



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

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
JUNE
2025**



ECGRA Communications Services Report

May 2025 Comms.

BiWeekly Meeting with ECGRA Executive Director

Ongoing Social Media Management

Ongoing Consulting

IMPLEMENTED

May social media posts
Invite: Early Childcare Educator Retention Award
Media Advisory-Release: Early Chilcare Educator Retention Award
BiWeekly planning meeting with the Executive Director
Talking Points-Run of Show: Early Childcare Educator Retention Awards
Photos: Early Chilcare Educator Retention Award Press Conference
Outreach
Media Release: Performance Audit
Social Media Graphic: Performance Audit

IN PROGRESS

Annual Report 2024
Media Outreach Child Care Initiative

IN PLANNING

Event planning /scheduling (Special Events Press Conference, Childcare Press Conference)

Graphics – Future grant opportunities, grant summaries





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210 Meadville Street
Edinboro, PA 16412
(814) 732-1669
mail@edinborofoundation.org
www.edinborofoundation.org

June 6, 2025

Mr. Perry N. Wood III, Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Rd Ste 201
Erie, PA 16510-4672

Dear Mr. Wood:

On behalf of the Edinboro University Foundation, I would like to say thank you for investing in the lives and futures of PennWest Edinboro students with your generous gift – we are grateful for you!

By supporting our students with your gift, you are helping to create the next generation of leaders, innovators and change makers in our communities. Your gift impacts students' futures, equipping them with the tools and resources to turn their educational experiences into rewarding careers.

We pride ourselves on being able to help those who strive, lead, create, explore and inspire. Because of you, these bright, talented and worthy students continue to have access to an outstanding education here at Edinboro. Thank you for your support and loyalty.

Sincerely,
EDINBORO UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION


Charles G. Scalise '86
Executive Director
cscalise@eupfoundation.org



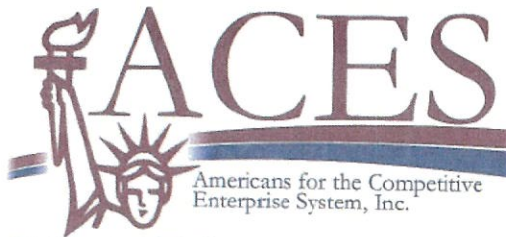
P.S. The impact of your gift may be doubled or possibly tripled! Please check with your HR Representative to see if your company sponsors a matching gift program.

Gift Amount: \$7,000.00
Gift Type:
Designation: Highland Games (Foundation)

Your contribution may be tax deductible as provided by law. Please retain this document for tax filing purposes. Unless otherwise indicated, no substantial donor benefits were associated with this gift. Edinboro University Foundation, 210 Meadville St., Edinboro, PA, 16412

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June 6, 2025

Tammi Michali
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Rd # 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Tammi,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff of Americans for the Competitive Enterprise System, we would like to thank you for your generous donation. Your donation is an important part of our success and continued mission to promote free market education in Western PA.

Our programs have impacted thousands of students, educators, and citizens over the years and, with help from our supporters, we are able to continue promoting our American free enterprise system through unique educational experiences.

Our mission is driven by the fact that today's students will be tomorrow's leaders. It is vitally important to the future of the nation that students everywhere receive a fundamental economic education. Our programs provide these fundamentals and set students on a course to success through realizing their own ability.

We received your donation of \$1,300 on June 6, 2025. Thank you for your commitment to our organization and your support of economic education in Western PA!

Sincerely,


Stacy Bartholomew
Executive Director

Please keep this as a receipt for your tax records. To comply with IRS supporting regulations, we hereby acknowledge that no goods or services have been or will be provided in consideration in whole or in part for your contribution. ACES is approved by the state of Pennsylvania as an Educational Improvement Organization. A qualifying business may be approved for a tax credit (EITC) equal to 75% to 90% of its contribution to ACES. A copy of ACES' official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling 1(800) 732-0999 within Pennsylvania. Registration does not imply endorsement. The IRS 503(c)(3) number is 26-2763757.



