

Saegertown Pride Alliance (SPA) Officers: SPA's elected officers (from left): Amanda Crowl, Zaine Eback, LaWrynn Edwards, Royal Miller, and Jazlen Miller. See page 3.

COVID-19 Vaccines Mobile Clinic

HARRISBURG, PA - April 12, 2021- Pennsylvania Department of Health hosted a press conference to announce a partnership with Latino Connection and Highmark Blue Shield, to launch the first statewide COVID-19 Mobile Vaccination Clinic tour to provide vaccinations and education targeting minority and underserved communities.

"The department has worked across state agencies and with external partners, including Latino Connection and Highmark Blue Shield, to identify vulnerable populations for whom receiving the CO-VID-19 vaccine is especially critical," Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam said. "This partnership is another successful example of our health equity efforts to ensure Pennsylvanians, no matter where they live or what language they speak, will have access to COVID-19 vaccinations. It also will help combat vaccine hesitancy, as trusted nurses will be able to provide patients with factual, take-home educational materials about the COVID-19 vaccines."

Latino Connection will use mobile units to

conduct a statewide vaccination and education tour. One unit, called CATE (Community-Accessible Testing & Education) was used in fall 2020 for a mobile COVID-19 testing tour. All units are equipped to conduct COVID-19 vaccinations on-site through a mobile vehicle while educating the public on how to stay healthy and safe. This is the first statewide dedicated vaccine mobile clinic in Pennsylvania.

As Erie Gay News was going to press, there are plans to have a mobile COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Erie that would target underserved populations, including the LGBTQ community. Please continue to check the website and social media for Erie Gay News and other area LGBTQ organizations for details when plans are finalized.

Spill The Tea Tuesdays Start May 4

Starting May 4, Erie Gay News will have a fun question as a conversation starter on our Facebook page for you! Our new #SpillTheTeaTuesday is a chance to share what makes you happy and great memories! If you have a question that you would like to propose for our new feature, email info@eriegaynews.com..

Coping With COVID Support Group meets Tuesdays April 20-May 11

Join us for a free, 4 week support group exploring themes of self care, self compassion, challenging negative thoughts, and creating safety. The workshop is presented by Journey to a Trauma Informed Life and happens April 20, April 27, May 4, May 11 from 4:00 to 5:00 PM at Central Outreach Wellness Center, 3104 State St, Erie PA. Have you been feeling stressed and overwhelmed? This past year we have all had to deal with difficult challenges, loss, stressors, and living with the unknown. Join Brianna Morrow and Mindy Luthey for a support group to help cope with the unprecedented challenges we have all been facing. Sign up at https://form.jotform.com/210976016714152. Questions? Please call or text (814) 201- 6432

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| AD SIZE | PRICE/ISSUE | DIMENSIONS |
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| EIGHTH | \$40 - \$36 Prepaid | 15/8" high X 2 7/8" wide |
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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

Fax: (440) 551-5985 info@eriegaynews.com www.eriegaynews.com

Editor/Layout: Mike Mahler

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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, Johauna, Kim Conti, Marty Sargent, Michael Mongera, and Rex Apps for folding; Johauna, Kim Conti, Marty Sargent, 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.

Zone Trivia Thursdays

from The Zone Dance Club

The Zone, 133 W 18th St, Erie PA, is now hosting triva nights every Thursday. Door opens at 8. Game starts at 9. The Zone is back to their regular hours of 8 PM to 2 AM. Masks are required when not sitting at your table. Social distancing is still required and dancing is not allowed due to COVID safety concerns. For more updates, follow The Zone on Facebook or Instagram.

Erie LGBTQIA+ Community to Celebrate Pridefest Virtually for a Second Year

The NWPA Pride Alliance, Inc., has announced that the upcoming PrideFest scheduled for Saturday, June 26, 2021 will be held virtually for the second year in a row. Given the continued uncertainty surrounding in-person gatherings amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization voted to host a virtual event out of an abundance of caution. On the decision to not hold an in-person event in June, board president Alex Sphon said, "This was one of the hardest decisions we as a board had to make. We all want to have an in-person event, but we could not jeopardize the health and safety of our community."

NWPA Pride Alliance will once again partner with the Erie Playhouse to present Erie Virtual Pride 2021 on the LECOM Stage at the Playhouse.

"The Erie Playhouse is thrilled to partner again with the NWPA Pride Alliance for the 2021 virtual pride celebration. We're honored to be able to provide a location for one of the most fabulous events of the year and look forward to celebrating the LGBTQIA+ folx of Northwestern PA and beyond," said executive director Kate Neubert-Lechner about the upcoming event.

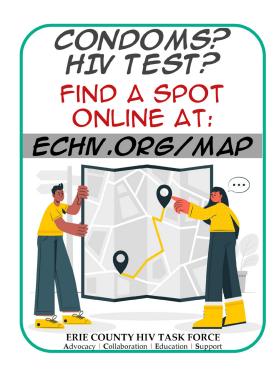
Further information regarding the event, including streaming platforms and performers, will be available on NWPA Pride's Facebook page and website prior to the event.

Saegertown Pride Alliance (SPA) sports new officers and new look

By LaWrynn Edwards

Saegertown Pride Alliance (SPA) members are coming together with new shirts and new officers to spread their positive message of acceptance.

The new shirts include two designs, a small





rainbow-colored panther paw on the front that reads "Saegertown Pride Alliance" and a large design of hands intertwined on the center back that reads "We Support." These logos were brainstormed by the members of SPA. Freshman LaWrynn Edwards created the initial designs, and the images were finalized by Lisa Currier of K & M Graphics in Linesville.

During the March 4 business meeting, the group re-elected officers because previous officers had either left the district or failed to attend meetings. Junior Jazlen Miller remained president. Junior Royal Miller was elected vice president; Amanda Crowl, secretary; Zaine Eback, treasurer; and LaWrynn Edwards, social media editor. SPA meets on Thursdays during lunch plus and all are welcomed to attend.

Along with the election of new officers, SPA is working to build connections with each other and gain new members. Recent meetings have included paint chip poetry, asking questions about one another, trivia, ice breakers, and sharing life experiences. Future meetings will include outdoor activities as the weather improves.

The group is also working to have ally window clings made available to staff members who wish to show their support for LGBTQ+ students. This would allow students to know they are welcome and can turn to those teachers for guidance.

"Whenever I go into a classroom where I might feel uncomfortable," SPA member Trinity Eback says, "At least I know the adult in the room is an ally of what I am. I still feel comfortable being in that room."

SPA has also gathered a number of new members and is still growing.

"I enjoy it a lot [SPA] because it is a place where everyone should feel safe and have a good time," a seventh-grade member said. SPA isn't just a place for students of the LGBTQ+ community to



feel safe; it is a place for everyone to come and have a place to feel accepted.

(LaWrynn Edwards writes for the Panther Press, Saegertown High School's award-winning newsmedia program.)

Drag Queen Bingo on May 2

Due to the overwhelming response, another Erie Drag Queen Bingo is scheduled. for Sunday, May 2, 2021 at 1:15 PM at Zem Zem Shrine Club, 2525 W 38th Street Erie, PA

Come out and have fun at Erie's Drag Queen Bingo. OVER \$2000 in CASH PRIZES!!And some crazy door prizes!!

Join your favorite Drag Queens, Rebecca Mae, Michelle Michael's, and Priscilla Godzilla for a crazy night of Bingo and fun.

Be warned... No one is safe from the Queens! Prepare for 2 hours of dirty jokes, ruthless insults, and side-splitting laughs! Not for the easily offended!

Tickets & Reservations can be made online at: www.ErieDragQueenBingo.com. Limited Seating Available. MUST be 18 and older to attend.Tickets are NOT transferable.

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GEAE Scholarships

GEAE is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2021-2022 school year. This year, GEAE will award up to three \$1,000 scholarships to applicants between the age of 17-25. Applicants must be residents of Erie County, Pennsylvania. This application is open to those who are seeking scholarship money to any university, community college, technical school, art school, or para-professional program. Applicants can be currently enrolled in their program. Any eligible candidate who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community is invited to apply. Current board members, advisory members, and their families are not eligible for this scholarship.

The recipients will receive \$1,000 made payable, and sent directly, to the educational institution indicated in their application.

Recipients will be chosen based on their application, which should be submitted via the GEAE website (www.greatereriealliance.com). The scholarship will be awarded to the applicant who best demonstrates a commitment to make an impact on their community as a LGBTQ+ advocate. Though we ask

for the applicant to submit their GPA, the GEAE Pride Scholarship is not purely an academic scholarship.

Requirements:

- 1. 500 minimum word essay answering the following: Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure associated with being a part of the LGBTQI+ community. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? Essays will be judged on content as well as grammar and punctuation rules.
 - 2. Admission to an educational institution
- 3. Letter or recommendation from a teacher, coach, employer, or mentor (not required)

The application deadline is July 15. GEAE will present the awards at our Afternoon for Equality event at the Erie Yacht Club on August 15. The recipients will be invited to receive their award at this event but are not required to attend. All applicants will be notified by the first week of August.

