



E·C·G·R·A
ERIE COUNTY GAMING REVENUE AUTHORITY

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**

FOR

JUNE

2019



Ridge Policy Group Activity

ECGRA May 15 – June 15 Report

RPG Relevant Meetings and Calls

RPG Relevant Activity

- Provided information on SBA Makerspace Workforce Grant to Perry Wood
- Provided information on ARC new workforce grant to Perry Wood
- Highlighted Erie's Opportunity Zone Flagship Project in several meetings with legislators and with HUD's Regional Director Joe DeFelice, who plans to now visit Erie

Funding Opportunities Presented

Federal Opportunities:

SBA Makerspace Grant

The SBA believes that existing makerspaces are uniquely positioned to help increase workforce development in U.S. cities. The MaTCH Pilot Competition seeks to address the job skills and placement gap faced by U.S. businesses by providing funding to create or expand programs within existing makerspaces that offer job-specific and soft skills training.

The SBA challenges individual organizations or teams to use existing makerspaces to create or expand skills training programs, including industry or trade certification when feasible, with a goal to immediately place all program graduates in positions with previously-identified employers that are in need of skilled labor. The SBA will award up to \$1 million in total prizes to fund winning program proposals.

To enter, individuals or organizations should submit a business plan detailing their qualifications, experience, and resources; the proposed training curriculum; the nature and length of the training/certification program; and the number of trainees that will be accommodated.

Timeline

Submission Period: May 21, 2019 to July 8, 2019

Entry Review and Judging Period: July 9, 2019 - August 5, 2019

Winners Announced: August 6, 2019

Prizes

The Competition will award up to \$1 million in total prizes, based on the following tiered approach:

- o Seed: up to \$25,000 will be awarded to seed small workforce development programs.

- o Proof of Principle: up to \$100,000 will be awarded to grow programs with a proven history of training and/or workforce development.

- o Scale: up to \$200,000 will be awarded for capacity building of successful existing programs with a strong history of training and/or workforce development. This winner would also have graduated participants in at least two training cycles.

Each award will be disbursed in a series of four payments, per completion of key milestones. Review the MaTCH competition rules and the FAQs for more detail on how the prizes are disbursed.

Eligibility and competition criteria

To be considered for selection, a proposed solution must leverage an existing Makerspace to provide vocational training programs (including job specific skills and soft skills training) that meet the minimum standards of the specific trade and, to the extent feasible, any required industry or trade certifications, in addition to targeted job placement of all program graduates in local businesses.

This Competition is open only to: (1) citizens or permanent residents of the United States who are at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of entry submission (or teams of such individuals); and (2) private entities, such as corporations or other organizations, both for profit and nonprofit, that are incorporated or organized in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States.

Applicants should review all the MaTCH competition rules and the FAQs before entering the competition.

ARC Grant

This week, the U.S. Department of Labor announced \$29 million is now available via the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC). initiative to implement innovative approaches to provide enhanced training and support activities to dislocated workers, new entrants in the workforce, incumbent workers, and individuals affected by substance use disorder returning to work. Successful awards, ranging from \$150,000 - \$2.5 million, will support workforce development activities that prepare eligible participants for good jobs in high-demand occupations aligned with a state, regional, or community economic development strategy. Communities across Appalachia, especially those underserved by other resources, are encouraged to apply.

Gaining Momentum

Tech company ValueMomentum expands to Erie, hopes to hire 100

By Jim Martin
jim.martin@timesnews.com

Tim NeCastro, CEO of Erie Insurance, wasn't shy about admitting it.

He sold ValueMomentum on the idea of locating a new development center in his hometown and he "sold them hard."

His efforts and those of a considerable list of other local political, business and educational leaders have paid dividends.

At a news conference Friday afternoon at Erie's Sheraton Bayfront Hotel, officials from ValueMomentum, a privately-held, New Jersey-based technology company, announced plans to open a new location in downtown Erie that's expected to grow to 100 employees in three years.

Company leaders, who briefed the Erie Times-News on their plans earlier this week, said the company plans to purchase a 40,000-square-foot building in downtown Erie and will invest \$5 million between the cost of purchase and renovation.

