



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

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
APRIL & MAY
2020**

Fugagli, Tracey

From: Sparber, James
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2020 12:27 PM
To: Fugagli, Tracey
Subject: FW: 1st Quarter 2020 Local Share Assessment Payment Notification

Tracey, Please see below. Jim

From: Heckert, Jennifer L <jeheckert@pa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2020 12:07 PM
To: Sparber, James <JSparber@eriecountypa.gov>
Subject: 1st Quarter 2020 Local Share Assessment Payment Notification

Dear Mr. Sparber:

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act 42 of 2017, the Department is required to distribute quarterly the Local Share Assessment collected for interactive gaming and slots to the municipalities in which a licensed gaming entity is located. This distribution is based on the interactive gaming and slots local share assessment amount collected plus the slot machine license operation fee amount collected over Summit Township's budget limitation.

Erie County: \$767,152.95
Land Bank Jurisdiction: \$767,152.95

An ACH for the first quarter of 2020 payment in the amount of \$1,534,305.90 should be deposited in Erie County's bank account within 7 - 10 business days. This payment includes the interactive gaming local share assessment of \$5,033.72, the slots local share assessment of \$438,681.18 and the slot machine license operation fee of \$1,090,591.00. Any reductions to the Gross Interactive Gaming Revenue (GIGR) and Gross Terminal Revenue (GTR) for promotional items is the result of the Gaming Bulletin 2015-01 and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's April 28, 2014 decision in Greenwood Gaming and Entertainment Incorporated v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Revenue (90 A.3d 699 (Pa. 2014)).

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thank you.

Jennifer Heckert | Division Chief
PA Department of Revenue
Bureau of Fiscal Management | Gaming Division
1147 Strawberry Square | Harrisburg PA 17128
Phone: 717.346.4004 | Fax: 717.787.6738
E-mail: jeheckert@pa.gov
www.revenue.pa.gov

Our mission is to fairly, efficiently and accurately administer the tax laws and other revenue programs of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Erie County 067-021010-042100

767,152.95 x .55 = \$421,934.12

ECGRA 067-021050-042100

767,152.95 x .45 = \$345,218.83

Land Bank 067-021018-042100

\$767,152.95

deposit confirmed 5-7-20 JH



Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C.

120 West Tenth Street | Erie, Pennsylvania 16501-1461
814-459-2800 | 814-453-4530 fax | www.kingslaw.com

Timothy S. Wachter

twachter@kmgslaw.com

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Dominick DiPaolo, Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, Pennsylvania 16510

RE: Solicitors Opinion Regarding Conflict of Interest

Dear Mr. DiPaolo:

As you are aware, you serve as an Erie County Council appointed Director on the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority ("ECGRA"). As such, you are considered to be a public official subject to the Pennsylvania Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (the "Ethics Act"), 65 Pa.C.S. § 1101-1113. You serve as a volunteer at the Sacred Heart Food Pantry (the "Food Pantry"), and the Food Pantry has submitted a grant application to ECGRA for review and consideration. You have indicated that you have no other role at the Food Pantry.

You have requested that I determine whether your participation in the deliberation, and voting, on the grant application would constitute a conflict of interest under the Ethics Act. I offer this nonconfidential opinion in my position as ECGRA Solicitor.

The Ethics Act defines a conflict of interest as the "use by a public official ... of the authority of his office ... or any confidential information received through his holding public office ... for the private pecuniary benefit of himself, a member of his immediate family, or a business with which he or a member of his immediate family is associated." 65 Pa.C.S. §1102. In this matter, the question is whether the Food Pantry would be considered to be a "business with which [you are] associated." The Ethics Act defines a "business with which he is associated" as "any business in which the person or a member of the person's immediate family is a director, officer, owner, employee or has a financial interest." *Id.*

So long as neither you nor a member of your immediate family would be considered to be a director, officer, owner or employee of the Food Pantry, and because you are simply a volunteer for the Food Pantry, then it is my opinion that no conflict of interest exists under the Ethics Act. See also *Advice of Counsel re McLanahan*, State Ethics Commission No. 10-589 (*finding that mere volunteer service, without a finding that the volunteer serves as a director, officer, owner or employee of the entity, does not create a conflict of interest*).

Mr. Dominick DiPaolo
May 12, 2020
Page 2

Accordingly, and so long as the stated factual assumptions remain accurate, it is my opinion that no conflict of interest exists and you may deliberate and vote on the grant application submitted to the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority by the Sacred Heart Food Pantry.

I recommend that you disclose the existence of this nonconfidential opinion at the next ECGRA meeting where the Food Pantry's application is discussed and voted on for the purpose of including this opinion in the minutes of the meeting.

Please do let me know if you require anything further. I remain,

Very truly yours,

KNOX McLAUGHLIN GORNALL &
SENNETT, P.C.

By: 
Timothy S. Wachter

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Paris
Chairman of the Board
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

FROM: Kelly Hess
ECGRA Board Director

DATE: May 21, 2020

RE: Conflict of Interest Disclosure

On this date, the Board of Directors of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority was presented with Resolution Number 11, 2020, which is a Resolution to fund applications selected through the Immediate Human Relief Grant Program as part of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund. One such entity is Harbor Creek School District.

I am the Superintendent of the Harbor Creek School District. As such, I have abstained from any deliberation or involvement in the process to determine whether to recommend an award to Harbor Creek High School, and I abstain from the deliberation, and vote, regarding the approval of the Resolution. Further, I announced my conflict during the meeting and request that this memo be made part of the minutes of the May 21, 2020 meeting of the ECGRA Board of Directors.



Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C.
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MEMO

TO: ECGRA Board of Directors

FROM: Timothy S. Wachter 

DATE: May 15, 2020

RE: Blue Zones and the Establishment Clause

As you are aware, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority ("ECGRA") is a funding partner with the County's Blue Zone program in Corry. Recently, the company that facilitated the Blue Zones program was acquired by Adventist Health, a faith based health care organization.

<https://www.adventisthealth.org/blog/2020/april/adventist-health-acquires-blue-zones-as-part-of-/>

As previously documented with ECGRA via correspondence dated November 28, 2011, ECGRA is able to make awards to faith based organizations without violating the Establishment Clause within the First Amendment of the United States Constitution because ECGRA grant guidelines are to provide that recipients will not use government funds to support religious activities.

The First Amendment to the US Constitution provides "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." This is known as the Establishment Clause. In the Declaration of Rights of the PA Constitution, Article I, Section 3, there is a similar clause: "All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship or to maintain any ministry against his consent; no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience, and no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship."

As such, government entities, such as ECGRA, cannot endorse one religion over the other, nor can they fund programs which require participation, acknowledgement or preference of one particular religion. It was with these concerns in mind that the November 28, 2011 correspondence was drafted to advise ECGRA to ensure that funding is only made available for secular purposes. A copy of the November 28, 2011 correspondence is attached for your review.

While the Blue Zones program has been fully secular, Adventist Health's mission is "Living God's love by inspiring health, wholeness and hope." <https://www.adventisthealth.org/about-us/>

A question has been raised as to whether the acquisition of Blue Zones by a faith based organization will change the purely secular mission of Blue Zones.

Accordingly, I advise that, prior to providing additional funding to Blue Zones, ECGRA should investigate if the acquisition of Blue Zones by Adventist Health will cause any changes to the program, and if so, whether those changes would include the endorsement of any religion or conducting religious practices.

Please note that I am not suggesting that any such changes would be an absolute bar to funding; rather, they would require ECGRA to rethink how the funding is deployed, and for what purpose. For example, ECGRA could be able to limit the funding to go towards secular activities and prohibit the funding for being used for any religious activities. This would require that ECGRA understand whether any endorsement of religion, or prayer, will be incorporated into the program, and if so, to what degree, before it is determined whether funding can be segregated to the purely secular purposes.

Please do let me know if you have any questions or if you wish to discuss this matter further.

2168631.v1

**KNOX
McLAUGHLIN
GORNALL
& SENNETT**

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+ Registered Patent Attorney

11 Park Street
North East, Pennsylvania 16428

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Timothy S. Wachter
twachter@kmgslaw.com

November 28, 2011

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
c/o Mr. Perry Wood
4250 Knowledge Parkway, Suite A
Erie, Pennsylvania 16510

RE: Grant Awards to Faith Based Organizations

Dear Mr. Wood:

I have been asked to draft an opinion as to the ability of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority ("ECGRA") to provide grant awards to entities determined to be faith-based organizations. I am of the opinion that ECGRA may award grants to faith-based organizations on the basis of the secular purpose of the grant award.

ECGRA was established pursuant to the Economic Development Financing Law, 73 P.S. § 371 et seq., the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act, 4 Pa.C.S.A. § 1403(c)(2)(v), and the Home Rule Charter of the County of Erie, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act provides that uncommitted gaming funds are to be distributed to a County Economic Development Authority. 4 Pa.C.S.A. § 1403(c)(2)(v). Erie County established ECGRA through Article II, §5(iv)(F)(5)(b)(2) of the Home Rule Charter of the County of Erie to manage, invest and distribute such uncommitted funds in accordance with the Economic Development Financing Law. The Economic Development Financing Law authorizes ECGRA to disburse monies and approve grants in a manner which is necessary or convenient for the promotion of its business and the general welfare of the Authority. 73 P.S. § 376(b)(15).

