Pennsylvania is set for Tuesday, May 18. All candidates must return their petitions with at least the minimum number of voters' signatures from their party by March 9 to be placed on the ballot.

Biden nominates Doctor Rachel Levine as Assistant Health Secretary

by Rex Apps

President Joe Biden made history with the nomination of Doctor Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania's top health official, as his assistant secretary of health. Doctor Levine would become the first openly

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transgender federal official to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Doctor Levine is a graduate of Harvard University and Tulane Medical School and completed her residency at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, where she was also a teacher. In 2014, Doctor Levine was the top doctor at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and served on the board of Equality Pennsylvania, a statewide LGBT rights group. It was then that she was asked by Tom Wolf to co-chair his transition team for health matters.

A year after that, Wolf appointed her as Pennsylvania's physician general, the state's top doctor. Doctor Levine won state confirmation with an unanimous vote in 2015. In 2017, Governor Wolf appointed Levine to be Secretary of Health.

While serving in state government, Doctor Levine has made her way here to Erie and served as speaker at the Erie PRIDEFest on August 29, 2015, and was a presenter at the Greater Erie Alliance for Equality's Intersections of Equality held on April 30, 2016.

PrEP 2-1-1 for Anal Sex

Adapted from an article by Aaron Valentic from QBurgh

When it comes to safe sex, it is always best to proceed with caution. Sure, we have the essentials like condoms, lube and routine STD/STI screenings, but there is more to it than most know.

Within the LGBTQ+ Community, many often hear the term "PrEP" (pre-exposure prophylaxis), or PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), oftentimes at the worst possible moment one could. Yet, by following a regimen of medication (Truvada, or more widely, Descovy through GILEAD), you will be able to eliminate the added stress of fearing protection.

An effective way for preventing HIV is the "PrEP 2-1-1 Method" – a crucial method in order to easily maintain your regimen while remaining sexually active. First, you will take your initial two pills within the first two to twenty-four hours before your first sexual encounter (remember, closer to twenty-four hours is better). Once your first set of pills has been administered, continue to take one pill every



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twenty-four hours. Once you have stopped having sexual encounters, take the final two pills twenty-four hours apart. (See infographic in the online version of this article.)

After the initial dosage, patients are able to continue to take one daily dosage if that feels more comfortable for their daily routine.

Still have questions? No need to fear – please follow along with the graphic below “Taking PrEP 2-1-1 For Anal Sex” in the online version of this article, with commonly asked questions PrEP users might have while on their regimen. If you still require further assistance, reach out to Central Outreach Wellness Center at (814) 619-4009, or centraloutreach.com, and speak with a provider.

If you miss a dose, immediately take 2 Truvada pills and contact Central Outreach Wellness at (814) 619-4009 or CentralOutreach.com

Pro Tips:

- * Taking the pills as recommended is crucial to making 2-1-1 dosing work for you.
- * Use reminders and alarms.
- * Use 2-1-1 with all sexual encounters. Don't pick and choose when to use 2-1-1.
- * Switch to daily dosing whenever you want if it's a better fit for you.
- * Always make sure to take the last 2 doses after your last sexual encounter.

A note on FDA review: Once-daily Truvada is currently the only FDA-approved strategy for PrEP. There is an additional strategy called PrEP 2-1-1 for anal sex, where you take Truvada only when you have

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sex. This additional strategy has not been reviewed by the FDA, as Gilead, the pharmaceutical company, has not submitted this strategy for FDA approval. However, there is substantial published evidence this dosing strategy will work, requiring less lifetime exposure to Truvada compared to once-daily dosing. The San Francisco Department of Public Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), the New York City Department of Public Health, and the International AIDS Society in the USA (professional medical society) endorse PrEP 2-1-1.

This medical update is published as part of QWellness, presented by Central Outreach Wellness Center and QBurgh.

Cyber Security Virtual Workshop on May 13 - Co-hosts Sought

On May 13, the PA Department of Banking and Securities will be presenting a virtual workshop - Cybersecurity – Keeping Yourself Safe Online. Organizations including NW PA Pride Alliance and Erie Gay News are partnering to promote this important educational opportunity. We would love to have additional co-hosts of the event, whether LGBTQ-focused or not. The only responsibility for being a co-host is to promote the event to your organization's social media or website. Co-hosting organizations will be listed on the event page and in promotional materials. This is a similar collaborative effort as the Zoom presentation on the 2020 Pennsylvania LGBTQ Health Needs Assessment results. If your organization wants to partner, contact Michael Mahler at info@eriegaynews.com or (814) 456-9833.

Whatever your age, understanding how to keep your information safe and secure online is vitally important for everyone. This presentation covers key topics like using secure websites, creating strong passwords, being aware of what you put on social media, and even tips for shopping online safely.

Erie Gay News Now on Instagram

Erie Gay News now is on Instagram, as well as maintaining our presence on Facebook, Twitter, and our web site. Be sure to follow us for photos from over 25 years of Erie's LGBTQIA+ history and new content!