Visit the GEAE website at www.greatereriealliance.com to apply for the scholarship. If you have questions, please contact us at geaeinfo@gmail.com.



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May 13 Cybersecurity Workshop

On Thursday, May 13, at 7 PM, the PA Department of Banking and Securities will be presenting a virtual workshop - Cybersecurity – Keeping Yourself Safe Online. To register for the event and get the Zoom link, fill out the form at http://bit.ly/cyberworkshopreg.

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.

Organizations including Erie Gay News, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality, Lake Erie Counseling, LBT Women of Erie, Northwest Alliance, NW PA Pride Alliance, Pennsylvania Equality Project, Safe Harbor, SafeNet, and TransFamily of NW PA are partnering to promote this important educational opportunity. For questions, contact Michael Mahler at info@eriegaynews.com or (814) 456-9833

SAGE of Western PA Zoom Meetings Every Tuesday

from Persad Center

SAGE of Western PA at Persad is looking to promote friendship and community for LGBTQ+ plus seniors in all areas of the Commonwealth.

SAGE (Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders) is a nationwide organization which has been working to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults since 1978. The Western PA chapter of SAGE hosts a regular Zoom meeting on Tuesday evenings from 7p to 8pm for area LGBTQ+ seniors looking for a comfortable, safe and welcoming environment to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

The Western PA chapter is seeking to expand our presence in the rural and outlying regions of the state where isolation can sometimes be a huge problem for LGBTQ+ seniors. SAGE of Western PA invites any LGBTQ+ senior looking for friendship and fun to join us on our calls.

We send out links twice a week to our Zoom meetings and if you'd like to receive an invitation, just send your email address to thoover@persadcenter. If you have any questions, just give us a call at 412/518-1515.

Hope to see you on the call.

Equality for PA Series: NW PA

by Dana Rasmussen, TransFamily of NW PA Board Member-she/her/hers

What impacts and barriers does Pennsylvania face due to the lack of statewide LGBTQ+ protections?

This was the main question of a Facebook Live event held on April 1st by Representative Brian Sims.

The panel consisted of Alex Sphon, Dana Rasmussen, and Leroy Oglesby. Collectively they represent the following local LGBT+ organizations: City of Erie LGBTQ+ Advisory Council, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality, NW PA Pride Alliance, and TransFamily of NWPA.

While the city and county of Erie have specific protections from LGBTQ+ discrimination, there are Pennsylvania cities and counties which do not.

Among the items discussed were importance of an LGBTQ+ council, access to health care including mental health, housing, public accommodations, employment, and safety.

Food Drive for Second Harvest Food Bank of NW PA

from NW PA Pride Alliance

On Saturday, March 20, 2021, the Erie LG-BTQIA+ Community came together to host a food drive benefiting the Second Harvest Food Bank of NWPA. Erie Gay News, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality, Northwest Alliance, and NWPA Pride Alliance collected the donations from 10 am to 2 pm. Nine hundred fifty-four pounds of nonperishable foods



Food drive on March 20 at Greater Erie Alliance for Equality/Lake Erie Counseling

were collected as well as \$500 in cash donations.

If you missed the food drive and would like to make a donation or need food, please visit nwpafoodbank.org for more information

TransFamily of NW PA Opposes Proposed Ban on Trans Youth in Sports

TransFamily of NWPA condemns the introduction of the so-called "Fairness in Women's Sports Act" to the Pennsylvania legislature on April 5, 2021.

It is TransFamily of NWPA's position that transgender and gender non-conforming youth deserve the same opportunities as their cisgender counterparts.

This legislation is not needed. In 2014 the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) adopted a mixed-gender sports participation policy which addresses this issue. To our knowledge there has been no outcry from Pennsylvania student athletes indicating this is an issue which needs addressed further. The NCAA went on record in favor of including transgender athletes in 2011. Since the introduction of these policies there has been no mass

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domination of sports by transgender or gender nonconforming athletes.

This bill contains similar text as to what has been proposed in other states. We feel this is a coordinated effort to inspire divisiveness based on lack of information and understanding. Other state's bills have already been challenged and found unconstitutional (Idaho, Judge David Nye) in the courts. If passed in Pennsylvania, this act will face similar legal challenges, incurring unnecessary costs to the taxpayers. We are hopeful that this hateful act will not be passed or signed into law.

Furthermore, TransFamily of NWPA urges our state's lawmakers to not sign on in support of this legislation. Doing so is an act of aggression toward one of the state's most vulnerable populations. It indicates a willingness to invalidate a transgender or gender non-conforming youth's existence and value.

Please Help Support Pride Events in Erie!

NWPA Pride Alliance is grateful to the supporters of 2020. Last year due to Covid-19 we were forced to be flexible and partner with community

partners to host a Virtual Pride in partnership with Erie Playhouse. For 2021 we are anticipating the same need for flexibility as we monitor the ongoing pandemic. We hope to be able to have some kind of in person event later this summer if it is safe. Either way, we will be hosting Pride as a virtual event on June 26th, 2021, and then host a Drive Your Pride parade on Sunday, June 27, 2021, similar to last year's event. We are already hard at work planning multiple options. We hope to be able to count on our community's support this 2021 Pride season. The support of individuals and organizations in our community has been the catalyst for furthering the Alliance's mission: Improving the visibility of the LGBTQIA community and facilitating communication and collaboration between groups and individuals.

Donors make it possible for the Alliance to organize, sponsor, and/or host events such as the Pride Festival and the Pride Picnic. The Alliance also participates in various community events to promote awareness of LGBTQIA issues, and supports the efforts and activities of other groups dedicated to the health and wellbeing of the LGBTQIA community.



Although we welcome donations throughout the year, to maximize the impact of your tax deductible contribution and to be included on promotional materials for this year's Pride events, please have donations in by Tuesday, June 1st. Checks should be made payable to NW PA Pride Alliance, Inc.

If you have questions about the NW PA Pride Alliance or would like to discuss becoming a donor, please contact donations@nwpapride.org or call (814) 314-9075. The board members and volunteers of the NW PA Pride Alliance look forward to the continued support of our current partners as well as forming new relationships in the Erie community.

NW PA Pride Alliance 2021 Donor / Sponsor Options

All donor levels include individual/organization name placed on the following: A list of donors placed on promotional materials and mailings and NW PA Pride Alliance web site (option to include an organizational link). Title Sponsor (\$2,500 & above) receive a specialized banner, plus benefits of Rainbow level. Rainbow Donor (\$1,000 - \$2,499) Recognition in all press releases, Name recognition in larger type on a banner displayed during all parades and major NW PA Pride Alliance events. Violet Donor (\$500) - \$999) receive name recognition in large type on a banner displayed during all parades and major NW PA Pride Alliance events. Blue Donor (\$250 - \$499) Name recognition in regular type on a banner displayed during all parades and major NW PA Pride Alliance events. Other levels are Green Donor (\$150) - \$249), Yellow Donor (\$100 - \$149); Orange Donor (\$ 50 - \$ 99), and Red Donor (\$ 25 - \$ 49).

Free Smoking Cessation Class

Registration is required. To register or for more information, call 814-877-2981.

Mondays, May 3 to June 7 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. | Free

The six-week, telephonic smoking cessation class offers individuals a step-by-step plan for quitting smoking. Free nicotine replacement provided.

Calendar

For latest updates, see www.eriegaynews.com

Apr 20 - May 11 (Tue - Tue) - Coping With COVID Support Group (Central Outreach Wellness Center (Erie), 3104 State Street, Erie, PA 16508) 4 PM - 5 PM. Join us for a free, 4 week support group exploring themes of self care, self compassion, challenging negative thoughts, and creating safety. Have you been feeling stressed and overwhelmed? This past year we have all had to deal with difficult challenges, loss, stressors, and living with the unknown. Join Brianna Morrow and Mindy Luthey for a support group to help cope with the unprecedented challenges we have all been facing. (814) 201- 6432. Venue (814) 619-4009. https://www.atraumainformedlife.com/. RSVP/Register/Tickets at https://form.jotform.com/210976016714152. venue web site https://www.centraloutreach.com/.

Apr 22 (Thu) - Free Webinar for Parents of Kids Being Bullied Because They Are LGBTQ+ (Google Meet) 2 PM - 3 PM. In observance of GLSEN's Day of Silence (raising awareness of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying), Greater Erie Alliance for Equality and Journey to a Trauma Informed Life are offering a free webinar for parents with kids dealing with anti-LGBTQ+ bullying. Register at www.greatereriealliance.com (833) 487-5769. ERandazzo@4urjrny.com. https://www.atraumainformedlife.com/.