Generally, ECGRA fulfills its purpose through the distribution of funds pursuant to grant programs which are administered through specific and written grant guidelines. The grant guidelines generally require that applicants are non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations and awards are considered based solely upon secular eligibility requirements. Further, grant guidelines provide that recipients will not use government funds to support religious activities.

Accordingly, based upon an analysis of applicable Pennsylvania laws, there are no known provisions which prohibit or restrict the Authority's ability to approve grants to faith-based organizations. Whether such awards are permissible, however, requires further analysis of applicable Constitutional concerns.

The disbursement of uncommitted funds by ECGRA to faith-based organizations is permissible under Federal and Constitutional law for two main reasons. First, the funds are not tax dollars; and, second, the distribution to a successful faith-based grant applicant on the basis of secular eligibility requirements does not have the effect of promoting a particular religion.

The general prohibition against the promotion of a particular religion by the government is contained within the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Establishment Clause provides, in applicable part, that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion . . ." U.S. Const. Amend. I. When determining whether a government practice, such as the distribution of gaming funds to faith-based organizations, violates the Establishment Clause, the United States Supreme Court established a three part test. The test, initially established in Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971), provides that there is no violation of the Establishment Clause if: (1) the practice has a secular purpose; (2) the principal or primary effect of the practice must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and (3) the practice must not foster an excessive government entanglement with religion. *Id.* Additionally, Courts consider "whether a reasonable observer would conclude that the government endorses religion by allowing the practice in question." Americans United for Separation of Church and State v. City of Grand Rapids, 980 F.2d 1538, 1544 (6th Cir. 1992).

ECGRA's distribution of gaming revenue should not be considered to be in violation of the Establishment Clause as the money that ECGRA is distributing is not considered to be public tax dollars. Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's funds are from a statutorily derived percentage of the revenues collected by the Casino and Racetrack as part of the Casino's licensing requirements. Generally, where the money being distributed is not collected through the imposition of tax, there is no conflict with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. See e.g. Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn, 131 S.Ct. 1436, ___ US 2011 (2011) (Governments allowance for use of private funds does not implicate the Establishment Clause). As the money being distributed is premised upon gaming revenues, and not tax dollars, the distribution of the funds should not implicate any Establishment Clause concerns.

Additionally, and even if taxpayer money was incorporated in the disbursement of funds to faith-based organizations, it would still be a proper use because the proceeds are used for secular programs and not for religious activities. In applying the three part test provided for in Lemon, ECGRA's grant programs and the distribution of gaming funds to faith-based organizations should not violate the Establishment Clause. In particular, as (1) ECGRA's grant guidelines provide that awards are based upon secular concerns and for secular purposes; (2) the guidelines do not consider religious affiliations and do not require ECGRA to become involved in the advancement, or inhibition of, any religion; and, (3) the grant awards do not require ECGRA to become involved or entangled in any operations of a religious nature, there should be no Establishment Clause concerns with grant awards to faith-based organizations. Further, as the grant guidelines make it clear that the awards are based upon secular purposes, a reasonable observer would not conclude that ECGRA is endorsing any religion or religious practices.

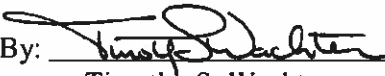
One example of the Federal Government making grant awards to faith-based organizations involves the programs administered by the White House's Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. This office requires its faith-based beneficiaries to demonstrate that it will not use government funds to support religious activities such as prayer, worship, religious teaching, or

proselytizing; will not discriminate on the basis of religion as they provide their services (faith-based organizations are required to serve people of all faiths or people of no faith in any program that they administer with Federal dollars); and that any religious activity offered by the faith based organization will be offered separately from the government funded activities. ECGRA likewise holds its grant recipients to similar guidelines, thus ensuring compliance with the Constitution and related state laws.

In conclusion, and in summary, ECGRA is not prohibited from making grant awards to faith-based organizations as any such awards are solely based upon secular grant eligibility criteria. I hope that this correspondence clearly answers any questions you may have had on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have further questions, or wish to discuss this matter further. I remain,

Very truly yours,

KNOX McLAUGHLIN GORNALL &
SENNETT, P.C.

By: 
Timothy S. Wachter

April 22, 2020

Honorable Kim Clear
Finance Chair, County Council
140 West 6th Street
Erie, PA 16501

RE: Reimbursement of ECGRA expenditures to alleviate the COVID-19 crisis

Dear Kim,

On March 19, 2020 the ECGRA board of directors with the urging and support of County Council created the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund (Response Fund). Your resolution gave the ECGRA board the assurance they could move quickly and decisively in addressing the effects of COVID-19 on the front lines of the crisis. Feedback we've received from Council indicates that we have done that successfully.

ECGRA created the following programs as part of the Response Fund:

1. Immediate Human Relief
2. Small Business Loan Program
3. Civic Institutions Deferred Loan Program

Immediate Human Relief was soon matched by Council with \$100,000 and then \$150,000 soon after bringing the total available funds to \$750,000 in grants. We expect to have exhausted those funds by mid-May. All these grants and the loans have a direct connection to the COVID-19 crisis.

The ECGRA board authorized \$2,350,000 to stand up the Response Fund. Members of the board have inquired about reimbursement from state and federal sources in order to replenish those funds and allow ECGRA to continue to use our grantmaking and loan network to assist County government and the community in this crisis. Specifically, while board member DiPaolo asked me to reach out to County Council at our last board meeting, all board members are concerned.

Our Executive Director has been in contact with Bruce Katz at Drexel University's Metro Finance Lab, the Birmingham Strong Fund, and the Indianapolis Rapid Response Fund. All are local relief concepts established for the same purposes as Erie County's Response Fund. During a recent conference call with them, the main topic of conversation was reimbursement of these expenditures for grants to human services, grants for PPE, and dollars distributed to loan funds.

This week, Congress is looking at expanding PPP and the CARES ACT. The current version of the CARES Act is granting dollars to community's over 500,000 in population. CARES Act 2 is on its

way and is anticipated to include communities of Erie County's size. We anticipate two sources of funding that will benefit county government:

- CDBG to the County and City levels
- New legislation that specifically addresses local relief funds for small business

It's worth noting that when Mr. Katz advises HUD on these programs, he is using Erie County and the Response Fund administered by ECGRA as exemplars. These case studies are being read by policymakers nationally and our advocacy efforts have positioned the Response Fund for reimbursement.

As such, when funding is made available, we request your support of ECGRA's efforts to obtain reimbursement of the Response Fund dollars so that the funding can again be redeployed throughout Erie County.

I want to commend County Council for the work you've done. We have appreciated working with you on community impact during this ongoing crisis. I hope it is a model for future collaboration as we continue to address the fallout from COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Mike Paris, Chairman

Cc: Andre Horton, Carl Anderson, Perry Wood

Erie County Redevelopment Authority COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Loan Fund Helps 28 Local Businesses, Board Ups Available Funds

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT
Tina Mengine
814-480-0337, ext. 1

ERIE, PA (April 22, 2020) — The Erie County Redevelopment Authority Board approved an increase of **\$375,000 to the COVID-19 Emergency Loan Fund**, created to help small businesses survive COVID-19 closures.

“The rapid onslaught of requests showed the remarkable stress facing local businesses as they worked to avoid permanent closure,” said Tine Mengine, Chief Executive Officer, ECRDA. **“With the support of the Board, we have been able to provide businesses from retail and food service to manufacturing and service providers with more than one-million-dollars in emergency capital.”**

The emergency loan fund, created in March, has **helped support 28 local businesses that employ more than 3,000 employees across Erie County**. To date, the fund has injected \$1.2 million into the local economy, and helped businesses enduring unprecedented closures due to COVID-19 global pandemic.

“ECRDA funding is helping PSNERGY get through this challenging time and we will be stronger when these pandemic issues are behind us, thanks to the professionalism and speed with which our emergency loan was processed,” said Carl Nicolia, President, PSNERGY, LLC. **“Through their responsiveness, flexibility, and simple process, PSNERGY was able to keep our employees on staff and continue to support our customers in essential steel and aluminum industries”.**

“This loan was a needed bridge that helped keep our 200+, now virtual workforce, employed,” said Thomas Laird, CEO, Expivia Interaction Marketing Group, Inc. **“It has allowed us to forego any potential furlough that may have happened with all the uncertainty presently felt by all businesses, and made a huge impact when we needed it most.”**

The ECRDA COVID-19 Emergency Response included the following:

- 90-day deferral available to existing loans
- \$1,375,000 Small Business Emergency Loan Fund
 - Loans up to \$50,000

- Zero percent Interest for the life of the loan
- 1-3 year terms

Erie County Emergency Loans can be accessed online at <https://ecrda.net/ECRFlloans.php>

The Redevelopment Authority of Erie County is a full-service development team that provides low interest financing, real estate services and grant assistance to businesses and non-profit organizations with the ultimate goal of fostering investment and employment in the Erie Region.