ECGRA awards nearly \$1 million total to 59 childcare providers



ECGRA awarded nearly \$1 million in grants to childcare providers across Erie County. A check presentation was held on May 23 at St. Martin Early Learning Center. The grants are funded by a \$2.5 million Rescue Plan investment. A.J. RAO/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

A.J. Rao Erie Times-News | USA TODAY NETWORK

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority awarded nearly \$1 million in grants May 22 to help 59 childcare providers recruit and retain qualified educators. • ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood said the grants — the Early Childhood Educator Retention Awards — serve to boost a vital sector in Erie County that’s long been underfunded and understaffed.

“According to Start Strong PA, there are currently 93 unfilled early childhood educator positions in Erie County. If filled, these roles could serve 744 more children,” Wood said at a check presentation Thursday at St. Martin Early Learning Center.

“That’s why these grants are so important. They represent a crucial step forward in supporting the dedicated professionals who care for and educate our young learners.”

The \$991,785 in grants were funded by a \$2.5 million investment of American Rescue Plan funds from Erie County government. ECGRA has also provided a \$2.5 million match in gaming revenue for a \$5 million childcare investment.

“An investment in childcare is an investment in workforce development — that is economic development,” said Erie County Executive Brenton Davis. “Without parents being able to become dual income families, we’re unable to lift our community up the economic mobility ladder.”

Thursday’s investment represents the first phase of a broader, multi-step initiative to strengthen Erie County’s early learning infrastructure, according to ECGRA.

“An investment in childcare is an investment in workforce development — that is economic development. Without parents being able to become dual income families, we’re unable to lift our community up the economic mobility ladder.” Erie County Executive Brenton Davis

Kenya Johnson, owner of Learning Ladder Early Child Care, said the grants will have a “real and meaningful” impact on her center, both in terms of retaining quality teachers and giving them some much-needed recognition.

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“For many of them, this extra income will make a difference in their personal lives — paying bills, putting gas in their car, covering groceries and that all matters,” she said. “But beyond the money, it’s the message that came with it. That message says: We see you, we appreciate you and we want to

keep you here doing what you do best.”

Asha Graeb, director of the St. Martin Early Learning Center, added that early childhood educators often have limited support and resources despite the crucial role they play in a child’s life.

“Our teachers work every day to create safe, nurturing environments where children can build confidence, spark curiosity and learn compassion,” she said.

Grant recipients

- A Child’s World Daycare & Learning; \$23,683
- Annie’s Bubble Care; \$6,459
- Barb’s Care A Lot; \$19,377
- Barbs Family Learning Group Daycare LLC; \$6,459
- Boro Babies Child Care Center;
\$9,689
- Bright Horizons at Eric; \$29,066
- Corry Alliance Childcare Learning Center; \$8,074
- Creative Learning Childcare – iRock; \$35,525
- Cuddle Time Daycare; \$1,077
- Dr Gertrude Barber Corry; \$12,918
- Dr Gertrude Barber Happy Hearts;
\$46,290
- Eagles Nest Group Daycare;
\$6,459
- Early Connections City Center;
\$16,148
- Early Connections Harbor Homes Early Learning Center; \$6,459
- Early Connections North East;
\$6,459
- Early Connections Union City;
\$23,683
- Early Learning Center; \$19,377
- Early Learning University;
\$24,760
- Eastside YMCA; \$33,372
- Elk Valley Elementary YMCA;
\$9,689
- EPS Pennbriar Childcare LLC;
\$16,417
- Erie First Early Education Center;
Advertisement

\$11,303

- Fit Kids; \$10,227
- Glenwood YMCA; \$17,224
- Growing and Learning Center;

\$43,060

- Handled with Care; \$37,678
- I Love It Daycare Learning Center;

\$15,071

- Javonne Beason; \$1,077
- Jumpstart Early Learning Center LLC; \$6,459
- KinderCare 1279; \$8,612
- Learning Ladder; \$18,301
- Little Explorers Christian Academy; \$5,378
- Lollipop U Daycare; \$8,612
- McKean Elementary YMCA; \$2,153
- Milestones Early Learning Academy; \$13,995
- Milestones Early Learning Center;