Apr 23 - 25 (Fri - Sun) - All An Act Theatre presents Another Country by Julian Mitchell (YouTube) Another Country is loosely based on the life of the real-life spy Guy Burgess. Set in an English public school in the early 1930's, where future leaders are being prepared for their roles in the ruling class. Guy is coming to terms with his sexuality and Tommy is a committed Marxist. Click the https://allanacttheatre.ticketleap. com which will take you over to Ticketleap.com and purchase one ticket for each person viewing. The day of the performance you will receive an email with a web address/link leading to a special unregistered page on YouTube that only ticket holders can access. (814) 450-8553. director@allanact.net. http://www.allanact. net/. RSVP/Register/Tickets at https://allanacttheatre. ticketleap.com/all-an-act-online-presents-anothercountry-bu-julian-mitchell/. venue web site http:// www.youtube.com.

Apr 23 (Fri) - Day of Silence GLSEN's Day of Silence is a student-led national event organized in thousands of schools, bringing awareness to the silencing effects of anti-LGBTQ name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools. Students from middle school to college take

a vow of silence in an effort to encourage schools and classmates to address the problem of anti-LGBTQ behavior by illustrating the silencing effect of bullying and harassment on LGBTQ students and those perceived to be LGBTQ. http://www.glsen.org/dayofsilence.

Apr 24 (Sat) - Polar Plunge (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

Apr 24 (Sat) - TransFamily of NWPA (Erie) Transgender Support Group meets (Zoom) 2 PM. Currently meeting via Zoom. Please message via Facebook page for meeting info.

Apr 26 (Mon) - Lesbian Visibility Day Created in 2008, this day showcases women-loving-women, providing a platform for lesbian role models to speak out on the issues facing female-identified sexual minorities. This day, alongside other queer celebration days, is still an integral part of moving forwards to create an intersectional society where all are treated equally and fairly.

May 1 (Sat) - Premature Cinco - Oooops! (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219) May 2 (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. http://internationalfamilyequalityday.org/.

May 3 (Mon) - Pennsylvania Primary Election Registration Deadline Register at https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx May 7 (Fri) - Opening Weekend 2021 (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park, 9835 Old State Rd, Angelica, NY 14709-8729)

May 8 (Sat) - Happy Mother's Day...Karen (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

May 10 (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.

May 11 (Tue) - Pennsylvania Primary Election Last day to request a mail-in or absentee ballot Request at https://www.votespa.com/Voting-in-PA/Pages/Mail-and-Absentee-Ballot.aspx

May 11 (Tue) - Jamestown Pride Planning Meeting (Zoom) 6 PM. Helping to plan Jamestown Pride, which will be happening on Saturday, June 12. Contact: Sheridan Smith. (716) 661-9044. JamestownPride@mhachautauqua.org. RSVP/Register/Tickets at https://us02web.zoom.us/i/85475350654.

May 11 (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. youngstownareapflag@gmail.com. http://www.youngstownpflag.org/.

May 14 - 16 (Fri - Sun) - Onesie Weekend (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park, 9835 Old State Rd, Angelica, NY 14709-8729)

May 15 (Sat) - Blast from the Past (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

May 15 (Sat) - Deadline for Erie Gay News June 2021 print edition (#306) (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 on the evening of Tuesday, May 25. For a complete list of upcoming deadlines and release dates, check the print edition schedule at www.eriegaynews.com/print-edition/deadlineschedule.php (814) 456-9833. info@eriegaynews.com. https://www.eriegaynews.com.

May 16 (Sun) - LBT Women of Erie meets (Zoom) 12 PM - 12:30 PM. Meeting ID: 770 9886 1291. Passcode: F4fwNr. https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77098861291?pw d=VVJFclo1NTFrTnR3ZzlrZEVmUFExdz09 Contact: Kim Conti. (814) 490-3994. ErieBeans@yahoo.com. https://www.facebook.com/LBTWOMENOFERIE.

May 16 (Sun) - National Honor Our LGBT Elders Day National Honor Our LGBT Elders Day was established to draw awareness to and appreciation of the



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USA/CANADA: \$25 by first class mail. All states and providences, national headquarters of organizations, mail order companies, etc.

The whole book is now online in Acrobat Reader format. www.gayellowpages.com/online.htm Also available as a no frills CD in PDF format.

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http://gayellowpages.com

lifetime of contributions made by LGBT older adults #LGBTEldersDay https://www.lgbteldersday.org/.

May 17 (Mon) - 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. https://dayagainsthomophobia.org/.

May 18 (Tue) - 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 https://www.niaid.nih.gov/.

May 18 (Tue) - Pennsylvania Primary Election 7 AM - 8 PM.

May 18 (Tue) - Eric County HIV Task Force meets via Zoom 1 PM - 2:30 PM. Zoom Meeting ID: 927 9128 9996. Passcode: 940728

May 19 (Wed) - Agender Pride Day To be agender means to not identify as any particular gender. Agender is also called genderblank, genderfree, genderless, gendervoid, non-gendered, ungendered, or null gender. The agender identity falls under the nonbinary umbrella and (sometimes) the transgender umbrella.

May 19 (Wed) - 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 http://www.banyantreeproject.org/.

May 21 - 23 (Fri - Sun) - Throwback Weekend (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park, 9835 Old State Rd, Angelica, NY 14709-8729) It's time to turn back time! (585) 567-8100. info@jonespond.com. http://www.jonespond.com.

May 22 (Sat) - Curse of the Cocktails (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

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

May 22 (Sat) - TransFamily of NWPA (Erie) Transgender Support Group meets (Zoom) 2 PM. Currently meeting via Zoom. Please message via Facebook page for meeting info.

May 24 (Mon) - Pansexual and Panromantic Awareness and Visibility Day This is a day to celebrate the pansexual and panromantic community and educate others on the community. https://thepancommunity.tumblr.com/faq.

May 25 (Tue) - Release Party for Dragons & Disco Socks (Artlore Studio, 3406 W Lake Rd, Erie, PA 16505) 6 PM - 8 PM. Memoir by Journey to a Trauma Informed Life owner, Will Koehler. Browse to https://www.amazon.com/Dragons-Disco-Socks-William-Koehler/.

May 25 (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.

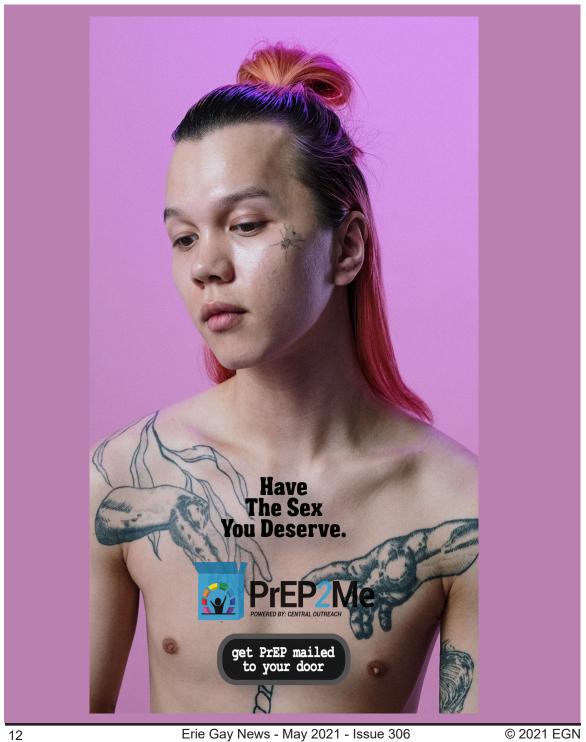
May 27 (Thu) - Queer Youth: Virtual Connect - Chat & Chill (Zoom) 6 PM - 7:30 PM. Come join us for a night of community, laughter, and chill. No real agenda, just a safe, virtual space. Co-hosted by Compton's Table, Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE) and Journey to a Trauma-Informed Life. Contact: https://comptonstable.org/connect-events. https://comptonstable.org/.

May 28 - 31 (Fri - Mon) - Memorial Day Weekend (Jones Pond Campground & RV Park, 9835 Old State Rd, Angelica, NY 14709-8729)

May 29 (Sat) - Camp Davis Memorial Day Weekend (Camp Davis, 311 Redbrush Rd, Boyers, PA 16020-1219)

See our web site for photo galleries dating back to 1995!





Candidates for Erie County Executive, Erie County Council, Erie City Mayor, and Erie City Council were asked about their positions on LGBTQIA+ issues. Their responses appear below

These were the questions asked for all races:

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
Municipal Equality Index (MEI) https://hrcprod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/
MEI-2020-Erie-Pennsylvania.pdf?mtime=2020
1202124502&focal=none, Erie has zero points
for domestic partner benefits for city/county
employees. What strategies would you use to
address this?.

How would you assure that Erie implements city/county contractor nondiscrimination policies?

To what extent have you participated in LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training? What types of training would you recommend for 1.) city staff & 2.) council members?

What strategies would you use to include and engage LGBTQIA+ organizations and community members in developing policy and legislation?