###

From: Bridgeway Capital <kchamberlain@bridgewaycapital.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2020 8:00 AM
To: Perry Wood
Subject: Bridgeway Names Erie Office Director

[View this email in your browser](#)



BRIDGEWAY CAPITAL

Connect Opportunity with Capital

Bridgeway Capital names Cathryn Easterling Erie Office Director

Cathryn Easterling has been selected as the Director of Bridgeway Capital's office in Erie, PA. Easterling brings a wealth of experience from the financial and healthcare industries and has over ten years of community development and financial services experience. Within her previous role as Community Development Coordinator with Aetna, Cathryn maintained a territory of 19 counties within Northwest PA.



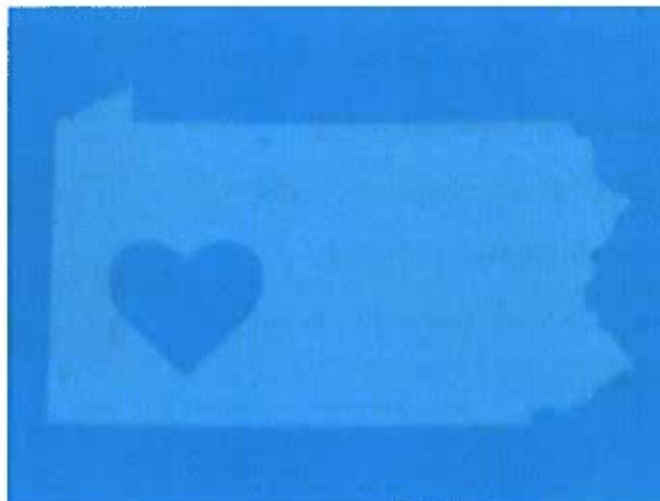
Easterling will lead Bridgeway's efforts in Erie to provide responsive capital that ignites economic growth and fosters community revitalization. Since opening its Erie office in 2012, Bridgeway has invested \$25.5 million in people and places in Northwestern Pennsylvania that cannot access mainstream sources of finance.

"Being a lifelong resident and child of a minority entrepreneur has provided me a unique viewpoint and a deep understanding of the small business needs within Erie, PA. I am thrilled to join the Bridgeway team," says Cathryn Easterling, Erie Office Director of Bridgeway Capital. "I am eager to lead Bridgeway's efforts, providing inclusive economic growth opportunities with the Erie community."

Easterling is working to connect Erie area entrepreneurs with capital to launch, grow, or sustain business during the COVID-19 crisis. Connect with Cathryn Easterling to learn how Bridgeway can help.

[Connect with Cathryn](#)

COVID-19 Response Fund



From: The Nonprofit Partnership <abratton@yournpp.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2020 9:18 AM
To: Perry Wood
Subject: We're working on the quarantine 15 ☺



Nonprofit Insider: April 30, 2020

Today may be the last day of [National Humor Month](#) but funnies are allowed (and needed...) always!

Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund Opens Project Face Shield to Nonprofits

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) authorized the purchase of an additional 500 face shields, which are now available at no cost to Erie County nonprofits.

Project Face Shield



Free face shields for
Erie County non-profits



CLICK
HERE

[READ THE PRESS RELEASE](#)

[REQUEST FACE SHIELDS](#)

Calling all member CEOs and Executive Directors!

Now is the time to plan for the next stages of the COVID-19 crisis. How do we do that?



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April 6, 2020

Perry Wood
ECGRA
5340 Fryling Road
Erie PA 16510

Dear Mr. Wood,

Thank you so much for your first grant installment of \$84,000. This generous donation in support of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania's Disaster Relief Food efforts will help individuals, children, families and seniors who are in need of food due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Many of our neighbors are facing hunger, possibly for the first time, due to temporary unemployment and scarce supply at local grocery stores. Your support makes it possible for Second Harvest to provide food and other necessities through our partner agencies to fulfill the elevated need for emergency food assistance during crisis situations.

You can be assured that your gift will be used wisely. We are proud to be recognized for the 12th consecutive time by Charity Navigator for sound fiscal management. This prestigious, four-star rating places Second Harvest in the top 1% of all nonprofits ranked nationwide.

I am grateful for your belief in our mission and hope that you will continue to support our mission. Thanks to community partners like ECGRA, we can continue our important work of providing food to those in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen S. Seggi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" being the most prominent part.

Karen S. Seggi
Chief Executive Officer

*Please retain this letter as a receipt for tax purposes.
No gifts or services were received in exchange for this donation.
Thank you for supporting Second Harvest.*



April 3, 2020

ECGRA
5340 Fryling Rd Ste 201
Erie, PA 16510-4672

Dear Friends,

How quickly things have changed in our community and our nation! Just three weeks ago we were planning events and doing life as usual. As we adjust to a new normal for the time being, I want to thank you so much for your gift of **\$9,525.00** to help cover our extra expenses due to the COVID-19 crisis. As you can imagine, Mercy Center for Women will continue to care for the women and children who have come to us seeking to overcome the difficulties they have encountered in life, such as homelessness, domestic violence and addiction.



In cooperation with CDC directions we have restricted access to our facility in order to keep our clients and staff safe and healthy. Our women and children will be sheltering in place. We are blessed to have such a wonderful facility with a large protected yard and everything we need. We have temporarily closed our clothing store and our Dress for Success Erie program, and are not accepting clothing donations at this time. Thank you for your understanding.



If you are at home and looking for something to do, check out our Meal Train on Facebook or at <https://mealtrain.com/1wmrm5>. If you love to cook or bake, sign up to provide an entrée or a dessert, order from a restaurant that offers delivery, or give a financial gift. We currently have 13 women and six children in-house. You can still reach us by telephone at 814-455-4577 and through our Facebook page or e-mail.

We are truly grateful to you for your support. Together we can do many great things for families right here in Erie. One kind deed at a time. On behalf of the women, children and staff of the Mercy Center – Thank You!

Kindly,

Jennie
Jennie Hagerty
Executive Director

*Dear Perry and Tom,
We are truly grateful to ECGRA
for this generous grant during these
difficult times. We appreciate your
ongoing support of our mission in
helping others. Stay safe and well!*

In accordance with section 170(f)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code, I certify that Mercy Center for Women is a 501(c)3 charitable organization to which contributions are tax deductible. Since no goods or services were given in exchange for your gift, the entire amount is tax deductible. This letter serves as documentation of your gift and is necessary for your income tax records.



meals on wheels erie

4408 Peach Street, Suite 102

Erie, PA 16509

Office (814) 452-6930

www.MealsOnWheelsErie.org

wecare@mealsonwheelserie.org

April 20, 2020

Mr. Perry Wood, Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Mr. Wood,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, clients, volunteers and staff, thank you so much for awarding us an Erie County Response Fund/COVID-19 grant in the amount of \$2,000.00. We are so grateful for your organization's steps to appropriate funds to non-profits in need. Through grants like these, we will be able to continue realizing our mission – "...promoting healthy, independent living through home delivery of nutrition services" – by delivering ~20,000 meals annually and grocery shopping for the home bound and disabled over 500 times a year. Both services are in high demand during these uncertain times when so many people are homebound and food insecure.

Please know that this gift goes directly to those most in need in our community and helps us continue to do good work.

Thank you again for this assistance when we most need it. Please be safe and be well.

Sincerely,

Wendy Wallace, Executive Director
Meals on Wheels Erie

Donation Amount \$2,000.00 Giving Year March 2020

Metro-Erie Meals On Wheels, Inc., dba Meals On wheels Erie, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID# 51-0200640. No goods or services were received in consideration of this gift.

Home Delivered Meals



Grocery Shopping & Delivery Service



Second Harvest
Food Bank
of Northwest Pennsylvania

1507 Grimm Drive • Erie, PA 16501
(814) 459-3663 • www.nwpafoodbank.org

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April 29, 2020

Mr. Perry Wood
ECGRA
5340 Fryling Road
Erie PA 16510

Dear Perry,

A very grateful "Thank You" for the second installment of \$84,000.00 from ECGRA's generous donation to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania. These funds will help place food on the tables of those who are facing hunger due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Many of our neighbors are facing hunger, possibly for the first time, due to temporary unemployment and scarce supply at local grocery stores. Your support makes it possible for Second Harvest to provide food and other necessities through our partner agencies to fulfill the elevated need for emergency food assistance during crisis situations.

Please be assured that your gift will be spent wisely, as Second Harvest has earned a 4-star rating for sound fiscal management from Charity Navigator for the 11th consecutive time. This designation places our organization in the top one percent of all charities ranked nationwide.