For now — most likely for the next six to nine months



Kalyan Kodali, at podium, announced that his company, ValueMomentum, will establish a regional development center in Erie and will hire 100 software developers and other computer professionals from the Erie region and elsewhere. The news conference was held at the Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel on Friday. Seated, from left, are Swarup Ghosh, chief operating officer for ValueMomentum; Erie Mayor Joe Schember; Tim NeCastro, CEO of Erie Insurance; and Abhijeet Jhaveri, chief marketing officer for ValueMomentum. Kodali is the CEO of the company, which is based in New Jersey and employs 2,500 people. (PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

More online

Watch the ValueMomentum news conference and meet some of the company's employees: www.GoErie.com/Videos

— the company will move into Gannon University's Erie Technology Incubator on State Street with about 30 employees.

The company, which provides information technology services, primarily to customers in the fields of insurance, banking and finance, and health care, won't need an extended buildup to bring online those first 30 employees, including software engineers and other computer specialists.

Swarup Ghosh, chief operating officer for

ValueMomentum, said the company has been working with local universities and already has hired 21 new employees from the Erie area. In addition to those employees, seven to 10 more employees will be transferred to Erie, he said. That new office is scheduled to open June 1.

See TECH, A4

A4 Saturday, May 11, 2019

TECH

From Page A1

Some of those new employees, including some from the Erie and Pittsburgh areas, were among the 75 or so people on hand for the company's announcement Friday. Ralph Ford, chancellor of Penn State Behrend, and Keith Taylor, president of Gannon University, each said he had met with company officials as they scouted Erie as a possible location.

Ford said Friday he believes the universities played a role in the company's decision.

It's been said before that Erie is all but invisible to site selectors looking for homes or expansion sites for their businesses.

That wasn't the case with ValueMomentum, which has had its eye on expansion for some time, said Kalyan Kodali, the company's CEO. Kodali explained that his company's strategy called for focusing on what it calls mid-tier cities that can offer strong educational systems and an affordable cost of living. Erie checked all the boxes, Ghosh said.

The company's relationship with Erie



From left: Swarup Ghosh, Tom Hagen and Abhijeet Jhaveri talk before a news conference Friday. Hagen is the chairman of the board of Erie Insurance. Ghosh and Jhaveri, top officials with ValueMomentum, hope to hire from Erie's local universities for the Erie operation.

Insurance and NeCastro didn't burt, he said.

NeCastro said the company has been doing business with Erie Insurance for 17 years, and has employees working on site, some of whom stay for extended periods, while others are in Erie for the duration of short projects. When NeCastro learned that ValueMomentum was considering a second location, he began making a case for Erie.

"Tim got on the phone with me and made a very compelling speech," Ghosh said.

Ghosh, who has been coming to Erie for years, also said the new sense of energy and the development of the Erie Innovation District under Mercyhurst University also played a role in the company's selection of Erie.

Ghosh said Erie Insurance team members introduced ValueMomentum leaders and human resources employees to key figures in the Erie business community, including the Erie Downtown Development Corp., the Erie Innovation District, the

Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, Radius GoWork and others.

"We got a chance to meet with all of them," he said. "We felt that if there was a group of different organizations coming together it would be so much easier to develop the talent pool here."

NeCastro said Erie Insurance not only had a business relationship with ValueMomentum that had grown over time, but the two companies share a common value system.

NeCastro said that's why he pushed hard for the marriage that came Friday and enlisted his business and community contacts to do the same.

"From the very first conversation, there was very good chemistry, a really good discussion," he said. "What I tried to portray to ValueMomentum was that this was an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a city that knows where it is and what it is trying to do to get things done. We don't have all the answers, but we have a lot of positive things happening and a lot of opportunity."

Abhijeet Jhaveri, chief marketing officer for ValueMomentum, said the company is not yet prepared to say where it plans to locate, only that it's in negotiations to buy a 40,000-square-foot building downtown.

The company wasn't saying where, but one option might be the former Regional Center for Workforce Excellence building. The 40,000-square-foot, four-story building, which has underground parking, was sold at a sheriff's sale in January 2018 for about \$69,000. The building, which had been the main asset of RCWE when it filed for bankruptcy protection, had previously been

valued at more than \$1.2 million.