Share a time/moment when you influenced or were positively influenced by the LGBTQIA+ community.

County Executive

Not Responding: Rita Bishop (D), Brenton Davis (R)

HRC MEI Score Carl Anderson (D)

I would support and advocate for County Council to include domestic partner benefits for county employees. I would also use my position as County Executive to discuss with the Mayor and City Coun-

cil the importance of the addition to this policy. Not only to the family's it will help, but also the overall perception of Erie as a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable community.

Dylanna Grasinger (D)

As County Executive, I will publicly support the LGBTQIA+ community and will work with residents to pass policy that is inclusive of every resident. To specifically answer your question, all employee benefits are mutually agreed upon by the union and the county during negotiations. As new union contracts come up for renegotiation, I will work with the union to provide fair and equitable benefits that are accessible to all employees and taxpayers.

Tyler Titus (D)

Assuring that all families are honored and protected has to be a top priority of county government. As County Executive I will work closely with the City and County Councils to advocate on behalf of domestic partner benefits. My experience working with various stakeholders as the president of the Erie School Board prepares me to effectively advocate for this change.

Shawn Wroblewski (R)

I would seek answers from the human resources and the underwriters of the insurance organizations for county policies. We need to ensure that any benefits afforded to the county employees are within their umbrella of coverage. If they are not, then we will have to consider our options. I fully support domestic partner benefits. We need to work on this and many other issues to bring everyone to an equal standard.

Contractor Non Discrimination Policies Carl Anderson (D)

I would ensure all contracts stipulate that any contractors hired by Erie County, must abide all non-discriminatory laws.

Dylanna Grasinger (D)

Enactment alone does not ensure that policy will be successful. Eric County currently implements nondiscrimination policies that were last updated in 2018, however, evaluating success of these policies has not been an integral part of the planning process. As County Executive, I will take the following steps

to assure Erie that Erie County implements contractor non-discrimination policies.

- 1. Keep the desired outcomes in mind.
 Before implementing a new policy or revisiting old, all stakeholders need to be clear about the goals of the policy.
- Identify resources that can help you implement the policy including funding, possible staffing, and infrastructure.

This can include necessary funding, staffing, and infrastructure.

- Define who is involved and who does what during implementation. Plan who will be involved in implementation and what their roles and responsibilities will be. Outline key roles and responsibilities with measurable outcomes.
- 4. Identify: the staff member or organization that will lead implementation of the policy; roles and responsibilities of partners and stakeholders; opportunities and processes for collaboration; current policies to ensure they are not in conflict with the new policy

Development of policy is not effective when it is developed from top down, but rather when it grows from the ground up.

Tyler Titus (D)

As an active queer advocate who has assisted in constructing and revising nondiscrimination policies across the region and state, I am prepared to ensure our county procedures uphold this inclusive, necessary value.

Shawn Wroblewski (R)

I do not recall the county's policies on contractor services at the moment. However, I believe that a contractor will need to submit its policies and procedures to the body for review. However, it isn't easy to monitor what a contractor does out of sight of the county's services. As a government entity, the contractors should provide and follow the standards of the government body that they are working for. Should the contractor violate the nondiscrimination policies, then repercussions should occur for violations of the policies.

Cultural Competency Training Carl Anderson (D)

I have gone through some cultural sensitivity training with my former employer, Morgan Stanley. I would require that all our staff and members of our administration complete LGBTQIA+ Cultural and Sensitivity Training within the first 90 days in office. That would include myself. We would also do a yearly review to ensure we are up to date with the most current training available.

Dylanna Grasinger (D)

Over my more than two-decade long career, I have both participated and taught a variety of Cultural Competency Trainings, including many specifically geared toward working with the LGBTQIA+ community. County Council and staff members all receive some level of cultural competency training; however, it should be seen as best organizational practice and advantageous for trainings to be implemented into the workplace as continuous learning. To make systemic change, trainings should be aligned with specific roles in Erie County government and work towards being culturally responsive to the population they are intended to serve. Trainings should not be optional. For example, the issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ community and appropriate responses may vary in delivery, approach, and follow-up depending on if we are talking about mental health services versus housing or employment needs. I believe that a one size fits all Cultural Competency training does not readily lend itself to being part of a diverse and inclusive organizational structure where leadership is intentional about a cohesive vision for the County. When elected to be your next County Executive, I would be strongly committed to putting diversity, inclusion, and equitable access into policy and the overarching regional plan for growth

Tyler Titus (D)

Over the past decade, I have had the privilege of conducting queer competency trainings across the country. I believe training is an excellent way to introduce topics, but that it needs to move into actionable items such as policy updates, procedural adjustments, and proactive steps to protect all community members, especially those most at risk of

systemic harm within the queer community.

Shawn Wroblewski (R)

I have not participated in any such training, nor have I been offered such training that I recall. With the current culture in America, we need to develop something. However, we need to be all-inclusive, or we will offend others. I do not want to exclude anyone. We need to be tolerant of everyone regardless. I have had the benefit of collegiate-level classes on various subjects. However, the most effective training has been sitting and talking with friends of friends from the LGBT community. When we sit down and put aside all the other noise and distractions, we realize we are all human.

Engagement Strategies Carl Anderson (D)

My administration will be open and connected to the community. I think it is important to regularly meet with local grassroots organizations, non-profits, small business owner's, etc. to ensure we are leading Erie County into the future with their voice and opinion in mind. I would also suggest setting up a council similar to the City's council on LGBTQIA+ affairs. We must make sure that the citizens of Corry, Union City, Edinboro, and other rural areas also have their voice heard as well and I believe creating a County wide coalition could be very beneficial at "bridging the gap" between our urban and rural communities.

Dylanna Grasinger (D)

A primary pillar of my campaign is to increase public private partnerships so that diversity is more than simply compliance. Creating equitable access to services and a voice at the table is paramount to Erie County's success. With that said, I believe that local leaders can drive diversity engagement efforts by following five key actions: understanding, acknowledgement, commitment, allocation, and action. As your next County Executive, I will deliver messages to the public that reinforce my commitment to bringing LGBTQIA+ organizations and community members to the table. If we want true equity and inclusion, this means discarding practices meant to keep people out.

Tyler Titus (D)

I currently serve as the Co-Vice Chair of the

Commission of LGBTQIA Affairs for Governor Tom Wolf and have used this platform to engage with queer-led organizations across the Commonwealth. I am 100% committed to replicating that back at home—elevating community member voices and experiences during policy development.

Shawn Wroblewski (R)

I want to be a different leader for Erie County. I want to be the voice of the people. I would encourage quarterly meetings followed by a community gathering to openly and safely discuss the issues and positively change everyone in Erie County. I also want to make sure that Erie County is on top of the state and national policies that will affect all the communities. I want to be the voice of Erie that we are going to have a positive change and be all inclusive of everyone.

I encourage those from your community that work at Erie County to meet with human resource representatives and myself to research options and positively change everyone.

LGBTQIA+ Influence Carl Anderson (D)

I have family who are members of the LG-BTQIA+ community and their experiences they have shared with me, have really helped highlight the need for continued conversation, but most importantly advocating on behalf of equitable rights for LGBTQIA+ community members.

Dylanna Grasinger (D)

A number of important people in my life are members of the LGBTQIA+ community - family



members, lifelong friends, clients, and colleagues. I am influenced and inspired by them and the community constantly, in countless ways, leading to me being heavily involved in my organization's national Gender Equity and Social Inclusion strategies. Several times throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working with newcomers to Erie who, upon arriving on US soil, finally feel free to be their true selves and identify openly as part of the LGBTQIA+community without fear for their life. Being able to play a part in those stories is truly an honor.

Tyler Titus (D)

The trailblazers of our community continue to give me hope and inspire me to keep fighting for equity. In 2017, I became the first openly transgender person elected in the Pennsylvania history. In 2020, I was unanimously voted into the president seat. My campaign and candidacy has helped elevate the voices of the queer community.

Shawn Wroblewski (R)

I have many friends who are part of the LGBT community, I have even been invited to various past events. I support your lifestyle and respect your choices. I want to work for the people of Erie to recover from the pandemic. More importantly, I want to work on programs to make Erie a model of positive change. One that shows we can all work together, to get along and unite as a community, not as individuals. I have had many good experiences with many from the LGBT Community. one of the most significant points that stick out is how welcoming everyone is. How open and friendly to everyone is. I genuinely enjoy spending time with all of my friends from the LGBT community.

COUNTY COUNCIL District 2

Not Responding: Andre Horton (D-Incumbent)

COUNTY COUNCIL District 4

Not Responding: Julia Ann Calipo (D), Jim Winarski (D)

HRC MEI Score Angela Euell-McNair (D)

To address this issue I would construct a detailed plan of the expectations and goals to include domestic partners within the benefits package. In this plan would be examples of how other cities and companies have addressed the issue successfully. I would also involve the union to promote this as an employee right.