Hunger has a price. Medical problems, learning difficulties, headaches and fatigue all result from a lack of proper nutrition. But hunger also has a cure – food. Through your generosity to Second Harvest, you have become a part of the cure. A donation remittance envelope has been included with this letter for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Karen S. Seggi
Chief Executive Officer

*Please retain this letter as a receipt for tax purposes.
No gifts or services were received in exchange for this donation.
Thank you for supporting Second Harvest.*



1701 Parade Street
Erie, PA 16503 -1994
814.452.6113
f: 814.461.9483
stmartincenter.org

May 6, 2020

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
Mr. Perry Wood
5340 Fryling Rd., Ste. 201
Erie, PA 16501

Dear Mr. Wood and ECGRA,

We cannot thank you enough for choosing us as a recipient of a special COVID-19 grant. This award of \$7,300 allowed us to deep clean our early learning center and purchase thermometers. Both of these expenses will help keep our staff and families safe.

We appreciate ECGRA's thoughtfulness and quick response to this unprecedented situation, and we thank you for selecting us for this award.

With gratitude,

David González
Chief Executive Officer



May 7, 2020

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
Attn: Mr. Perry Wood, Executive Director
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Mr. Wood and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority,

The St. Paul's Free Clinic has received Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's donation of face shields through the "Project Face Shield Program".

We want to thank you personally for this very generous gift. It was through your generosity that we are the recipients of this charitable act. This donation help St. Paul's Free Clinic keep all our volunteers protected, as we continue with our mission to provide free medical and dental care to the needy in our community.

Once again, we thank you so much for your support and interest in the St. Paul's Free Clinic in helping us to achieve our mission.

Stay safe and stay well!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Kelleher". Below the signature, the name "Lisa Kelleher" and title "Executive Director" are printed in a black, sans-serif font.

Lisa Kelleher
Executive Director

Council, ECGRA to fund COVID-19 response effort

By Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News

Erie County Council is poised to vote Tuesday on a \$50,000 budget increase that would aid the county's department of health in addressing COVID-19, the new coronavirus that is causing a global outbreak.

That's not all.

Also Tuesday, County Council will vote on a resolution to encourage the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority to create a "RID COVID" fund, which

would help nonprofit agencies, small businesses and local governments recover from the economic fallout and additional strain on resources caused by the pandemic.

County Council chairman Andre Horton announced the measures Thursday.

"We have great confidence in our health department," Horton said in a statement. "Erie County is fortunate to be in one of 10 counties in Pennsylvania to have a local

health department."

As of Sunday, there were no suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Erie County.

However, Gov. Tom Wolf this past week ordered all K-12 schools closed for two weeks. Many colleges and universities have canceled in-person classes and are instructing students virtually. Erie County's largest employer, Erie Insurance, instituted a work-from-home policy for most of its employees. And several local events have been

canceled or postponed.

ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood said the agency is following Erie County Council's lead. The ECGRA board plans to discuss in further detail how such a program would work, including eligibility guidelines, when it meets Thursday.

"We want to help the nonprofits that are on the front lines of this," Wood said. "We're fully in support of it. We want to be involved in this. We're talking to other funders as well,

in hopes that they'll join in on this effort."

The Nonprofit Partnership is surveying local charities about the effect of COVID-19, Wood noted. Survey results could be used to help ECGRA direct funds.

"Food insecurity is going to be an issue whether there are cases of COVID here or not because of self-quarantine, because of places shutting down, because of schools shutting down," Wood said about one of the issues that Erie County families

could face in the coming weeks and months. "There are vulnerable populations that will be indirectly affected. We'll be exploring how we can help the agencies that support those populations."

Erie County Council meets at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Flore Leone Chambers of the Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. Sixth St.

Contact Matthew Rink at mrink@timesnews.com. Follow him on Twitter at @ETNrink.

Erie Times-News | GoErie.com | Wednesday, March 18, 2020 A3

County, ECGRA direct \$300K to COVID-19 relief efforts

By Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News

Erie County Council and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority will create zero-interest loan programs for small businesses and civic institutions negatively impacted by COVID-19.

To meet more immediate needs, they will infuse \$100,000 into local food pantries, homeless shelters, and child- and elder-care centers to assist them in meeting the needs of the people they serve.

And there's the potential for a fourth program — one that would serve as a short-term solution for people who lack access to the Internet.

The programs are part of the COVID-19 Response Fund, originally called the RID COVID Fund, which Erie County Council asked ECGRA to create and

administer in a resolution that council approved at its regular meeting Tuesday.

Erie County is committing \$100,000 to the fund and ECGRA is expected to match that with \$100,000 of its own. Erie County Council is also directing \$100,000 of additional funding to the Health Department.

"We want to alleviate (hardship) to the degree that we can and provide immediate relief in the form of some grants for food banks, homeless shelters, the elderly, day care and child care," Erie County Council chairman Andre Horton said. "This (COVID-19) is going to affect poor people, regardless of their ethnicity."

"The economic stratum is sometimes the equator line in who gets information, education, health care services — the whole nine," he continued. "Those underserved communities could also be

incubators for COVID-19 if left unaddressed."

The ECGRA board, responsible for distributing \$4.5 million annually of casino gaming revenue, will meet to approve its share of the fund at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, in the Jordan Room of the Knowledge Center, 5240 Knowledge Parkway.

The three programs are being referred to as the Immediate Human Relief Fund, Civic Institution Deferred Income Loans and the Small Business Loans.

"Everything has come together in the last 48 hours to make this happen," ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood said. "We are certainly motivated by this crisis to make a difference. It's something you can't plan for, but I can tell you this — we are prepared."

Wood and Horton have spoken with other potential donors who could choose to

invest in the program.

"Quite frankly, what we're doing is really a drop in the bucket for what's needed," Horton said. "It's probably going to be more stop-gap as we wait for money to trickle down from the federal government through the state."

The zero-interest loan programs likely will be administered by Bridgeway Capital, a community development financial institution that has partnered with ECGRA in the past to offer financing to start-ups and small businesses, including minority business owners and entrepreneurs.

For civic institutions, zero-interest loans with deferred payment plans will be available in 2021. Many local institutions, Wood noted, often operate without immediate access to credit and do not have large cash reserves to stabilize them during emergencies.

Without a loan program, many of these agencies would be at risk of closing.

Government directives and social-distancing guidelines have prompted many of these agencies to cancel events that serve as sources of income.

As for the small business loan fund, loans will have "relaxed, short-term repayment plans" that are based on improved economic conditions worldwide.

Erie County Council on Tuesday also allocated an additional \$100,000 to the Health Department for its efforts to handle the new coronavirus. The department had asked for \$50,000.

"We thought they'll blow through that pretty fast," Horton said. "So we proposed to double it."

Contact Matthew Rink at mrink@timesnews.com. Follow him on Twitter at @ETNrink.

Board OKs raise for Wood

By Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News



Wood

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority board by a 4-3 vote on Thursday approved a 17 percent pay increase for Executive Director Perry Wood.

The raise lifts Wood's base pay from \$97,100 to \$125,000, or by \$27,900.

At the same time, Wood will no longer receive \$12,000 for a health-insurance opt-out. The board reduced the opt-out amount to \$3,000.

Wood's base pay and opt-out reimbursement will result in a net increase in compensation of \$18,900, or 17 percent, as part of a new four-year contract.

Board members David M. Bagnoni, Whitey Cleaver and Dominick DiPaolo voted against the raise. Board members Michael Paris, Dale Barney, David Sample and Kelly Hess voted in favor of it.

Paris, the board chairman, called it a "pay adjustment" and said it puts the pay for the position in line with other authority directors.

"We've done our homework," Paris said. "We've talked to people with different organizations about what their executive directors are paid. I can't stress enough that this is about

the position of executive director. It has nothing to do with Perry Wood, if it's you or if it's me. If we were to lose our executive director right now, this is what we feel we would have to pay somebody to come in."

"Naturally, it's too much," DiPaolo said. "Everybody else is getting 3 percent. This is crazy. Here we are in a situation where we also voted on many things for the COVID-19 (Response Fund) to help the community out and he's getting a ton of money. People aren't working."

Wood was hired in 2011.

The ECGRA board had been discussing a raise of \$33,500.

That drew the objection from Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, who has no control over the ECGRA board. Dahlkemper, who praised ECGRA and Wood for their work, said the proposed raise was too much.

In a letter to the board in late February, Dahlkemper urged the board to reconsider.

"As far as I can discern, there are no additional duties added to the position in this agreement nor

is there additional staff to manage," Dahlkemper wrote. "I am unclear of the justification for such an increase. As these are public funds belonging to the citizens of Erie County, I must express that I am not in agreement with this proposed compensation increase."

Erie County Council formed ECGRA in 2008. As a host county of Presque Isle Downs & Casino, the county receives a share of the casino's annual gross revenue — about \$11 million annually. About \$5.5 million goes to Erie County government. Another \$1 million supports the Erie County Land Bank.

ECGRA invests its share, \$4.5 million, into municipalities, neighborhood associations and other nonprofit agencies, including nine of the county's leading cultural and heritage institutions, for a range of programs, events and community improvements that benefit the public.

The board also voted 4-3 to cut ties with the lobbying firm Ridge Policy Group, which it had been paying approximately \$48,000 annually.

Contact Matthew Rink at mrink@timesnews.com. Follow him on Twitter at @ETNrink.