\$21,530

- Miss Julies Childcare; \$11,842
- Miss Rose's Learning Center;

\$8,612

- Montessori in the Woods; \$9,150
- My Terra Village; \$4,844
- New Horizons Early Learning Center; \$10,750
- Northwestern YMCA; \$8,612
- Playway Loving Childcare Center LLC; \$5,383
- Saint Benedict Center; \$52,749
- Saint Vincent Child Care Center;

\$34,448

- South Hills Child Development Center; \$37,139
- St. Martin Early Learning Center;

\$76,432

• St. Paul's Child Development Center; \$24,760

• Summit YMCA; \$6,459

• Teresa Jordan; \$6,000

• The International Institute of Erie;

\$10,765

• Tracy Heutsche; \$4,844

• Twinkle Time Child Care Center;

\$5,921

• Wat★rford YMCA; \$10,765 • Wattsb▶r★ Elementary YMCA;

\$9,688

• World of Care; \$12,918 • YMCA Camp Sherwin; \$2,153

•

YMCA of Corry Daycare; \$47,366

• Young Environment; \$20,992 *A.J. Rao can be reached at arao@gannett.com. Follow him on X @ETNRao.*

Wednesday, 05/28/2025 Page .A01

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COLUMNS | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Why I am hopeful for the future of child care in Erie County | Opinion

Michelle Harkins Your Turn

May 28, 2025, 5:05 a.m. ET

Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

Erie County is facing a child care crisis due to staffing shortages and low wages.

ECGRA, in conjunction with Erie County, is investing \$2.5 million in ARPA funds to address the crisis.

Statewide initiatives and advocacy groups are working to make child care investment a priority in Pennsylvania.

There is a child care and early childhood education [crisis affecting children and families across Erie County](#). Many leaders and organizations [recognize this](#) and [have been advocating](#) for a solution. The [Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority](#), in partnership with Erie County, is taking tangible steps and providing funding where it's needed most. ECGRA was recently awarded \$2.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds by Erie County. These funds are the first steps in fixing Erie's fundamentally damaged child care system.

Early Connections (formerly the YWCA) has operated in Erie County for over 130 years, providing outreach and programming to young children and families. At first, the YWCA primarily focused on providing housing, education and employment services for young women living in the Home for Girls. To meet the growing demand for child care, this expanded into opening the Children's Center in downtown Erie. After disaffiliating from the national YWCA and becoming Early Connections, we continued to focus on developing programs to meet the needs of our community.

Now, Early Connections provides high-quality early care and education programming at four sites, two in the city of Erie, one in Union City, and one in

North East. As an intermediary, Early Connections is dedicated to providing connections and supports for high-schoolers and nontraditional students working in the child care field. This strengthens the pipeline between high schools, employers and higher education institutions to help individuals become credentialed child care workers at little to no cost while improving the quality of child care centers.

For a long time, we've grown in this city and championed early childhood education.

According to [Start Strong PA](#), as of September 2024, Erie County faces a shortage of 93 staffing positions in early childhood education, with the potential to serve an additional 744 children if the positions were filled. A vast majority of centers reported teacher shortages, including difficulties recruiting new teachers and retaining current staff.

Need a break? [Play the USA TODAY Daily Crossword Puzzle.](#)

The child care staffing shortage is driven by low wages, which fail to meet the cost of living in Erie County. This creates challenges in hiring, retaining staff and expanding programs to serve more children. As a small program, we've certainly encountered these issues firsthand. The first round of ECGRA funding is designed to address this issue directly.

All industries are feeling a squeeze when it comes to staffing, but early childhood education faces unique challenges. Unlike retail or food service, we can't operate with fewer staff without compromising the quality of care. Early childhood education requires specific teacher-to-student ratios to ensure each child receives the support they need. Without enough staff, programs are forced to close classrooms that would normally be full of eager, learning children.

Addressing staffing from the state level, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro proposed approximately \$1,000 bonuses annually to all child care employees in recruitment and retention grants. If passed, this would be an investment of \$55 million in the child care workforce.