Kevin Pastweka (D)

I have seen examples such as a life-partnership registration in Philadelphia which allow for domestic partner benefits. I would be happy to work with leaders from the LGBT+ community to work towards these ends. And I have an open ear for other solutions.

Contractor Non Discrimination Policies Angela Euell-McNair (D)

In order to ensure that the county uses these policies there will be a diversity and inclusion officer who reviews all submitted contracts to ensure that no qualified contractors are excluded regardless of race, sexual orientation or religion. There would also be a push to ensure that our contracts are being fulfilled by a diverse group of people and not just one group exclusively. Our officer would have to ensure that contracts are being offered to all groups and there would be reporting on how successful we are meeting guidelines.

Kevin Pastweka (D)

I will screen contracts with businesses and companies and I will be looking for non-discriminatory policies. I will need to see proof of non-discrimination benefits before I vote to approve contracts.

Cultural Competency Training Angela Euell-McNair (D)

As a current board director I have pushed for this and we have made this a part of or inservice training for the district. All staff in and board members should be required to participate in trainings such as the ones offered by Cornell University or even by local presenters around the community. It's important that officials and staff can understand and relate to



KEIRA KRISTINE DESANTIS AWARD

Keira was a visible fixture in the community, fighting for the rights of trans communities. In honor of the tireless efforts of Keira to illustrate the societal barrier experienced by trans communities and advocate for advancements in the social and human rights of the trans community, the KEIRA KRISTINE DESANTIS AWARD was created. This award recognizes others like Keira who do whatever it takes, without question, to make the path easier for those who follow a similar journey.













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all people. With such a diverse city, knowing how to appropriately engage people is important.

Kevin Pastweka (D)

As a former history and sociology professor with an M.A. in American Studies, I am a strong advocate for enhanced cultural literacy and improved interaction with the LGBT+ community. I think it's in the best interest of all elected officials and staff members to increase sensitivity awareness and knowledge and help decrease potential disparities by having on-going cultural competency training.

Engagement Strategies Angela Euell-McNair (D)

To engage LGBTQIA organizations, advisory committees would be formed and would review policies before they are brought to council. This would ensure that they are properly represented and served by all policies.

Kevin Pastweka (D)

I think we can learn a lot from the strategies implemented in Philadelphia and in other areas with success like San Francisco and we will be able to develop inclusive policy and legislation.

LGBTQIA+ Influence Angela Euell-McNair (D)

It amazed me at the Pridefest how the community can be brought together by the LGBTQIA to show unity and love for one another. This positively influenced me on so many levels with one being that love is greater than hate. Accepting one without discrimination is key.

Kevin Pastweka (D)

In the summer of 2019 I was glad to be part of the Erie Pride Parade, marching with the Erie Democratic Party, as the treasurer. The day was a fun celebration of cultural pride and support. But I also have great respect for the fighting spirit of the LGBT+ community. In the Fall of 1989 I went to Washington D.C. for the Homeless March. That was a time when the failures of the Reagan administration policies were being realized in a collective way

and while his social service-cutting policies grew the homeless population 10 times that decade many other groups were negatively affected. One of the groups most negatively impacted was the gay community and while the focus that day was on homelessness, the group, Act Up, was there in support, but also very vocal on the neglect of the government to take greater action on the breaking AIDS crisis. Their activism that day was inspiring and came from the dire need to fight against a very real threat. Our democracy today also faces very real threats and as a County Councilman I hope to work with the LGBTQIA community to make Erie County a better place for all of us and a good place in this world.

COUNTY COUNCIL District 6

Not Responding: Samuel Charles Bayle, IV (R), Scott Rastetter (R-Incumbent)

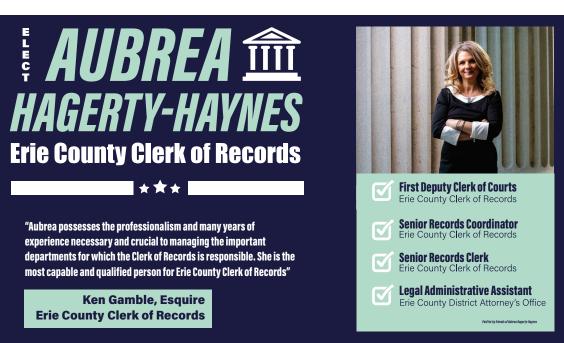
HRC MEI Score Lydia Laythe (D)

Wow! Thank you for sharing this information with me. I had not realized that domestic partners were not included for employee benefits. That definitely needs to be changed. Seems to me this could be done several ways - one way would be to change the verbage used in current County policy to make sure we're modeling inclusivity. Using more inclusive language, such as "partner" instead of "spouse," or explicitly outlining that a partner/spouse could include a civil union or registered domestic partnership would be a simple first step. Then the next step would be to reach out to other local leaders and encourage this policy to be amended in every municipality in the County. But I'm just one person brainstorming about this, I'd much rather sit down with a group of people and develop a more thorough plan on this issue! If anyone's interested, I'd love to hear from you (electlydialaythe@gmail.com).

Herb Reide (D)

Correct me if I'm wrong, but Erie County doesn't seem to have the opportunity to be scored based on "Municipality as Employer" in the MEI. The scores are blank under county in the entire sec-





tion. That said, Domestic partnerships should be recognized full stop. The City is somewhat outside the direct scope of the 6th District except as a potential employer of its constituents and a necessary destination for resources and dealing with government, so a heaping level of shame from down here in rural Erie County for discriminating against any constituents who drive to work for the City of Erie from the 6th District who could use coverage for their partner during this time of the pandemic is what I'd use as a strategy. But the County needs to tend to it's own house as well on this matter.

Timothy Gostomski (R)

I have no particular strategy to address this issue at this time. I think Covid concerns are a much more pressing issue.

Contractor Non Discrimination Policies Lydia Lathe (D)

Accessibility and transparency of local government seems to be the most foundational piece to this issue. If government work is transparent and accessible to observe/view, then it will be easier to identify if/when violations to nondiscrimination policies occur. I also think we could do a better job at modeling diversity and inclusion within the Human Relations Commission at the County level that is intended to hear complaints about discrimination but seems to be run and organized by a majority of older, white men - statistically less likely to be discriminated against. This is a problem and the makeup of the Human Relations Commission needs to be changed to represent the people and groups most at risk for discrimination.

Herb Reide (D)

Up front I will say I'm personally culturally incompetent. More specifically, to use categories described by ASHA, I believe I'd lie somewhere between Cultural Incapacity and Cultural Pre-Competence.

I don't mean to imply indifference or blindness, just that I am more of a person who wants to fix precisely definable problems, and culture strikes me as a deeply personal and shared concept, and I have trouble with things that need inferred and cannot be quantified precisely.

Some training that I have taken has been about

power dynamics and how people can perceive, very validly, that as a person in a position of power (even if you don't feel you have or want any of that power) you need to consider your position when speaking on behalf of others, as your position in leadership is as a representative of all people, not just people who act, think, look, love, support, believe or talk like you.

As far as training for city staff and council members, I would welcome advice.

Regarding public services, whether it is the LGBTQIA+ community, minorities, immigrants, or all of us in rural Erie County, city and county resources need to be made available in a way that is less foreboding and more inviting. The imposing brick structures of the conquered city squares do not appear inviting to citizens who approach humbly seeking help. Even when I was growing up in Erie visiting my dad at the Department of Public Welfare on State Street, walking up the stairs to that scary brick building was intimidating. As an adult, these structures are still the imposing legacy of white men in black suits and robes. I'm not necessarily suggesting calling LEO A DALY to rebuild everything, simply that elected official meetings and social services should move out of these hardened citadels and out, at least occasionally, into the community when feasible.

Timothy Gostomski (R)

I do not feel it is the council's job to directly enforce policy or law. If someone has a specific concern then it should be looked into at that time.

Cultural Competency Training Lydia Lathe (D)

My undergraduate and graduate social work curriculum included Cultural Humility and Sex & Sexuality courses. I currently facilitate traumainformed and culturally sensitive workshops for local social service agencies around Erie, which covers a lot of topics, but it includes reference to sexual orientation and gender identity (particularly around discussions of privilege and acknowledging straight, straight-passing, and cisgender privilege). To be honest, "cultural competence" as a concept is not my favorite - I prefer "cultural humility" or "cultural sensitivity" - because it acknowledges the



process/mindset that people need to adopt to become more aware and inclusive. I don't believe any amount of training or experience would make someone an "expert" or "competent" in the LGBTQIAA+ community - there's so much diversity, complexity, and intersectionality that shapes our experiences and identities. But there's definitely some basic concepts people NEED to know - like the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, understanding pronouns, dismantling heteronormative, assumptive language in policy or correspondence, or even just the importance of words in general and the language we use to talk to/about someone. But these are all really foundational - and unfortunately, I think those basics are still lacking from most elected officials and decision-making spaces (I still have to advocate for my title to be used correctly in Washington Township Council Meeting Minutes - I'm a "Councilperson" not "Councilwoman."). I absolutely believe these types of trainings/discussions are important, and in my experience, we have to start at the very beginning right now. But I clearly don't have all the answers! I'd gladly receive feedback, hear your ideas, or brainstorm together (electlydialaythe@gmail.com).