COVID-19 Response Fund grows

By Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority bolstered its contribution to the newly created COVID-19 Response Fund Thursday.

Instead of \$100,000 as originally proposed, the board unanimously voted to dedicate \$500,000 to the fund. Erie County Council seeded the fund with \$100,000 on Tuesday.

Those dollars will go toward the Immediate Human Relief Fund, one of three programs created in response to the global pandemic. The grant money will be directed to food pantries, homeless shelters,

child care centers and elder care centers.

The two other programs are zero-interest loan programs backed by Bridgeway Capital, a community development financial institution that has partnered with ECGRA in the past.

The Civic Institution Deferred Income Loan Program, will provide a total of \$800,000 of loans with deferred payment plans to civic institutions. Loans will be available in 2021.

The Small Business Loan program will provide a total of \$800,000 of loans with relaxed short-term repayment plans to small businesses.

Michael Paris, chairman of the ECGRA board, said the decision to add to the fund was made after extensive discussion in recent days.

"We thought the \$100,000 was a drop in the bucket and it would disappear in days if not hours," he said. "We thought to up it to \$500,000 would give us the opportunity to see where we are in a month or a month in a half. We don't know what the state is going to be doing or what the federal government is going to be doing. But we're in the position where we can get the money out a lot faster than they can."

VIEWPOINT

OUR VIEW

Protect life, economy from COVID-19

The issue: Virus poses twin threat
Our view: Swift action is needed

It is difficult to believe that just days ago COVID-19 seemed remote and an acceptable source for toilet paper jokes.

What we now know, pulled up brutally and set on a new course in the name of survival, is that the extreme, necessary measures we must take to save lives from the pandemic might also spell an end, or at least a drastic change, to our way of life.

We must heed experts' calls for social distancing or risk the apocalyptic events playing out in regions that took less care about the advance of the new coronavirus. Slowing the disease that spreads with ease among an as-yet defenseless population is imperative lest hospitals not adequately equipped be overrun and friends and loved ones needlessly die.

What is also clear is the need to mitigate the effects of shutting down the economy in the name of safety. It is possible we will come together, slow the disease's progression quickly and allow for a return to life as we once knew it. More likely, this pandemic will take months to resolve and years to recover from.

To navigate that passage with lives, values and the contours of our local economy intact requires a mustering of will and intention not seen in a generation.

The challenge in Erie? Stay safe and at home and also in whatever way safely possible support our local businesses. As Antonio Milone, majority owner of Erie's Bourbon Barrel, said, "It's going to hurt everyone who doesn't have a million dollars to fall back on."

Small local businesses ground Erie's authenticity and character. Consider life without them and lend your support.

That won't be enough, of course. That is why it is so welcome to see Erie County government pairing with the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority to lay out so quickly in these disorienting early days a thoughtful, multi-faceted strategy to strengthen the resiliency of local businesses and nonprofits. The ECGRA board of directors on Thursday unveiled a \$2.35 million Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund. It will provide aid to Erie's most vulnerable residents, keep venerable civic institutions afloat and offer a small-business loan fund.

Similar moves were taking place on the state and national levels. Gov. Tom Wolf on Wednesday asked the U.S. Small Business Administration to declare a COVID-19 disaster in Pennsylvania and free up loans for small businesses and nonprofits. The state Legislature is eyeing several pieces of relief legislation.

Congress and President Donald Trump are advancing multi-billion-dollar aid packages that we hope scale to the depths of the crisis.

However much we might wish it, there is no going back at this point. We are at war and must act like it with all of the courage, sacrifice and bold vision victory always demands.

Second Harvest awarded Response Fund grant

Times-News staff

Second Harvest Food Bank on Friday was awarded \$168,000 through the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund.

Second Harvest officials said the funding will support 6,000 meals to be distributed to Erie County residents in need for the next two weeks.

Second Harvest Food Bank received the funding through the Immediate Human Relief Fund, a grant fund established to offer immediate relief to the population served by food pantries, homeless shelters, child care centers, and elder

care centers. "These are unprecedented times in which families are in desperate need of food," said Karen S. Seggi, CEO of the Second Harvest Food Bank. "This crisis is affecting our entire community and ECGRA quickly answered our call to purchase

life-sustaining food to help our neighbors. Second Harvest Food Bank is extremely grateful and proud to partner with caring organizations such as ECGRA." Second Harvest Food Bank will pack and distribute emergency relief food boxes through partners across Erie County.

Each emergency food relief box, which provides 20 meals, costs \$28 to assemble and distribute. Second Harvest Food Bank anticipates it will need to distribute 3,000 of these boxes throughout Erie County, each week for the next 10 weeks.

M Saturday, March 21, 2020 | Erie Times-News | GoErie.com

Summer JAM program seeks more businesses

BY SARA JUKES
sara@thecorryjournal.com

Greater Erie Community Action Committee is looking for more businesses to take part in the Summer Jobs and More (JAM) program.

The countywide program is a summer job program that aims to employ young Erie County residents who come from low- to middle-income families. JAM is administered by the Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC), and is a collaboration between Erie

County government, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and the Erie Community Foundation.

The program is entering its seventh year and Erie County Director of Administration Gary Lee said they are working to bring in more companies from outside the city of Erie.

"When you look at student participation level, this past year we were at about 57% in the city of Erie and outside the city of Erie is about

43%," Lee said. "The goal is to make that 50/50."

While there were information sessions for employers at the Corry Higher Education Council building in February and early this month, employers still have time to learn about the program and take part.

An early application date is Friday to give students information about available work opportunities, but businesses can still apply to take part until April 24.

◀ See JAM, P.2

JAM

(Continued from front page)

Youths ages 16 to 21 sign up to work from June to August, up to 180 hours, paid through the Summer JAM program, and their minimum wage pay does not come from participating businesses.

"In particular, we're working with Corry because we feel that is an area that can really utilize and can really gain benefits from the program," Lee said.

GECAC Workforce Development Summer JAM Program Manager Silvana Lator said both small and large businesses can provide youth with meaningful and challenging work experiences.

"One of the things that we are interested in doing this year is providing a larger variety of work experiences," Lator said. "We've had a lot of young people interested in the program that were creative and wanted to do things related to

fashion, art and design."

Lee said today's youth seem to enjoy engaging with technology and the program would benefit from various opportunities at software and application development companies.

Job opportunities in the program are often the first job for most participants.

Any workplace is eligible to apply for inclusion in this program.

"We will look at any opportunity to work with for-profit employers and nonprofit employers, large or small," Lator said. "We're looking to expand to cosmetology, spas, salons and manufacturing."

More information can be found at

www.gecac.org/work/employment-and-income/summer-jam.

Lator can be contacted by calling 814-870-5418 or emailing slator@gecac.org.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Donations sought for Erie-region COVID-19 funds

By Jim Martin
Erie Times-News

The COVID-19 pandemic is almost certain to compound the needs and expand the numbers of those served by Erie County's nonprofit community.

There will be people who need to be fed, babies who need diapers, homeless people who need a place to stay, people who need mental health services.

To help meet those needs, the Erie Community Foundation and other community grant makers have launched the COVID-19 Rapid

You can help

To donate to the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund for Erie County, go to www.ErieGives.org.

To donate to the relief effort in Crawford County, go to www.crawfordheritage.org/emergency-response-fund.

Response Fund.

Lead gifts from the foundation, Erie Insurance, United Way, Hamot Health Foundation and Highmark/Allegheny Health Network gave the fund a \$285,000 start last week.

"We wanted to see who was doing what

so we didn't duplicate efforts," said Mike Batchelor, president of the Erie Community Foundation. "We thought this was the best way."

In Crawford County, the Crawford Heritage Community Foundation has launched a similar effort as it seeks to raise funds for nonprofits helping those affected by the coronavirus.

As of Tuesday morning, public fundraising had brought donations to Erie County's fund to about \$368,000.

Requests for grants, which have come from about 20 nonprofits, already have topped

\$475,000, said Erin Fessler, a spokeswoman for the community foundation.

"They're all over the board," she said. "I don't envy the grant makers who will make those decisions."

The first of those grants, however, has likely been earmarked.

Batchelor said the member organizations have matched a \$168,000 grant made by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority to the Second Harvest Food Bank.

"It's a pretty dire situation," Batchelor said. "Supply chains are very slow, food is a very basic need and demand is high."

Between ECGRA and the match from the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund, thousands of meals could be provided over the next month, Batchelor said.

The plan was to raise money using the Erie Gives website until the end of this month.

The application for grants is April 1 with a plan to distribute money by April 3.

For nonprofits seeking grants, priority will be given to those providing food, administering care to children, serving the elderly and helping those suffering from hardships and job loss due to

COVID-19.

"Our goal is to rapidly respond to this pandemic crisis and support our nonprofit sector that helps our residents in distress," Batchelor said in a statement.

The fund, which was launched with a goal of \$1 million, could continue raising money past that goal and beyond its original end date, Batchelor said.

"Gifts are coming in all the time," he said. "I hope it has some legs."