It's not only staffing that's an issue. Once the current empty classrooms are filled and additional children need to be served, capital improvement projects will be another hurdle to manage. A lot of Erie facilities are entirely tapped out on space and affordably acquiring new rooms is difficult or impossible, especially when factoring in the other challenges at play. This is yet another limiter for child care progress that can be addressed by future ECGRA, Erie County or state investment.

Nick Scott Jr.: [Child care and economic development in Erie - it is time for action](#)

More: [ECGRA, Erie County invest nearly \\$1 million to address shortage of early childhood educators](#)

The difficulties we face seem insurmountable when we just talk about them, but I think there's hope on the horizon in the form of tangible action. Thank you to ECGRA for investing in solutions that not only support families today but also help elevate the conversation around early childhood education both here in Erie and in Harrisburg. I'm encouraged by statewide advocacy efforts like [Pre-K for PA](#) and Start Strong PA, which are working alongside local leaders to make sustained, strategic investment in child care a priority across Pennsylvania.

Michelle Harkins is the executive director of [Early Connections](#) in Erie.

LOCAL

Downtown Corry businesses eligible to share \$225,000 grants for facade improvements



Valerie Myers
Erie Times-News

June 2, 2025, 5:08 a.m. ET

Key Points

The grants aim to revitalize downtown Corry and attract new businesses, jobs and customers.

Previous investments have already shown positive results in filling vacant storefronts, Corry community leaders said.

CORRY — Downtown Corry businesses can improve their storefronts with help from state and local grants.

A \$100,000 grant to Impact Corry from the state's Main Street Matters program and \$125,000 in matching funds from the Mission Main Street program of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority will be available to building owners investing in facade improvements.

Communities in Erie, Crawford and Warren counties will receive more than \$1 million in Main Street Matters funding, Lt. Gov. Austin Davis said in presenting the grant in Corry on May 30. There were more than 200 applications requesting more than double the amount of funding available.

"Our administration is making these investments, not out of the goodness of our hearts but because we believe they are smart investments for our commonwealth,"

Mission Main Street

Mission Main Street grants from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority are designed to help revitalize commercial corridors to boost tourism and job creation.

Corry mayoral race: [Corry City Councilman Jeff Fike resoundingly wins Republican nomination](#)

Fourteen Corry storefronts have already been improved.

Additional ECGRA funding for Corry's downtown will help pay costs to improve 20 more storefronts, Maggio said.

Contact Valerie Myers at vmyers@gannett.com.



AUDITOR GENERAL VALIDATES ECGRA PROCESS, POLICY IN CLEAN AUDIT

*Auditor General Confirms ECGRA's Accounting, Finds Davis Administration Error
County Ordered to Pay ECGRA \$538,248*

*****RELEASE***RELEASE*** RELEASE*** RELEASE***RELEASE*** RELEASE*****

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Kate Philips
philips@kateco.com
(215) 850-4647 | mobile

ERIE, PA (May 30, 2025) – Auditor General Tim DeFoor issued a report today showing the Erie County Gaming Revue Authority (ECGRA) is following the letter of the law. ECGRA Board Chairperson, Kelly Hess issued the following statement regarding the state audit.

“The ECGRA Board of Directors and staff thank Auditor General DeFoor and his staff for their professionalism and thoroughness throughout the process and in his final audit findings.

“This audit is a powerful validation of ECGRA. The Auditor General’s findings show not only that ECGRA has complied with the law, but that our process, rooted in transparency and excellence, *goes beyond the letter of the law*. The manner in which ECGRA - a public authority with a clear mission and unwavering commitment to transparency - has been treated is not appropriate.

“ECGRA is an exemplary public authority delivering on the legislative promise we have been charged to enact. We look forward to continuing to lead through impact investing in partnership with local economic development agencies and the Erie County communities we proudly serve.

“Under the leadership of Perry Wood, ECGRA has done phenomenal work to advance the economic and community development goals of Erie County. Now that the ECGRA model and process have been affirmed by the Auditor General - the state’s chief fiscal watchdog responsible for using audits to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent legally and properly - we hope that these relentless and baseless attacks will end.”