**Deadline for Next EGN issue
Mar 15**

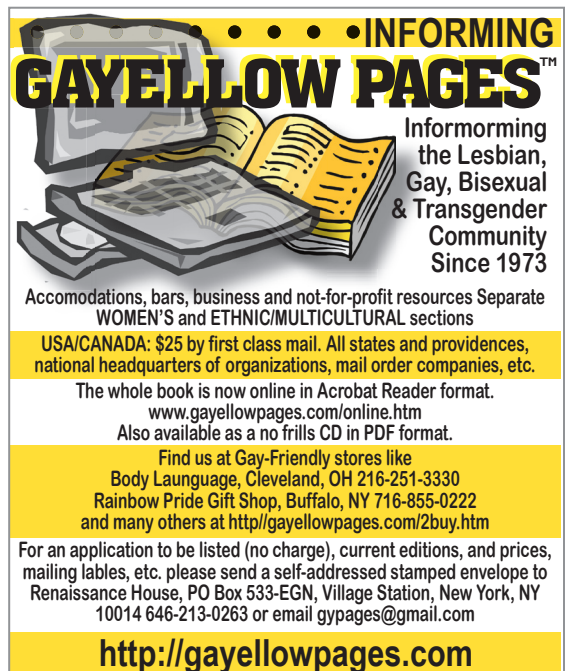


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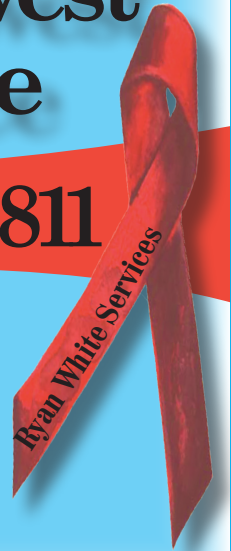
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Calendar

For latest updates, see www.eriegaynews.com

Feb 26 (Fri) - International STAND UP to Bullying Day International STAND UP to Bullying Day is a special event in which participants sign and wear a pink “pledge shirt” to take a visible, public stance against bullying. Browse to <https://www.facebook.com/pg/standupday/>.

Feb 21 - 27 (Sun - Sat) - Aromantic Spectrum Awareness Week An aromantic is someone who doesn't experience romantic attraction. Arospec is the shorthand name for people who identify anywhere on the aromantic spectrum, including aromantics. Aro Awareness Week is for anyone on the aromantic spectrum, regardless of where they lie there or sexual orientation. Browse to <http://www.arospecweek.org/>.

Feb 27 (Sat) - TransFamily of NWP (Erie) Transgender Support Group meets (Zoom) 2 PM. Currently meeting via Zoom. Please message via Facebook page for meeting info.

Mar 1 - 31 (Mon - Wed) - Bisexual Health Awareness Month Bisexual Health Awareness Month is dedicated to raising awareness about the startling social, economic and health disparities facing the bi+ community. Browse to <https://bihealthmonth.org/>.

Mar 1 (Mon) - Zero Discrimination Day Zero Discrimination Day is an annual day celebrated by the UN and other international organisations. The day aims to promote equality before the law and in practice throughout all of the member countries of the UN. Browse to http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/campaigns/zero_discrimination.

Mar 8 (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.

Mar 9 (Tue) - Create Your Own Podcast - Queer Youth Event (Online) 6 PM - 7:30 PM. Join us as Dr. Jamie Muskopf (she/her) shows us the power within a podcast. Dr. Jamie is an experienced creator who will lend her skills in using technology and platform to empower and elevate our lived experiences! Register for this virtual event for queer youth at Compton's Table web site at <https://comptonstable.org/>

Mar 9 (Tue) - Youngstown PFLAG meets virtually (Zoom) 7 PM - 8:30 PM. Youngstown Area PFLAG's support group meeting will gather virtually. Any person who would like to join us can request the zoom

link from youngstownareapflag.org Contact: Toni Schildcrout. Email: youngstownareapflag@gmail.com. Browse to <http://www.youngstownpflag.org/>.

Mar 10 (Wed) - National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NWGHAAD) sheds light on the impact of HIV and AIDS on women and girls. #NWGHAAD Browse to <https://www.womenshealth.gov/nwghaad/>.

Mar 14 (Sun) - LBT Women of Erie meets (Zoom) 12 PM - 12:30 PM. Meeting ID: 733 6894 3066. Passcode: 2NgZqW. <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/73368943066?pwd=VS9rSUIrK3Y2Y0JodVpQZEpaXVBQT09> Contact: Kim Conti. Phone: (814) 490-3994. Email: ErieBeans@yahoo.com. Browse to <https://www.facebook.com/LBTWOMENOFERIE>.

Mar 16 (Tue) - Erie County HIV Task Force meets via Zoom 1 PM - 2:30 PM. Zoom Meeting ID: 927 9128 9996. Passcode: 940728

Mar 20 (Sat) - National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day was first observed in 2007. This day is observed on the first day of Spring each year. #NNHAAD Browse to <https://www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days/native>.

Mar 20 (Sat) - Food Drive (Lake Erie Counseling Associates, 301 W 10th St, Erie, PA 16502) 10 AM - 2 PM. Non-perishable food items and monetary donations to benefit Second Harvest Food Bank of NW PA. Co-hosted by Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE), NW PA Pride Alliance, Erie Gay News, and Northwest PA Rural AIDS Alliance.

Mar 23 (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.

Mar 27 (Sat) - TransFamily of NWP (Erie) Transgender Support Group meets (Zoom) 2 PM. Currently meeting via Zoom. Please message via Facebook page for meeting info.

Mar 27 (Sat) - “Power, Love & Presence: The Joys of Getting Older” Workshop (Zoom) 4 PM - 6 PM. Each workshop in the series will have unique content. To keep it easy and fun to participate, each workshop is limited to a maximum of 20 men. Each workshop will run for 2 hours with a short break midway. www.lifebeyondtherapy.com/.

Mar 31 (Wed) - International Transgender Day of Visibility <http://tdov.org/>.

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