Contact Jim Martin at jmartin@timesnews.com. Follow him on Twitter at [ETNMartin](https://twitter.com/ETNMartin).

Gearing up for a fight

Erie industry teams with Behrend against COVID-19

By Jim Martin
Erie Times-News

For most of its history, Erie has been a place that not only built things, but did so at the dazzling scale of American manufacturing.

Thousands of locomotives have taken shape on the assembly line at the former GE Transportation, countless acres of paper rolled off Erie paper mills and millions of plastic parts have dropped from local presses.

Now, three local companies are partnering with researchers at Penn State Behrend and Case Western Reserve University to address the shortage of medical supplies for the battle against COVID-19.

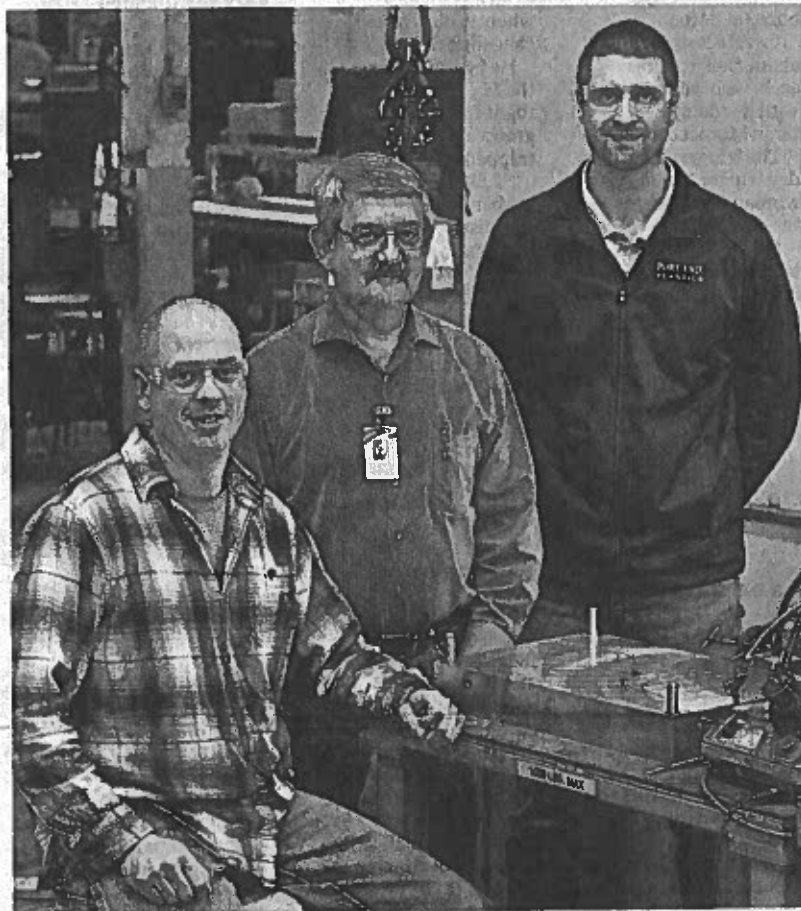
Beginning April 9, the local companies expect to manufacture 5,000 plastic face shields a day.

The seed of the idea began with conversations between Jason Williams, an assistant teaching professor of engineering at Penn State Behrend, and a colleague at Penn State's University Park campus.

Williams had been looking at open-source or public designs for protective face shields.

His colleague wondered if any of those designs could be adapted for high-speed injection molding.

A contact at Port Erie Plastics linked Williams to Ian Charnas, director of innovation and technology at the Sears think[box] at Case Western. With help from

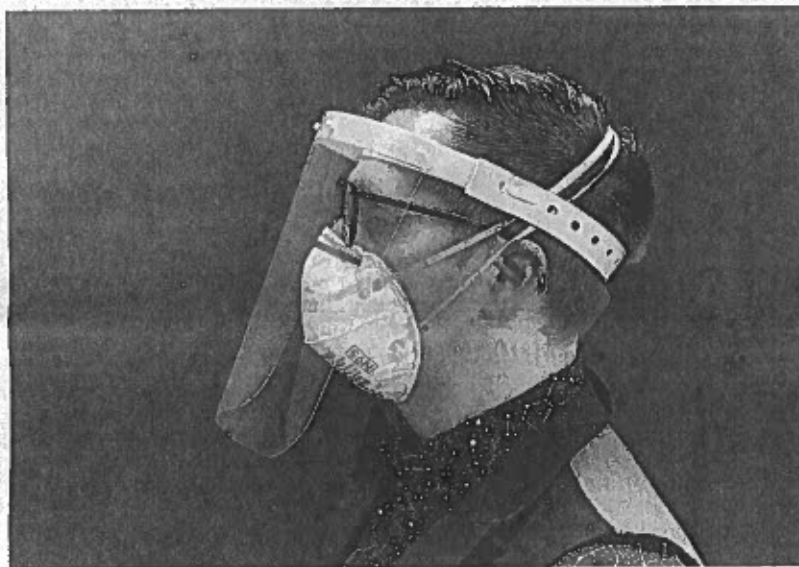


At Port Erie Plastics on Tuesday are, from left, Nick Portice, moldmaker; Jeff Horneman, support operations manager; and Sean Connole, president. They are shown near one-half of a mold, lower right, being polished at the Harborcreek Township manufacturing facility. The mold will be used to make headbands for medical face shields. The men are producing the injection-molded parts in an expedited project to help those fighting COVID-19, the new coronavirus. (GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

"This is something that resonated with us. We are in a place where we could help. We could step up and play a critical role."

Sean Connole, president of Port Erie Plastics

See **INDUSTRY**, A5



Ian Charnas, director of innovation and technology at the Sears think(BOX) at Case Western University in Cleveland, models a medical face shield on Monday that was developed with help from Penn State Behrend and a Cleveland-based design company. The face shields will be produced by Erie-area companies beginning April 9 for medical professionals who are treating patients who may be infected with COVID-19. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

INDUSTRY

From Page A1

Bill Rabbitt, an engineer at Nottingham Spirk, a Cleveland-based product design company, they modified a design for a plastic face shield with a polypropylene frame and a rubber strap.

Their design creates a shield that is thinner and can be built more quickly.

Working together, Williams, Charnas and Rabbitt developed a supply chain that includes three Erie companies: Port Erie Plastics, which is building the mold and molding the frames; Munot Plastics, which will produce the shields; and Bliley Technologies, which will manage logistics and distribution.

Williams said Port Erie Plastics, a Harborcreek Township company that makes a variety of plastics parts for plumbing, construction, cookware and other uses, reached out to him because it was looking to put unused capacity to work.

And, more importantly, President Sean Connole didn't want to sit on the sidelines when doctors and nurses were fighting COVID-19 without the equipment they needed.

"This is something that resonated with us," he said. "We are in a place where we could help. We could step up and play a critical role."

But it wasn't just business as usual. Developing a new mold and the tooling to produce new parts typically takes eight to 10 weeks, said Jeff Horneman, who oversees the company's tool room.

"We did it in less than two weeks," he said.

Connole said the company, which employs about 400 people, had already been busy, building a variety of products, including lids for a hand sanitizer company.

Face-shield production would quickly become a top priority. Horneman said the mold designer worked nights and weekends to meet his deadline.

The project has received a \$6,700 grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

For his part, Connole said he has no intention of making a profit from the sale of the face shields. In fact, none of the local companies are expected to profit.

"I think it's our patriotic duty," Connole said. "It is something we can do and there are people who need it right now."

In addition to work done by two Ohio companies,

Munot Plastics, a plastics packaging company on West 17th Street, will make the plastic shields.

That left one large task undone, Williams said.

"I said 'We can make these. How do we get them to the customers?'" Williams asked.

Williams said Behrend Chancellor Ralph Ford, who is on the board of Bliley Technologies Inc. in Erie, referred Williams to go to the company for help.

"Bliley will do the fulfillment, take the orders and pay the bills," Williams said.

Williams, who has been teaching his classes at Behrend online, said there were lessons to be learned for budding engineers.

Some were technical and logistical as students watched how designers and companies worked together to settle on a design and create a supply chain in days.

"I also think it shows them when there is a crisis that there is a good model for how they should react," Williams said. "It's our job to teach them the book content. It's also to teach them to be a good member of their community."

Contact Jim Martin at jmartin@timesnews.com. Follow him on Twitter at [ETNMartin](https://twitter.com/ETNMartin).

Erie Times-News

Sunday, April 5, 2020

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Making it work

With many day cares closed, essential workers with kids are struggling



From far left to right, Victor Bibbs, 26, and his daughters Kavaya Bibbs, 4, and Ziyona Calkins, 7, use hand sanitizer as Downtown YMCA childcare employee April Moskalczyk holds 2-year-old Zavaya Bibbs as she has her temperature taken, on Wednesday. Bibbs and the girls' mother dropped their three daughters off at the YMCA for the first time because the youngsters' schools are closed due to the COVID-19 coronavirus. (GREG WOHLFORD PHOTOS/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

By Madeleine O'Neill
Erie Times-News

One mom works from home with her 1-year-old daughter sitting on her lap.