ECGRA has been working for years to attempt to get the County to recognize and rectify an underpayment to the gaming authority via its year-end reconciliation process. The Davis administration’s refusal to distribute gaming funds in accordance with the law was identified by the Auditor General. The county was ordered by the Auditor General to pay ECGRA \$538,248 for the period of April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2024.

“Our work has been validated, and we hope that this long-sustained attack against ECGRA will finally come to an end,” said Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA. “What began as a baseless fishing expedition to discredit ECGRA is now validation that ECGRA works.

“ECGRA is something that Erie County should be proud of, and we appreciate the support of local officials who refused to engage in a public smear campaign and stood up for our team’s integrity. ECGRA and its dedicated staff will continue to go to work each day on behalf of Erie County and deliver - just as we have through the last four administrations.”

The Auditor General’s report noted that in 2022, ECGRA accepted a 2021 closeout report for a \$6,300 grant to Erie Downtown Partnership. In agreement with the Auditor General’s team, ECGRA is developing a closeout report checklist to ensure this minor error doesn’t occur again.

The Auditor General’s report was requested by County Executive Brenton Davis, state Senator Dan Laughlin, and several members of the local state delegation. State Representative Ryan Bizzaro, did not sign onto the request, calling it a baseless political attack.

ABOUT ECGRA

An impact investing organization, ECGRA's mission is to empower the nonprofit sector, municipal governments, and economic development agencies to revitalize Erie County. ECGRA is endowed with local share gaming revenue from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania via the Horse Race Gaming Act. The local share

gaming revenue is an assessment of the licensed gambling industry in Pennsylvania. ECGRA administers local share gaming revenue on behalf of Erie County government.

###

PA audit says ECGRA complied with laws

A.J.

Rao

Erie Times-News USA TODAY NETWORK

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority has complied with the law.

That was the verdict of the state Auditor General's office, which on May 30, released a performance audit of two years of ECGRA's activities, to include the administering of grants and loans, public disclosure and spending requirements.

The audit, which was requested by state Sen. Dan Laughlin, Erie County Executive Brenton Davis and a slate of state lawmakers in early 2024, came after Davis raised concerns about ECGRA's finances and adherence to state laws.

The audit discovered that ECGRA was not only in compliance but entitled to gaming funds from the county.

"We found that due to an informal, unwritten agreement between ECGRA and Erie County related to quarterly fund distributions, ECGRA did not receive \$538,428 of the gaming funds it was entitled to for the period of April 1, 2021, through March 31, 2024," the audit read.

The audit stated that a year-end reconciliation was never conducted to ensure the funds were properly distributed.

ECGRA Board Chairperson Kelly Hess noted in an April 29 letter to state Auditor General Tim DeFoor that ECGRA requested a reconciliation of the 2023 funding in January 2024 and followed up in June 2024 but did not get a response from the county.

The auditor general's office encouraged both parties to work collaboratively to conduct fiscal year-end reconciliations to make sure funds are distributed according to the law and any differences are settled.

The office also made a recommendation encouraging ECGRA and Erie County to formalize any agreement on how funds are distributed, reconciled and settled to avoid any issues in the future.

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The audit period for the first two objectives was April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2024. The period for the third objective was April 1, 2021, through, March 31, 2024.

Some findings

Among its findings, the audit showed that ECGRA:

- approved and denied grant applications in accordance with relevant laws, regulations and internal policies;
- monitored grant projects to ensure funds were spent according to grant guidelines, with one exception related to closeout documentation, which the audit referred to as an “isolated mistake;”
- adhered to the terms of the 2010 settlement agreement; and
- distributed loan funding to qualified organizations according to applicable laws and monitored loan money for compliance with the original loan agreements.

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A.J. Rao can be reached at arao@gannett.com. Follow him on X @ETNRao.

The Corry Journal

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Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Corry receives \$225,000 in state funding for continued downtown revitalization

BY CAROL FIELDING
carol@thecorryjournal.com

The downtown business district received a major boost last week when Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. Austin Davis announced \$225,000 in combined funding to continue the community's revitalization efforts.