Herb Reide (D)

Find an appropriate existing acceptable template, preferably from another county in PA or using language from the state itself, tweak it with guidance and input, and implement, with coordinated and ruthless public pressure, if necessary.

Timothy Gostomski (R)

I have not participated in any training and have none to recommend.

Engagement Strategies Lydia Laythe (D)

When government is more accessible and more transparent, everyone - including members of the LGBTQIAA+ community and related organizations - are more included and can take a more active role in the decision-making process. Accessibility and transparency can be improved in a lot of ways - through stronger, clearer social media presence, through online/virtual engagement options, and through greater individual accessibility/responsivity of elected leaders. I cannot speak for anyone else,

but I know I will be accessible to talk(and more importantly LISTEN) to LGBTQIAA+ community members - because they're my family and friends. Beyond that, we just need more people from the LGBTQIAA+ community in positions of power - be it elected office or appointed to commissions, boards or committees. We need more diversity across the board in these rooms where decisions are being made. Only then, when we have more seats at the table, can we truly say we're "included" in policy and legislation.

Herb Reide (D)

In simplest form, send me nasty grams if I say something stupid. Give me your email and I'll give you mine. Send me ideas and I'll tell you why you're right or wrong. I just ask one thing. Let's keep talking. I can be wrong. I have been wrong. But if I'm wrong I really need to know before I vote on something. I've voted to end a friend's job before. Multiple times. It sucks. I've also voted to create jobs too.

In the formal sense, keep the channels open. Open more channels. I'm willing to show up anywhere without hesitation, trepidation or fear and talk once in a while.

Timothy Gostomski (R)

I have no particular strategies to engage any specific interest group. I do strongly encourage people and groups to be involved in government'

LGBTQIA+ Influence Lydia Laythe (D)

In 2019, I took my son to Erie's Pride Parade. Weeks before, I had told him where we were going and I took him to the mall to pick out whatever he wanted to wear. He chose a bright white unicorn overall-type outfit, rainbow cat ears and sunglasses, and tie-dye bracelets. I was so happy to see my little gender-bending son embracing the things that brought him joy. Everyone at Pride loved his outfit and we were able to talk about love, gender, and being authentic. I just remember feeling so grateful that there was such a huge community of people that were positive and affirming toward my son's choice to wear a unicorn costume and be himself - an experience that sadly doesn't always happen for him in school. Truly, the LGBTQIAA+ community - which

includes myself and many of my friends and family - has validated my best instincts as a parent - to love my child unconditionally and embrace my child for everything they are or want to be.

Herb Reide (D)

To be completely and brutally honest, when I first ran as a 23 year old for Borough Council, I had read Pennsylvania's entire Borough Code, the Borough Ordinances, followed the hot topics of potholes, the need for safer pedestrian crossings, and the borough's ballooning costs in providing in-house door to door recycling with ancient equipment. The person who answered the first door I knocked on asked me about my stance on abortion. I honestly had no clue and was chastised for that answer.

I will claim ignorance and incompetence when it comes to understanding various cultures whether they are social, racial or ethnic, including some of my own. It may be a side effect of being raised on a diet of cartoons, sitcoms and late night comedy, but I want to start with the fact that it is hard for me to personally identify with seriousness with any identity without conscious intentional effort besides core family roles like son, father, brother and fiancé.

So TV, particularly comedy, influenced my opinion. There's some West Wing and all the Star Trek, but my upbringing is Nick at Night meets Adult Swim. My cultural ignorance led to cultural blindness as I would walk into situations such as an older pair of fellow same sex cooks at Corry Perkins long ago proposing to one another, or working at Burger King in Meadville for years before being told casually an older pair of women were partners, to being personally responsible for helping to appoint the first LGBTQIA+ leader of our state political organization and finding out his ceiling shattering status at an after party. My response in each case at the time has been slight confusion followed by the realization that not every member of the LGBTQIA+ community presents themselves as RuPaul's second cousin as TV had once dictated.

I've had that experience less and less as some of the friends I've gained along the way just happen to be members of the community. As I've said, I've been wrong, but I've had friends that have schooled me, and now I have family that keep me on the straight and narrow so I don't make any bad puns.

My name is Herbert Riede, and I would appreciate your vote in the May 18th Democratic primary for Erie County Council in the 6th District, or your support by asking your friends in the district to vote for me. Let's Make Things Go.

Timothy Gostomski (R)

I have never had any specific interaction good or bad with your community.

Erie City Mayor

HRC MEI Score Joe Schember (D-Incumbent)

The City of Erie does not currently provide any survivor benefits for domestic partners, regardless of orientation. We had looked at this previously, but since it provides only 1 bonus point, and we had so many other bigger priorities such as passing the conversion therapy ban, we decided to focus on larger issues that were more of a priority. If other domestic partners had benefits, and the City was excluding same-sex couples, then we would have definitely removed that exclusion. However, as a self-funded health care provider, and an employer of over 600 employees paid via city taxpayers, our challenges revolve around the cost associated with extending such benefits to all domestic partners as well as how we would monitor who was officially in a domestic partnership and when that partnership ended. We are currently revisiting how we could add these benefits. We will look at what other cities are doing, ascertain



how much it would cost for us to make domestic partnership benefits available, and begin discussions with our various unions during contract negotiations

Tom Spagel (D)

a. I believe married couples should receive the exact same benefits regardless of their identity.

Sydney Zimmerman (D)

As Mayor of the City of Erie, I would introduce an ordinance for consideration by the City Council for a change in our city code to ensure domestic partner benefits for all city employees. All city employees should have equal benefits, especially those that support families, partnerships, and children.

This ordinance can be modeled after Ord. No. 13-2008. passed by the Harrisburg City Council in 2008.

I would also advocate for and work with leaders on County Council to secure a similar change in legislation regarding domestic partner benefits at county level.

Contractor Non Discrimination Policies Joe Schember (D-Incumbent)

We have been working on this with our City Solicitors' office. The City of Erie is an equal opportunity employer. As stated in our revised handbook, "We will not, under any circumstances, condone or tolerate conduct which may constitute discrimination against any City of Erie employee or prospective employee because of race, color, sex, religion, disability, age, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information or any other category protected by federal, state, and local law. This policy covers, but is not limited to, hiring, placement, promotions, transfer or demotion, advertising, solicitation of employment, layoffs, terminations, compensation, benefit programs, training and educational opportunities, and any other term or condition of employment. Employees who fail to comply with this policy, including managers and supervisors, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination." As such, one of our top priorities is to implement a city contractor non-discrimination policy. This is a top priority, not only because it would earn us 6 points, but also because we want to ensure that we are only doing business with contractors who value everyone

and do not discriminate against anyone. Members of my team are in the process of identifying the City's most critical contractors. Once we have compiled that list of existing contractors, as a courtesy, we will send them a draft of the language to review. Going forward, all exisiting and future contractors will be required to sign-off on the policy as part of the contractual agreement.

Tom Spagel (D)

a. My experience with the Erie School District's nondiscrimination policies have led me to know that our community benefits from having the best qualified vendor at the best cost possible irrespective of their race, religion or identity.

Sydney Zimmerman (D)

As Mayor I would continue efforts to ensure all who work for the city in any capacity should never have to fear for their job due to discrimination. I would introduce an ordinance for consideration by the City Council for a change to our city code to ensure non-discrimination policies for all working as contractors of the city.

This ordinance can be modeled after Ord. No. 06-2021 passed by Lancaster City Council this year, on March 23rd.

I would also advocate for and work with leaders on the County Council to secure a similar change in legislation regarding contractor non-discriminiation policies at their level.

Cultural Competency Training Joe Schember (D-Incumbent)

I participated in Cultural Competency Training, along with the Police Chief, his Command staff, and officers of the Erie Police Department in 2020. The Reverend Dr. Rich McCarty conducted the training, and it was wonderful. He is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Mercyhurst University and is also an ordained clergyperson in the United Church of Christ, serving Community United Church in Erie. He has long served on the board and advisory council of the Greater Erie Alliance for Equality, and he currently serves on our LGBTQ+ Advisory Council. Dr. McCarty has provided diversity training for a wide variety of Erie institutions, advocating for restorative social justice and a better understanding of human

diversity. We share the belief that strong communities are those that continue to improve upon mutual respect, boundaries, and accountability. I admire and respect his guidance and counsel. We are currently working to schedule another training session this year with the rest of the Erie Police department and will include Mayor's staff, department heads, and Council members. In the future, as part of their orientation, City of Erie new hires would watch the video of the presentation, and we will continue to facilitate ongoing trainings.