ValueMomentum officials said Wednesday that his company hopes to announce that decision by June.

They also talked about their motivations for coming to Erie.

"The governor's office was very generous in incentives they offered to us," Jhaveri said.

But by the time those incentives were offered, it was late in the process and ValueMomentum already had chosen Erie.

"We respectfully declined those incentives," Jhaveri said. "They did not play a big part in the decision-making process. Being part of the community was more important to us."

For his part, NeCastro sees the addition of this established technology company as a vote of confidence in the community's universities, the Erie Innovation District, the beehive initiative, the EDDC and the energy of Erie.

"I think every win makes the next win a little easier," NeCastro said. "I think this sets the stage."

Jim Martin can be reached at 870-1668 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ETNMartin.

VIEWPOINT

OUR VIEW

Tech company lured to Erie by strengths

The issue: ValueMomentum coming to town
Our view: It's another sign Erie's on move

A key piece of the vision for a renewed Erie is transforming its downtown into a hub for technology businesses and study.

Early progress, seeded by the Erie Innovation District, includes startup companies putting down roots here. The latest good news came Friday from a New Jersey-based technology company with more of a track record.

ValueMomentum, which is privately held, announced it will open its second U.S. location in Erie. The plans include buying and renovating a 40,000-square-foot building downtown involving a total investment of \$5 million, company officials said.

ValueMomentum's choice of Erie is another indicator that this community's push for progress, investment and growth is getting traction. The company was looking for a "mid-tier city" that offered a pool of people with STEM skills and a manageable cost of living and doing business.

ValueMomentum chose Erie from among eight such cities it considered. The most important factor, CEO Kalyan Kodali said, was the talent to be found at the Erie region's universities.

ValueMomentum will launch its Erie presence with about 30 employees, including software engineers and other specialists, in rented space at Gannon University's Erie Technology Incubator. The company already has hired 21 new employees from this area, company officials said, and will transfer in seven more. Those officials said ValueMomentum intends to increase employment here to 100 over three years.

The company specializes in providing information technology services to the insurance, financial and health care industries. It didn't hurt Erie's chances that one of its major customers is Erie County's largest employer.

ValueMomentum has been doing business with Erie Insurance for 17 years. When Erie Insurance CEO Tim NeCastro found out the company was searching for a new outpost, he pitched Erie's strengths and connected ValueMomentum executives with key figures in Erie's business and political ranks.

Swarup Ghosh, the company's chief operating officer, said the energy and collaboration in motion in Erie — including the Innovation District, the Erie Downtown Redevelopment Corp. and the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership — played a role in the company's choice.

"We felt that if there was a group of different organizations coming together it would be so much easier to develop the talent pool here," Ghosh said.

Another factor, company officials said, is that ValueMomentum employees who spent extended periods in Erie while embedded at Erie Insurance found it welcoming and enjoyable.

NeCastro said landing an established, growing technology company that will look to hire locally adds a "strong punctuation mark" to Erie's efforts to pivot to a high-tech future. It's one more sign that Erie's on the move and that the outside world is noticing, he said.

"I think every win makes the next win easier," NeCastro said.

Thursday, May 16, 2019

New trees to take root on North Center Street

BY SARA JUKES
sara@thecorryjournal.com

The sidewalks of North Center Street have had trees planted in the past. Some have survived and some haven't. This week, the street will be getting more trees and there is a lot of prep work involved.

Impact Corry initiated this project with a Mission Main Street grant from Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

Corry Tree Committee committed to taking care of the trees after they are planted, using a portion of the remaining grant funds, said Tom VanTassel, chairman of the tree committee.

Dahlkemper Landscape Architects and Contractors, located in Erie, has been working this week preparing the holes to plant trees.

A variety of tree species will start going in the ground at the end of the week, weather depending, VanTassel said. The final tree could be planted as soon as next week.

Nine trees will be planted in the sidewalk in front of businesses on North Center Street between the railroad tracks and Franklin Street.