Impact Corry and the Corry Higher Education Council hosted a press conference to announce a \$100,000 Main Street Matters grant from the commonwealth and a \$125,000 Mission Main Street award from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), marking the latest chapter in Corry's ongoing transformation into a thriving downtown destination.

"We are honored to welcome Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. Austin Davis to Corry to share another great chapter of the word 'reinvention' in Corry and across Pennsylvania," said Wendy Neckers, who serves as president of both the Downtown Corry Business Association and the board of Impact Corry.

Neckers painted a picture of Corry's rich history and recent challenges during her opening remarks.

"Corry started out as an intersection of railroads in 1861, carrying lumber and newly



Carol Fielding/The Corry Journal

Lt. Gov. Austin Davis, at the podium, visited Corry on Friday, bringing an announcement of funding from the commonwealth to be administered through Impact Corry. Tom Maggio, far right, announced matching funding plus an additional \$25,000 from ECGRA. Impact Corry Executive Director Chuck Gray, far left, and Impact Corry Board President Wendy Neckers, second from right, also spoke at the press conference.

discovered oil, which was refined in Corry," she explained. "By 1870, 6,726 people resided in Corry. At one point, there were up to 25 passenger trains per day, plus trains being loaded with products, leaving

every few minutes to carry goods throughout the U.S. We were considered an important interior port and expected to grow to the size of Erie."

However, like many small industrial communities, Corry

faced demographic challenges over the decades.

"According to the U.S. Census, in 1970, we were 7,367 strong; in the 2020 census, we were 6,217, with an aging population," Neckers not-

ed. "I moved my business to the heart of downtown Corry in 2015, to a beautifully renovated historic building among many empty, derelict storefronts. My intent was to collaborate with other retail

shops to attract foot traffic and to show Corry it has value."

Davis emphasized the economic rationale behind the state's investment in small-town main streets during his remarks.

"Our administration is making these investments not out of the goodness of our hearts, but because we believe they are smart investments for our commonwealth," Davis said. "For every dollar the commonwealth invests in main streets, we get nearly an \$8 return on that investment."

Drawing from his personal experience, Davis added, "I grew up in McKeesport, a former steel town, so I've seen what happens when businesses and governments stop investing in local communities."

Davis stressed the competitive nature of the grant program, noting, "There were more than 200 applications requesting more than double the amount of funding available. Here in Corry, you're receiving \$100,000 for commercial façade improvements through the Main Street Matters program across the region. There are eight projects in Crawford, Erie and Warren counties that are receiving more than a million dollars in total funding."

◀ See Funding, P.2

Funding

(Continued from front page)

Davis also highlighted the bipartisan nature of effective local development work.

"One of the things that I've heard, no matter where I've gone, is most Pennsylvanians don't care about whether you're Democrat or a Republican," Davis said. "They care about whether you're delivering your results for them in their communities. They want their leaders to take off their red jerseys and their blue jerseys and to put on the Pennsylvania jersey."

The significance of Davis' visit was not lost on local officials. In an interview, herie Dickey, Corry Chamber of Commerce manager, emphasized the importance of the state-level recognition. "For the lieutenant governor to visit Corry is huge. Just to know that Harrisburg knows we exist, and the governor's office is supportive of all Impact Corry doing for our city, makes me proud," Dickey said.

Tom Maggio, grants manager of ECGRA, praised the partnership with Impact Corry. "It's easy to give money away, but it's hard to get it — you really need a great partner. We have one here at Impact Corry," Maggio said, adding that ECGRA has been "funding Main Street

programs for the last 12 years. We ramped up in the last six, and the transformation across the county has been amazing."

Maggio emphasized the visible impact of even modest improvements:

"Even a coat of paint goes a long way, and we really depend on people like Chuck [Gray] and Impact Corry. They're the bellwether — they've done an incredible job of transforming Corry and energizing this community."

Impact Corry Executive Director Chuck Gray provided funding statistics, revealing that, "Since 2019, Impact Corry's projects in downtown Corry have garnered \$887,000 in federal funding, \$1.2 million in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania funding and \$792,000 in regional and local funding."