Another has her 13- and 11-year-olds watch her baby while she and her boyfriend are at work.

Across Erie County, essential workers whose jobs have not stopped are finding that neither have their child care needs. With child care centers largely shut down across Pennsylvania because of the coronavirus pandemic, however, many have had to get creative.

"It's hard," said Mara Nunes, a single mother whose 16-year-old daughter watches Nunes'



4-year-old during the day. "I relied on day care full time, and now that's not an option."

Gov. Tom Wolf on March 19 ordered the closure of all non-life-critical businesses, a category that

included child care facilities.

See CHILD CARE, A6

Downtown YMCA Associate Executive Director Monica Olesnanik disinfects railings at the main entrance on Wednesday. Olesnanik, 39, said she does this at least every half hour, and more often inside, as parents and children enter and exit the building for childcare services.

CHILD CARE

From Page A1

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Office of Child Development and Early Learning began offering waivers for child care centers that serve workers employed at what the state classifies as essential businesses, such as hospitals or grocery stores, which are allowed to stay open during the pandemic.

Eighteen child care centers in Erie County that received these waivers were operating as of Friday, according to Elana Como, the director of Early Learning Resource Center Region 1, which includes Erie County. Normally, 81 child care centers are operating in the county, Como said.

The Downtown YMCA, at West 10th and Peach streets, is one of the child care centers that received a waiver.

For now, the YMCA of Greater Erie has consolidated all of its child care operations into the downtown location, said Tammy Roche, the Y's vice president of financial development, membership and marketing. The Y normally operates 13 child care centers.

As of a week ago, Roche said, 77 children were attending day care at the Downtown Y, with more parents signing up every day.

"Most parents are health-care workers, folks working in long-term care facilities, senior living," Roche said. "Some folks working in retail, like grocery."

Roche said the Downtown Y has also added several layers of safety precautions to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19, including:

- Nurses perform daily wellness checks, including a temperature screening, on children when they arrive.
- Child care employees, rather than parents, escort children to classroom areas to minimize the number of people inside the building.
- Children's comfort items from home, such as blankets, are laundered daily.
- If a child develops any symptoms of illness, the child is placed in a "sick room" with a staff member and the parents are asked to take the child home.
- Staff are serving food to children individually, rather than family-style.
- Group sizes have been limited to minimize the number of children having contact with each other.

Under the current safety guidelines, the Y can care for as many as 130 children at its downtown location, Roche said. The organization could reopen one of its other locations if more children need care.

Krystal Calkins, 26, dropped off her three daughters at the Y for the first time on Wednesday because she



Eight-year-old Tenley Ester, left, and Talyah Bolden, 6, play at the Downtown YMCA on Thursday. (GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

and her boyfriend, Victor Bibbs, have overlapping work schedules in the health care field.

Calkins said her options for child care were limited, and that the Y's health protocols made her feel that her kids would be safe there.

"Due to the coronavirus, I don't feel comfortable with my children just being anywhere," she said, "so I felt that that was the best facility for them to go to."

Roche said the Downtown Y is welcoming lots of kids who would usually attend a different child care center.

"A lot of people who wouldn't normally use the Y are coming to them because their regular child care is closed," she said.

Amy Nordstrom, the owner of Little Wonders Child Care, decided not to seek a waiver for her business at 1347 W. Sixth St.

Though about 80 children had been attending the day care, Nordstrom ultimately felt that not enough parents needed child care as businesses and schools shut down because of the coronavirus. There was still a need among some parents, though.

"You really have to sit down and think about the finances of the staff, yourself, the parents," Nordstrom said. "What are they going to do without the care?"

The Erie Times-News also put out a call on Facebook for answers to that question: How are parents, especially essential workers, handling child care in the current crisis?

Many parents said they are juggling an untenable number of tasks, including child care, helping with their kids' school work and doing their own work, which for some involves working from home and for others requires

them to go out into the community each day.

"This wouldn't be sustainable," said LeAnna Nieratko, who runs the Whole Foods Co-op in Erie. "This is not a long-term thing. It definitely is going to hit a breaking point."

Nieratko, 35, of Erie, is working long hours nearly seven days a week to keep her grocery store up and running and safe for customers.

On weekends, she works around her husband's 12-hour shifts as a medical courier.

"My husband and I are basically not seeing each other," she said. "I walk in the door at 2 (p.m.). He has to be at work at 2:30."

Her husband has also taken on the role of primary caregiver for their two children, who are 5 and 3, and his 11-year-old daughter, Nieratko said.

Nieratko is not seeing the children as much as she would like to. And she doesn't have the time or energy to focus on their education when she's at home.

"I'm worried that they're going to be behind because I can't double as running a grocery store and being a teacher," she said.

Her 3-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son would normally be in child care, Nieratko said. Her in-laws, who are in their 70s, might also help out under normal circumstances, but she and her husband worried about putting them at risk for COVID-19.

"It's just necessity," she said of the system they have cobbled together. "There is not another option."

Balancing act

Other parents are struggling to work from home while their children stay at home with them.

Melissa Sinicki, a program manager for Lord Corp., said she wakes up each day at 5:30 a.m. and tries to get half of her day's work done at her Millcreek Township home before her daughters, who are 7 and 9, wake up later in the morning.

She does schoolwork with the girls in the afternoon and then tries to fit in the rest of her workday in the evenings.

"I'm very grateful that I still have a job and that I have the flexibility to be able to work from home," she said, "but it's really hard to balance those things."

Sinicki, like Nieratko, is trying to avoid asking her mother to watch the children to protect her from illness.

Sinicki's husband, who is an office manager for a family practice doctor, is trying to adjust his schedule so he can work from home some afternoons and give Sinicki a break, she said.

"I was getting really stressed out last week trying to fit everything in, and I told my husband I didn't think I could continue like that," said Sinicki, 43.

Several parents said they are relying on relatives, friends or their own older children to care for young ones while they're at work.

Jamie Meli said her 13- and 11-year-old children watch her 1-year-old daughter while she and her boyfriend, who are each essential workers, are out of the house each day.

Meli, 34, is a chiropractic assistant. She's working limited hours that allow her to spend a little more time at home in West Springfield, but her two oldest children help care for their little sister several days a week.

Meli's 13-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter would usually be in school, and her youngest, Audrey, normally goes to an in-home babysitter. Meli and the

babysitter recently decided Audrey should stay home because of concerns about the coronavirus.

Without other options, Meli enlisted the two older kids to watch Audrey. They take turns with less pleasant tasks like changing diapers and find time to do their own online schoolwork throughout the day.

"Honestly, we don't have family that can watch them," Meli said. "We kind of just got stuck."

Help from relatives

Grandparents are also playing a key role in child care.

Joyce Adams, 66, is providing full-time child care for her daughter, who is the director of nursing at a senior rehabilitation center, and her son-in-law, who is an emergency room nurse. The couple has three boys, who are 9, 7 and 3.

"They're some of the front-line workers right now, so I'm filling in every which way I can," Adams said.

Adams temporarily moved in with her daughter's family in Fairview while her boyfriend, who recently returned from Florida, quarantined himself at her house for two weeks.

She spends her days helping the older boys with their online school assignments. They've found a good rhythm, she said.

But like so many of the parents who responded to the Facebook request from the Erie Times-News, Adams said the current situation is also tiring her out.

"I'm exhausted at the end of the day," she said.

Contact Madeleine O'Neill at moneill@timesnews.com. Follow her on Twitter @ETNonnell.

Food bank sees surge of requests

by Valerie Myers
Erie Times-News

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania is stepping up efforts to feed a growing number of Erie County residents who need food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second Harvest and its networks of food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters remain open to provide food for those in need.

"We're packing more than 3,000 boxes of food each week that we're providing to our agencies for distribution," said Karen Seggi, Second Harvest CEO.

The number of new requests for food from Erie County households jumped more than 200 percent in March, Seggi said.

"In Erie County alone in February, we had 445 new households come to our member agencies for food. Last month, we had 1,535 new households. That's a 245 percent increase," Seggi said.

The requests are from people who are newly unemployed and others who don't have the financial resources to provide even a small stockpile of food, Seggi said.

"We're dealing with a population that does not have a lot in its cupboards to begin with. They're people living day to day who are afraid they won't have enough food to last them if they do come down with a diagnosis



Erie resident Peter Gambill, 62, brings home a food donation on April 1 that he had picked up earlier at nearby Henderson United Methodist Church. The church food pantry is part of the Second Harvest Food Bank network.

[GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS]

of COVID-19," she said.

Second Harvest has enough food to meet local needs for the foreseeable future thanks to early help from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and Erie Community Foundation, Seggi said.

"Help from the Erie Community Foundation and ECGRA right from the beginning enabled us to order food immediately and order aggressively," she said. "I feel very confident with the supply we have on hand right now for the people going through our network. The food isn't going to run out. We've got enough to last a while."

Erie Community Foundation's COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund and ECGRA each provided \$168,000 for Second Harvest.