Tom Spagel (D)

- a. While serving in the military, I have received numerous training sessions on multi cultural issues.
- b. I believe all the city employees should receive a variety of cultural training in their annual professional education. This training should occur at all levels within the city government's employ

Sydney Zimmerman (D)

I have benefited from relationships with many out and proud members of the community but I have not yet participated in LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training. As Mayor of Erie, I would reach out to the Human Rights Campaign for their guidance and resources. Through this partnership the city will offer the HRC's All Children - All Families Training Series with our city staff and council members.

Engagement Strategies Joe Schember (D-Incumbent)

In June 2018, when we received our first letter from the Human Rights Campaign with our preliminary score on the Municipal Equality Index. Our MEI was only 34 out of a possible 100 plus 22 bonus points. My team and I immediately sought guidance on how we could do better. One of the best things I did as Mayor was convene a Mayor's LGBTQ+ Advisory Council. The Council is comprised of representatives from the Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE), NW PA Pride Alliance, TransFamily of NW PA, Erie Gay News, Northwest Rural AIDS Alliance, the PA Commission on LGBTQ Affairs, Crime Victim Center of Erie, The Pennsylvania Youth Congress, Community United Church, SafeNet, students involved in PRISM, Stairways, Senator Bob Casey's Office, the Arts Community, Universities, Hospitals, and Financial Institutions. This team is active in the

RE-ELECT JOE SCHEMBER MAYOR OF THE CITY OF ERIE



Experienced

- Saved city taxpayers \$86.3 million by paying down city's debt
- Ensured city taxes will not increase for the next 5 years
- Passed a LERTA program, creating nearly \$86 million in investment
- Solved the city's pension problem

Engaged

- Created Mayor's LGBTQ+ Advisory Council
- Passed Conversion Therapy Ban
- Increased HRC Municipal Equality Index Score from 34 to 80

Energetic

- Created first-ever grant programs for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and residents
- Works over and above to serve the residents of Frie
- · Active, visible, and involved

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community, and we meet regularly to seek their guidance and act on it. They provide valuable input to the City, help us to revise policies and ordinances, ensure that we are all on the same page and that the City is a partner, and work together to spread the word about the valuable programs that exist. We will continue to work closely with this team to advocate for the needs of our LGBTQ+ communities in Erie and throughout the region, and to ensure that our policies and ordinances reflect our beliefs that everyone is entitled to the same human rights and freedoms. We are also in the process of hiring a consultant to review our policies, programs, and initiatives to ensure that we are doing everything we can to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion of all.

Tom Spagel (D)

a. While working on our Strategic Plan for the Erie School District, we incorporated our communities views by hosting dozens of forums in numerous locations to get our stakeholders feedback and ideas. I would do the same for Erie as I value all our citizen's points of view regardless of their identity.

Sydney Zimmerman (D)

As Mayor, I would continue the established City LGBTQIA+ council. In addition, I would set up listening hours to hear about the issues, and solutions, of both individuals and organizations concerned with matters of the LGBTQIA+ community. It is important to have an open door policy for all issues that face those who live in the City of Erie.

LGBTQIA+ Influence Joe Schember (D-Incumbent)

What people in Erie may not know is that my son, Joe, is gay. Several years ago, my son, Joe, and daughter, Jaime, sat down with my wife, Rhonda, and me in our family room. Joe told us that he was gay.

My immediate response was: "Joe, you are our son and we love you." My son is a good man. He works hard at his job, was an excellent student in school, played on a championship tennis team, helps take care of his disabled twin sister, and volunteered at the Barber Center for 15+ years... and he is gay. I'm proud to call him my son. Each and every one of us is a unique individual. Our differences make us stronger. I want to live in an Erie that celebrates our differences and welcomes and values everyone for the

diverse skills, talents, and perspectives that each of us possesses. Imagine what a wonderful community Erie would be if we were not only tolerated but accepted and celebrated!

One of the most impactful influences on me was my experience participating in Pridefest in 2018 and 2019. It was such an amazing day – to see the diverse groups of people heading to the street for the parade, which were the two largest Pride Parades in Erie's history. And then when I delivered my remarks, it was such an inspiring moment to look out at the crowd from the stage and to see all of the color, the vitality, the smiles, and the celebration of love. It was beautiful! It's an image that I don't ever want to forget, and it's an image of what I want Erie to be all the time – loving, accepting, and welcoming.

Tom Spagel (D)

a. While owning Stanganelli's Italian Foods for the last 28 years, we have had the pleasure of truly representing Erie's diverse community. Anyone is always welcome at our small business and you can see for yourselves that the demographic make-up of our staff has a greater than average share of minorities, women, persons of color as well as members of the LGBTQIA community. I have been positively influenced at my business by members of the LGBTQIA community that have contributed and continue to contribute to making the best pasta and pepperoni balls in the area.

Sydney Zimmerman (D)

In 2020 I worked on a national deep canvass team. We had to learn how to share vulnerably-while still being mindful of our needs and boundaries-- which meant being in touch with ourselves, our stories, and our experiences. During this time, one of our trainers shared that she is a bi-sexual woman as well as some of her struggles as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. This prompted me to come out to family members of mine as a bi-sexual woman, something I had been afraid to do. But by coming out I gained more trust in my familia relationships, more strength in myself, and the ability to share that newfound strength with others by continuing to share my identity and story with them. Visibility of all types is important and I am proud to be someone who can be visible so that another individual may feel safe doing the same.

Erie City Council

Not Responding: Marcus P. Yuille (D), Greg Brown (R), Shawn Lyons (R)

HRC MEI Score Liz Allen (D)

I examined the MEI scores for the nine Pennsylvania cities listed in the 2020 report. Erie is one of five cities that did not receive "flex" points for providing benefits for domestic partners. According to survey results, Carlisle, Philadelphia, Reading and Wilkes-Barre don't provide domestic partner benefits, yet they all score higher on the MEI than Erie does. (I believe Philly actually does provide domestic partner benefits, so that survey answer may be incorrect. I do not believe that the city of Erie can add domestic partner benefits as the city continues to grapple with a structural deficit. In fact, Public Financial Management (PFM), which examined the city's finances and made recommendations for bringing down our expenses, which continue to outstrip revenues, recommends that the city of Erie examine its current benefit package for ways to reduce costs for future hires. I am happy to share more information about the city's financial picture for anyone who is interested. However, based on the MEI score for Erie, It looks like our challenge is to look carefully at Erie's scores under law enforcement and see how we can work to raise those ratings so that Erie can hit the perfect score of 100 in the future, as Allentown, Philadelphia, Reading and State College already have.

Cory Diloreto (D)

Domestic partner or marriage partner, benefits should be afforded to whom any individual considers 'spouse'. I would gladly have a results-oriented discussion with EGN, Erie's LGBTQIA+ community, or anyone else who will lend their voice to find tangible policy-driven solutions.

Jasmine Flores (D)

It's truly an embarrassment that Erie received a score of 0 not once, but twice. Strategies I would use to help address the scorecard scores would include reaching out to groups already established in Erie and are already working towards fixing this scorecard.

Groups like this would include GEAE and the mayor's LGBTQIA Advisory Council. I also would use a strategy revolving around researching and reaching out to different cities who scored much higher than us on the Scorecards. It's important to learn from those who excel and look outside of Erie. There is no shame in copying other cities who successfully pass the HRC's MEI with flying colors.

Elspeth Katrine Koehle (D)

I would explore how City Council could change human resources policies to allow domestic partners of city employees to receive health insurance, pension benefits, etc.

Chuck Nelson (D)

Partner benefits should be equitable. **Kendrick Tate (D)**

My strategy in regards to domestic partner benefits is to create a policy to reapportion part of the city's future pension contributions. Our budget increases dramatically each year due to pension costs, and there are very few ways to address the cost increase as people retire from public service. In light of this, the current employees and their families have to wait until they're able to retire to utilize any funds, while taking on costs to their own income to provide for their partners. I believe that the city can continue to maintain its obligation to its current and retired employees, and mitigate the expenditures they have, by intently reviewing and adjusting the pension plan to provide funds that can be used to negotiate insurance coverage for the current needs of employees and their partners.

Mo Troop (D)

One of the main reasons I am running for office is to ensure that all community voices are heard and because equity and inclusion are two things that I feel are very important. LGBT community is one of the voices that is important to be heard in our community and to my campaign. The Domestic Partner Benefits

Deadline for Next EGN issue May 15

could be addressed by first listening to the members of the LGBT community to gather what their needs are and how they envision those needs being met. Secondly, as a City Council Member, I would bring the issue to the forefront as an issue that needs to be addressed. Third, I believe that Erie could look at other cities that are doing well in this area and model strategies working successfully there. Lastly, coordinate with the Human Relations Commission to eliminate discrimination in employee benefits for Domestic Partnerships.