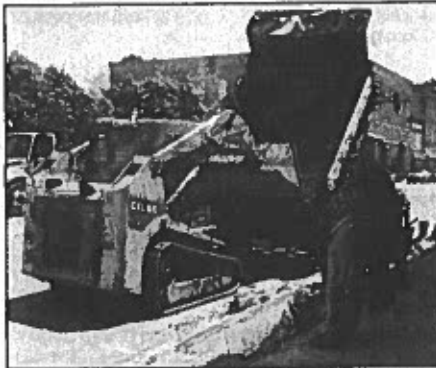
The trees will be planted at:

- 200 N. Center St., in front of William Barney's office
- 134 N. Center St., near Hammond Rentals
- 116 N. Center St., in front of T.J. Jewelers
- 118 N. Center St., in front of Adecco Employment Services

- 109 N. Center St., near Hiram's Marketplace
- 40 N. Center St., near Meerhoff's Appliance and TV
- 32 N. Center St., near Painted Finch Gallery Inc.
- 26 N. Center St., near The White Butterfly
- 37 N. Center St., near Little Annie's

At least 4-foot wide holes for the trees need to be dug first and prepared with a special mixture of stone and soil that has been trademarked as CU-Structural Soil, developed at Cornell University.

◀ See Trees, P.2



Sara Jukes/The Corry Journal

Dahlkemper Landscape Architects and Contractors, located in Erie, is in Corry this week and next planting nine trees on North Center Street. Dahlkemper project foreman Jesse Foley, right, works to spread the soil layers to prepare the hole for a tree with crewman Tommy O'Lena while crewman Matt Green runs a Gehl compact track loader.

Trees

(Continued from front page)

The stone used is a uniformly sized, highly angular crushed stone that can form a "lattice" base to help support the tree and provide space to encourage roots to grow among the stone into the soil.

After all the holes are prepared, the landscapers will return to plant the trees. After the trees are planted, then the bricks are put back in, VanTassel said.

The specialized soil preparations should allow the tree roots to grow within their own trenches

instead of ruining surrounding sidewalks, VanTassel explained.

With the planting taking place after wet weather, the trees will still need to

be tended, but with the planting VanTassel said.

Friday, May 17, 2019

2020 Census preparation outreach comes to Corry

BY SARA JUKES
sara@thecorryjournal.com

Planning for a 2020 Census is underway and Erie County officials are putting forth efforts to prepare.

At a recent Corry City Council meeting, letters were received and filed about preparations Erie County officials have started for the 2020 census.

Government officials take a residential count very seriously, since census data is used to determine what funding is needed for planning the future of communities.

Census data is used toward planning for schools, roads, emergency services and community development block grants,

to name a few.

To enhance count accuracy, an Erie County Complete Count Committee is being formed and a request was received for Corry to designate a representative to serve on the committee.

Nick Heil, Corry's city business manager, was sent to a recent Complete Count Committee launch to gather more information, City Manager Jason BlonDI said. A representative has not been designated yet.

In order to fund the 2020 Census related marketing and a contracted outreach coordinator, a \$100,000 grant is being sought from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

The grant requires \$50,000

◀ See Census, P.3

Bridgeway Capital celebrates 7 years of operation in Erie

Nonprofit aimed at developing Erie County minority entrepreneurship

Times-News staff

Since the creation of its Erie office in 2012, Bridgeway Capital has lent \$20.5 million to small-business ventures in Erie County and northwestern Pennsylvania that cannot access mainstream sources of finance.

The company is a private nonprofit and a community development financial institution that provides affordable, lower-interest business loans in communities marked by disinvestment and low wealth.

Company officials and employees, and clients and customers they have assisted in launching businesses, gathered in Erie at the Warner Theater on Wednesday evening to celebrate the nonprofit's seven years of operation in Erie.

Bridgeway Capital officials at Wednesday's gathering discussed future plans for two Erie-region programs — the Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator and the Erie Inclusive Fund — aimed at encouraging minority entrepreneurship in Erie County.

Launched in April and funded by a \$300,000 grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, the Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator aims to lead minority entrepreneurs on the path to success.

"We're still in the application phase where we're hopeful to have six applicants that are current businesses that will walk through a nine-month training process," said Jimmy Jackson, director of Bridgeway Capital's Erie office.

"They're going to engage in mentorship and peer-led training."