Second Harvest staff has upended its routines to continue supplying food, Seggi said. Staff and their families now pack food boxes for agencies to distribute. Volunteers no longer are allowed inside the Second Harvest warehouse so that the number of people in contact with the staff is limited.

And Second Harvest employees are fielding calls from people who need food and referring them to member

agencies.

"We kind of changed the whole process and ramped it up last month," Seggi said. "We also have some emergency agencies we can send people to if they don't have enough food to get them through until their neighborhood pantry is open."

No identification or paperwork is necessary to receive food.

"We're maintaining social distancing to keep people safe," Seggi said.

In addition to the ECGRA and foundation donations, individuals and businesses are making monetary donations to help Second Harvest feed more

To register

Call Second Harvest's Food Line at 459-3663, ext. 117, or visit www.nwpafoodbank.org/agency-locator

people.

"I'm extremely humbled by the caring and compassion we've received from businesses and from people calling us. We live in a very generous community, and I'm so proud to be part of this network and part of this community."

Contact Valerie Myers at vmyers@timesnews.com. Follow her on Twitter @ETN/myers.

VIEWPOINT

OUR VIEW

Hunger is also sign of COVID-19

The issue: Local food bank demand surges

Our view: Pandemic exposes chronic needs

News reports of hoarders clearing store shelves of toilet paper and hand sanitizer are being overshadowed by a fresh spate of COVID-19 preparation stories that are less telling about human nature and more indicative of the fragile margins on which too many of our neighbors exist. It is seen in the miles-long lines of vehicles queuing up for free food.

It's possible the same impulse that spurs the hoarding might be in play among some seeking donated food. More likely, the coronavirus crisis is again pushing into an unsparing spotlight chronic unmet needs.

Erie County is fortunate. Thanks to swift, compassionate action by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and the Erie Community Foundation, Second Harvest Food Bank was able to shop early and aggressively, as Karen Seggi, Second Harvest CEO, said. ECGRA and the Community Foundation each donated \$168,000 to Second Harvest to bolster supplies.

And just in time. In February, before the COVID-19 pandemic ransacked the economy, an additional 445 households had signed up for food distribution. In March, Second Harvest tallied 1,535 new registrations, a 245 percent increase, as reporter Valerie Myers detailed.

Second Harvest staff members are now packing more than 3,000 boxes of food a week for their member organizations, Seggi said.

The jump coincides with the skyrocketing unemployment numbers triggered by the state's stay-at-home order. But Seggi said the new registrations are not just driven by the newly unemployed, but also by those who don't have enough extra money to go to the store and lay in supplies for days.

"We're dealing with ... people living day to day who are afraid they won't have enough food to last them if they do come down with a diagnosis of COVID-19," she said.

The economy boomed prior to the pandemic's onset and Erie County enjoyed relatively low unemployment. But those numbers did not tell the whole story.

The United Way of Pennsylvania in 2019 issued a revealing report that tallied a concerning number of "A.L.I.C.E.," that is, asset-limited, income-constrained employed households in Pennsylvania. "A.L.I.C.E." households earn above the poverty level but still struggle to afford basic needs.

In Erie County, the report found 15 percent of households lived in poverty and 27 percent were "A.L.I.C.E." The numbers were worse in the city of Erie, 24 and 34 percent, respectively, meaning more than half of the households were struggling to make it and that was even when some had employment.

Experts tell us COVID-19 strikes hardest the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. The impoverished and those "A.L.I.C.E." households are likewise at extreme risk - to the economic havoc brought by COVID-19.

When this crisis passes, experts will inevitably look to strengthen our defenses and resilience against future pandemics. Don't forget them.

Companies shipping thousands of face shields

By Jim Martin
Erie Times-News

A collaborative effort that got underway earlier this month is putting plastic face shields in the hands of medical professionals.

More than 50,000 shields have been produced and shipped through a design, production and logistics effort led by Port Erie Plastics, Munot Plastics and Bliley Technologies.

The shields, designed in part by Jason Williams, an

assistant teaching professor of engineering at Penn State Behrend, have been shipped to hospitals, health-care workers and first responders in three states.

The companies are currently producing 5,000 shields every day. New funding from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority will create an additional mold that will allow daily production to be doubled to 10,000.

The first batch was

shipped to the Cleveland Clinic, a first installment toward an order of 100,000 face shields.

ECGRA, which has provided more than \$21,000 in grants for the project, has ordered 500 face shields for distribution to Erie County fire departments and the Erie County Sheriff's Office.

The effort is helping to keep some people working, but it's not driving profits for the local companies. The face shields are being

sold at cost, according to a statement from Penn State Behrend.

Likewise, Williams and the other designers are making their designs available to anyone who might want to duplicate their efforts at <https://whitelabelfaceshields.com/>.

Because of the need for personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic, the partner companies said they fast-tracked a process that might

normally have taken months. "Three weeks after our first meeting, we had product on a pallet, shipping to customers," Steve Rosenzweig, director of finance at Bliley Technologies, told Behrend. "That's a quick turnaround, and it underscores the vendors' commitment to this project."

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Erie region to get face shields, masks

By Kevin Flowers, Jim Martin and Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News

Erie on Thursday received a significant donation from its sister city in China aimed at helping to curb the spread of the new coronavirus.

Officials in Zibo, China, donated 50,000 reusable cloth face masks to the city.

Renee Lamis, Mayor Joe Schember's chief of staff, said the masks will initially be distributed to city workers; local homeless shelters; and various nonprofits in the city, including Erie's neighborhood centers.

"Then we will see how many we have left and who needs them," Lamis said.

Han Lin, section chief of the Zibo Municipal People's Government, confirmed the donation in an April 14 e-mail to Lamis.

The masks, which come in packages of five, were shipped from Zibo to Chicago this week. Logistics Plus, the Erie-based freight management company, helped get the masks to Erie from Chicago.

"Zibo is doing it for free. We just want to help them do that," Logistics Plus founder and CEO Jim Berlin said.

Berlin said he got word from Schember's office that there were problems getting the masks through customs in Chicago and transported to Erie.

"We said we would take care of it," Berlin said. "We cleared it (through customs) in Chicago and we trucked it to Erie on our truck."

Schember and a delegation from Erie visited Zibo, a city of 4.5 million people near the



Officials from Erie's sister city of Zibo, China, met with Mayor Joe Schember in Erie in December. Zibo has donated 50,000 face masks to Erie. (DAVID BRUCE FILE PHOTO/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

coast in east-central China, in April 2019.

Five-hundred plastic face shields will be given away for free to the public on Saturday by Bliley Technologies.

Five-hundred face shields will be distributed from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, if supplies last, at Bliley Technologies, 2545 W. Grandview Boulevard.

There will be a limit of four face shields per person, but people are asked to take only what they need.

People will be asked to stay in their cars during the event. There is overflow parking to accommodate vehicles.

Face shields work best for protection against COVID-19 when worn with a face mask. The shield is affixed to a strap that is worn around the head.

The mold for the mask was designed at Penn State Behrend. Bliley Technologies, in partnership with Behrend, Case Western University in Cleveland, Port Erie Plastics, Munot Plastics, Musson Rubber, and Lake Erie Transport.

The company has made 60,000 face shields in recent weeks that have been distributed to emergency responders, hospitals and other medical facilities in Pennsylvania, Ohio and western New York.

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority provided grants to Penn State Behrend for the development of the mold used to make the face shields being given to the public at Bliley Technologies on Saturday.

And ECGRA has purchased 2,000 face shields, half of which have already been distributed.

Last week, it gave about 500 face shields to city of Erie firefighters, area volunteer firefighters and Erie County sheriff's deputies.

On Wednesday, ECGRA gave away 500 face shields to area non-profits. Thursday, it announced it is giving another 1,000 face shields to local non-profits at no cost. Non-profit agencies can sign up for face shields at www.ecgra.org/covid-19-face-shield-form.

Thursday, May 7, 2020

Erie County COVID-19 Human Relief Fund awards grants

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority has awarded five additional grants through the Erie County COVID-19 Human Relief Fund.

The ECGRA board of

directors awarded grants to YMCA of Greater Erie (\$22,960), Erie Family Center (\$13,000), Edinboro Community & Economic Development Corp. (\$9,370), Elmwood Food Pantry (\$2,000), and Harborcreek High School (\$1,000).

The Erie County COVID-19 Human Relief Fund was created by ECGRA and Erie County Council to support those in need throughout the county. The Human Relief Fund is part of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund, established by ECGRA to provide flexible and patient loans to nonprofits and small businesses.

A total of \$604,234 has been awarded since the launch of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund on March 19.

Business hands out free face shields



Shelbi Daniels, left, Dawn Hamilton, center, and Heather Kahle, right, were among a dozen employees of Bliley Technologies to hand out 500 face shields free to the public Saturday at the Millcreek Township business. Bliley Technologies Inc. with the support of Penn State Behrend, Case Western, Port Erie Plastics, Munot Plastics, Musson Rubber, Lake Erie Transport, and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, have been making face shields available to hospitals, first responder groups and other medical facilities across Ohio, Pennsylvania and Western New York for the past several weeks. (JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)