Contractor Non Discrimination Policies Liz Allen (D)

To address equity/diversity, including for the LGBTQIA community, we should create an equity/inclusion task force or commission to study a range of issues, including current nondiscrimination policies for contractors, and then come back with recommendations to monitor those policies to make sure they are being followed. I would suggest that council consult with the city solicitor to see if new language needs

to be drafted on contracts and contractors

Cory Diloreto (D)

By-laws and a citizen review board are two ideas to start with. I'm open to any and all suggestions. Open and honest communication is key to building positive relationships and an inclusive, understanding and accountable community.

Jasmine Flores (D)

I would guarantee Erie City Contractors sign off on non-discrimination policies by passing legislation and making laws. Adding in a nondiscrimination clause to any contractual agreement should not ever be an issue. I have no problem putting together a legislature or even an example contract clause for the Mayor to sign off on. The role of the city council is to represent the community and pass the legislation in their favor. It might involve getting other council members on board, but this is the

Elspeth Katrine Koehle (D)

I believe that just like Councilmember Keys increased wages for city contracted employees, that policy can be enacted, if it is not already, to encourage

and monitor best practices. While I believe incentives work best to encourage diversity and combat discrimination, I believe that employers not complying should face penalties.

Chuck Nelson (D)

As a councilmember I would happy to hear and advocate regarding concerns of discrimination, and hold others accountable.

Kendrick Tate (D)

In order to create an accountable and nondiscriminatory work environment in our city, we should make examples of the businesses doing work for us. I believe that city governments should have a more active role in vetting the businesses that contract with them, beyond only accepting the lowest bid. On City Council, I would urge Councilmembers to adopt a policy for bidding contractors to complete a community-written survey about factors regarding their company's community impact, their nondiscrimination policies and practices, and their commitment to anti-bias/hate training, to be a preferred contractor with the city.

Mo Troop (D)

To implement these policies, I would first do a thorough examination of the existing policies. This examination would be completed by various community stakeholders while following all of the required procedures under our charter and city code. Here is also an opportunity for Erie to research other cities that are operating successfully in this area. The strategies that they are using could be adapted to meet the needs of our city.

Cultural Competency Training Liz Allen (D)

We have not had any LGBTQIA cultural competency training. Council could benefit from such training, as well as training in how to recognize/respond to implicit bias. We do have one training session planned this year on civility. I am confident that after we complete that training, council as a whole will recognize the value of training on a variety of issues, including cultural competency.

Cory Diloreto (D)

I would recommend all city employees, and the public if they so choose, to participate in and attend educational symposiums and/or classes to be given by an individual or a group of individuals supported and chosen by Erie's LGBTQIA+ leadership, approved by EGN and made public by EGN and the City of Erie via website, social media and press release.

Jasmine Flores (D)

I have not received any LGBTQIA+Cultural Competency Training outside of anything required by the law for my job. Types of training I could recommend for city staff and council members would come directly from resources like the Great Erie Alliance, or the LGBTQIA Commission from Edinboro. I do believe, however, our best bet would be to start with Equality Pennsylvania. The entire purpose of Equality Pennsylvania all revolves around education and policy or legislation for the LGBT community right in our home state. The Equality Pennsylvania Education Fund is perfect for this scenario.

Elspeth Katrine Koehle (D)

I don't recall getting any LGBTQIA+ specific training, I believe it is imperative especially for those of us who work with diverse populations, along with non-bias training, trauma response, understanding poverty, mental health first aid, etc. As I am not extremely knowledgeable about issues the LGBTQIA+ communities face, I would welcome all suggestions for training.

Chuck Nelson (D)

I have taken many classes on ethnography and sociology, but no specific corporate training. I'd be happy to advocate for recommended training.

Kendrick Tate (D)

Personally, I've never had the opportunity to participate in LGBTQIA+ Cultural Competency Training. But, the importance of understanding the community as our society progresses can't be overstated. For city staff and council members, I would recommend a yearly training for city employees and elected officials by local LGBTQIA+ organizations to establish and maintain acceptance and understanding of the wider LGBTQIA+ community and the experiences of the community within our city.

Mo Troop (D)

I have recently conducted a training on Equity and Inclusion at the school where I work with a staff of nearly 200 people. I possess the ability to conduct these pieces of training with the city staff personally. I also believe that we should seek out members of the LGBT Community who could plan and implement the training with staff. Once again, we could research existing trainings used and approved by LGBTQ Organizations to make sure that we are using the best and most current resources.

Engagement Strategies Liz Allen (D)

Council has the ability to tap into the various advisory councils that the Schember administration has created. Scheduling at least one study session at the start of the year to hear from members of these councils would be invaluable for myself and my colleagues. We do not have a formal liaison assigned to these advisory councils; creating such a liaison would do a great deal to open up the lines of communication for feedback on policies and legislation.

Cory Diloreto (D)

Public forums and open, ongoing, inclusive discussion with Erie's LGBTQIA+ community and leaders is one idea. I'm open to all ideas. The goal is communication with results.

Jasmine Flores (D)

The best strategy to use to engage and include the LGBTQIA organizations and community members when I develop policies and legislation is to build personal relationships and reach out to them. Whether it's a phone call, meeting for coffee, or sending an email, the strategy will be being proactive and building bridges. I cannot wait for anyone to approach me.



It's my job to engage and include the LGBTQIA community every step of the way. I've already reached out to my trans teenage nephew regarding what he needs to feel safe and protected in his community and my sister who is homosexual and a preteen before even answering these questions. I have a lot of friends who are LGBTQIA their needs are just as important as anyone else in our city. It's important to always get a perspective different than mine, and from the people who we are trying to help directly.

Elspeth Katrine Koehle (D)

I have witnessed some problems in the past that have alienated individuals. My first thought is to ask questions and not make assumptions. One of the reasons I am running is because I do not see the entire community represented by city leadership. I can think of a few ways to engage community members such as board appointments, CDBG funds for organizations, inclusion during study sessions, and perhaps a revamping of the administration's LGBTQIA+council, led by the community, not by staff.

Chuck Nelson (D)

I do not need to speak on behalf of an underrepresented community. I need to open the floor. When City Council had previously worked to pass legislation regarding LGBTQIA+ issues, I have organized people from the community to speak out from particular positions to help understanding.

Kendrick Tate (D)

In order to involve LGBTQIA+ community members and organizations in policy decisions and legislation, I would recommend our council members to personally get involved with local LGBTQIA+ organization events to establish relationships with the event organizers and organization leaders, and hold regular meetings with LGBTQIA+ leaders in the city, along with others in our community, to determine their specific priorities within the city.

Mo Troop (D)

I would use the strategy to develop an LG-BTQIA Task Force to include and engage the LGBTQ Community Members. Also, I would work to make open lines of communication between prominent LGBTQIA organizations and the city government.

LGBTQIA+ Influence Liz Allen (D)

Thanks to the pandemic, I reconnected with a gay friend from high school on Zoom to talk about politics, feminism, religion, spirituality, science, social isolation, silly high school memories and grandparenting. Our Zoom started with four classmates; now about a dozen of us get together every week. Thanks to my friend's openness, we have all become better at recognizing that we are not defined by sexual orientation but by our humanity, and that friendships can be picked up where we left off more than 50 years ago, with all the wisdom we've gained since then.

Cory Diloreto (D)

Living in San Diego I had the great opportunity to be amongst an incredibly diverse population with full-spectrum views on many topics. During weekends, while on long bicycle rides through the city, I frequently stopped at a very friendly and inclusive coffee shop in Mission Hills, neighboring Hillcrest, called Meshuggah Shack. Conversation was always colorful and inviting. It was always positive and accepting; a microcosmic community of openness and inclusiveness. This is what I hope to bring to city council and our community.

Jasmine Flores (D)

I have family members who are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, if they are younger family members I give them information for programs and organizations for support. I also try to introduce them to fellow community members to find friends and support they might not have. Being an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community I am positively influenced to embrace my true authentic self. The LGBTQIA+ community has fought and continues to fight for their rights to be seen and heard so they can live as their true self in life. I continue to admire that.

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Elspeth Katrine Koehle (D)

I'd have to say it was at Pride a few years ago. My youngest son was about 11 or so. He is Bi and he just felt so welcomed by everyone at the festival. I have a beautiful picture of him draped in the pride flag in the middle of State St. That made me really happy and proud.

Chuck Nelson (D)

Most of my time spent with the LGBTQIA+ community has been working at restaurants with larger LGBTQIA+ populations. And oftentimes they brought the party up a notch.

Kendrick Tate (D)

Over the years, I've met many different people who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The community as a whole inspires me with the commitment to recognizing and embracing themselves and each other, regardless of the continued hate and violence committed against them. In Erie, seeing the brilliance and compassion of people like Tyler Titus or the dedication and entertainment success of people like Rebecca Mae has given me the chance to see from the perspective of another community that stands with each other against social norms that marginalize the people's existence. I have tremendous respect for the LGBTQIA+ community and they've inspired me to promote the sense of pride that motivates them.

Mo Troop (D)

The LGBT community has inspired me because I have close family and friends who are dear to me in the LGBTIA community.





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