Six businesses are expected to be chosen in late June to participate in the first accelerator project, Jackson said. Bridgeway Capital and ECGRA in December formed the Erie Inclusive Fund, a \$5 million investment pool to ignite Erie County minority entrepreneurship. Bridgeway Capital will match dollar for dollar the \$2.5 million ECGRA has invested into the program, and is committed to investing \$2.5 million in minority-owned businesses over three years.

"These types of transactions that we're lending into and the type of education we're developing creates opportunities that are unique to the

disfranchised, underbanked populations," Jackson said. "We've seen what happens in low-income communities. We are really grateful for the support and involvement of Erie community banks and leaders for helping us deliver the capital where it's needed the most."

Bridgeway Capital CEO Mark Peterson, who attended Wednesday's Erie event, founded his company in Pittsburgh in 1990. Bridgeway Capital opened its Erie office in 2012 and its Uniontown office in 2013. The company employs 25.

"Bridgeway is fortunate to work with the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority to allocate funds for minority-owned businesses," Peterson said. "We're really pleased with what these businesses in the community here have done with their money, and it shows how money designed to meet their needs can really fuel business growth, especially in the minority community."

"We're much lower with our interest rates than other sources of capital for them," Peterson said. "It's hard for banks to do business start-ups and it's hard for banks to do business without a lot of real estate involved."

GOOD MORNING

Readers weigh in on what's next for Erie Next



Lisa Thompson

based on innovation. Groove, mojo, grit, rock bottom, and a host of correct but boring "re" words — recovery, revitalization, renewal, reinvention — all get here. "Transformation" is one we fall back on perhaps most. It is the word that caught the attention of our new Reader Advisory Board member, Diane Chido.

Chido, an Erie native, is bringing her background in military intelligence studies to bear on change under way in Erie. The military has developed a framework to stabilize societies torn apart by war and conflict. Chido sees potential applications in cities like Erie.

Her interest in both news and her strategic thinking about Erie's prospects, featured in a recent Jefferson Educational Society lecture series, make her a good fit for our board — a diverse group of newspaper readers who meet with Opinion Editor Pat Howard and me once a month to share feedback.

The Erie Next initiative that we coordinate is a mix of solutions and watchdog journalism, commentary and advocacy that strives at once to track, vet, spur and keep in sharp focus this

forward momentum in Erie and anything holding it back. Chido said the initiative has been helping her get her arms around all of the related events and action.

Amid ongoing work to sharpen and focus the initiative, we asked the Reader Board to weigh in. They want to know more than the highlights.

For example, what happened to companies that stayed after the Erie Innovation District "boot camp" a year ago? John Hess asked. An accounting of exactly who is doing what and what they have accomplished would be helpful because there is such an "alphabet soup" of agencies in the news, Jane Wagner said. Laban Marsh stressed the need to accentuate the positive, especially in light of the stone-throwing that reflectively seems to break out on Erie's social media channels when anyone tries something new.

"It would be awesome to be 'encouraging Erie,'" he said. *Erie Times-News staff writers share their views from behind the scenes, stories and bylines. Lisa Thompson can be reached at 870-1802. Send email to lisa.thompson@timesnews.com.*

I have covered or opined on news in northwestern Pennsylvania for more than two decades now. When I reach for ways to convey this watershed moment in Erie, it tends to get a little metaphysical.

There is a mustering of spirit and will, labor, wit, capital, grit and leadership that is jelling on so many fronts to push Erie into a new, more relevant way of existing in the modern world. It is seen in the outward-facing, inclusive leadership of Mayor Joe Schember, and grassroots activists and neighborhood champions taking ownership of both elections and blighted city blocks.

It is seen in the plans of the Erie Downtown Development Corp.; smart, targeted investments made by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, the Erie Community Foundation and the United Way of Erie County; and steps taken by local colleges and universities to foster an economy

^(/live)
WATCH LIVE: Erie News Now at 12:30



(/)

Meadville
Few Clouds

54°

H 61°
L 47° ^(/weather)



NEWS ^(/CATEGORY/205182/NEWS)

WEATHER ^(/WEATHER)

SPORTS ^(/SPORTS)

VIDEO ^(/VIDEOS)

COMMUNITY

FEATURES

TV ^(/TV-PROGRAMMING)

YOUR PHOTOS ^(/YOUR-PHOTOS)



NEWS

EHCA Participants Show Their Moves at Partners in Dance Program

Participants in the EHCA MOVE program showed off their moves at a dance performance Monday.

Monday, May 20th 2019, 7:00 PM EDT by Alex Popichak

Updated: Monday, May 20th 2019, 7:00 PM EDT

Participants in the Erie Homes for Children and Adults (EHCA) MOVE program performed in a spring performance Monday.

EHCA teamed up with Dafmark Dance Theatre to present a creative show entitled "Travel Adventures" Monday at the MOVE program facility on W. 23rd Street.

EHCA is a nonprofit agency serving children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the MOVE program encourages exploration through the arts and volunteerism.

"Our individuals enjoy being able to express themselves through different forms of art and one of the ways that they like to do that is through movement and dance," Debra Niland, director of the MOVE program said. "This has been a great opportunity for us to be able to have a grant through Erie Arts and Culture and ECGRA [Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority] to provide opportunities like this for our individuals."

In addition to MOVE dancers, the program included performances by Dafmark dancers.

Monday's performance is part of an ongoing program at EHCA called "Partners in Dance," which has provided arts encounters for the last 18 years.

#ECGRAWorks

An impact investor, ECGRA's mission is to elevate Erie County by galvanizing nonprofits and small businesses toward economic and community development. ECGRA's Impact Investing Policy focuses in on five areas: Small Business, Youth & Education, Neighborhoods & Local Communities, Municipalities, and Quality of Place.

Over the past decade, ECGRA has invested more than \$55 million in Erie County. In 2019, awarded \$175,515 in Special Events grants to 45 local non-profits in support of special events that improve quality of place for Erie residents.

IMPACT: Quality of Place

Events like parades and festivals are part of the social fabric that enhance the attractiveness of a region, while elevating our pride in Erie County. Special events grants are driving tourism, attracting talent to the region, and helping sustain some quintessential Erie traditions.



ERIE COUNTY SPECIAL EVENTS

Make Erie a Special Place to Visit and Call Home



Over the Edge & Trivia Night



Regional Dance America Northeast Dance Festival 2019



North East Area Chamber of Commerce Events 2019



12th Annual Art Show & Sale, 7th Annual Barber Beast on the Bay, 55th Annual Christmas Ball



EHCA 2019 Special Events



Maple Festival, Honey Harvest, Scary Creature Feature & Winter Wonderland



26th Annual Zabawa Polish Heritage Festival



4th of July In the Park



The AmeriMasala



March Against Crime, Victims' Rights Speaker Series and Conference, Moonlight on the Bay



Edinboro Highland Games & Scottish Festival



Harborcreek Community Concert & HC Light Up Night



Erie Irish Festival



Scrabble Tournament, Garden Party, Intimate Partner Violence Conference, Big Backyard Children's Parties



2019 Scouting Series



Gathering at French Creek



ServErie Saturdays, ServErie Spring Soiree, ServErie School Initiative



2019 Special Events



Annual Fireworks Extravaganza



Sunset Celebration



JES Programming/Global Summit



2019 LEAF Events



Light Up North East



Oktoberfest 2019



Albion Area Fair



Sounds Around Town Summer Concert Series and TV & Radio Broadcasts



Edinboro Centennial Celebration/Art 100



Asian Festival 2019



2019 Schedule of Educational & Cultural Events



Nonprofit Day 2019



Erie Regional Chamber 2019 Events



CelebrateErie 2019



Annual Greek Festival



Erie Food Truck Festival



Four Seasons Performances



Global Youth Service Day, "Say It, Say It Loud"



2019 Roar on the Shore Bike Week



Saint Paul's Annual Italian Festival



36th Annual Drum Corps Competition, 23rd Annual German Heritage Festival



2019 Waterford Community Fair



Independence Hill District Flea Market

ERIE COUNTY FAIR
Wattsburg Agricultural Society, Inc. 2019
Erie County Fair



Celebration of 25 Years Serving Women and Children on the Road to Recovery



ECGRA's work in community and economic development is funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through an assessment levied on Preque Isle Downs and Casino.

#ECGRAWorks

@ecgra814

www.ecgra.org