She explained that these awards are, "matched dollar for dollar by private and public investment, and have turned a would-be rural ghost town into a thriving downtown with shops and invested entrepreneurs."

Gray outlined the comprehensive impact of these investments.

"These projects, both completed and in progress, have promoted confidence in Corry's future, attracted new businesses, filled vacant spaces, made our Victorian historic district an attraction, advanced tourism and raised community pride," she said.

The community has embraced crea-

tive programming to support the business district, including themed First Fridays that began in 2017. As Neckers described, the DCBA started these events "to celebrate the community, to show off our great shops and restaurants and bring a festive atmosphere to the city with flower planters, music, entertainment, carriage rides and food trucks."

Gray concluded by emphasizing the regional significance of the investment.

"These investments will empower our businesses and enhance our economic development and tourism in Corry, as well as in neighboring communities for decades to come," Gray added. "These investments and Lt. Gov. Davis' visit are an honor and a huge show of support for our region, and for the work of Impact Corry."

The press conference concluded with a video featuring testimonials from Corry residents and business owners who have participated in previous downtown improvement programs, demonstrating the tangible impact of continued investment in the community's main street revitalization efforts.

With the Shapiro administration proposing an additional \$20 million in funding for the Main Street Matters program in the upcoming budget, communities like Corry may have additional opportunities to continue building on their transformation success.

\$225,000 in grants available for Corry upgrades

Valerie Myers
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

CORRY — Downtown Corry businesses can improve their storefronts with help from state and local grants.

A \$100,000 grant to Impact Corry from the state's Main Street Matters program and \$125,000 in matching funds from the Mission Main Street program of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority will be available to building owners investing in facade improvements.

Communities in Erie, Crawford and Warren counties will receive more than \$1 million in Main Street Matters funding. Lt. Gov. Austin Davis said in presenting the grant in Corry on May 30. There were more than 200 applications requesting more than double the amount of funding available.

"Our administration is making these investments, not out of the goodness of our hearts but because we believe they are smart investments for our commonwealth," Davis said. "For every \$1 the commonwealth invests in main streets we get nearly an \$8 return on that investment."

Main Street improvements are transforming communities across Erie County and attracting new businesses and customers, and Corry has been a bellwether for the program, said Tom Magglio, grants manager for ECGRA.

"There is something about Corry and



Lt. Gov. Austin Davis, Impact Corry Executive Director Chuck Gray and Wendy Neckers, president of the Downtown Corry Business Association, from left, announce new grants for downtown Corry facade improvements.

VALERIE MYERS/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

the spirit here that has moved Corry forward," Magglio said.

Federal, state and local investments in the city since 2019 through almost \$2.9 million for Impact Corry projects are reversing the city's commercial decline and filling empty storefronts, said

Chuck Gray, executive director of Impact Corry.

"Each of these awards, matched dollar for dollar by private and public investment, have turned a would-be rural ghost town into a thriving downtown of niche shops and invested entrepre-

neurs," Gray said. "These projects, both completed and in progress, have prompted confidence in Corry's future, attracted new businesses, filled vacant spaces, made our Victorian Historic District an attraction, advanced tourism and raised community pride."

Main Street Matters

Main Street Matters is a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development program designed to support downtown revitalization.

The program provides funding for planning, business support, aesthetic improvements, and upgrades for safety and security.

Corry is among 81 communities awarded Main Street Matters grants on May 30. More than 200 communities applied for funding, Davis said.

Mission Main Street

Mission Main Street grants from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority are designed to help revitalize commercial corridors to boost tourism and job creation.

Fourteen Corry storefronts have already been improved.

Additional ECGRA funding for Corry's downtown will help pay costs to improve 20 more storefronts, Magglio said.

Contact Valerie Myers at vmymyers@gannett.com.

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Davis conducting own legal review of ECGRA audit after county is found \$538,248 delinquent

BY ERIN PASSINGER
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Erie County Executive Brenton Davis said he and the county are still reviewing the findings of a 53-page state audit that combed through a three-year spending history of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

The audit, which was conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, was released on Friday, and found that ECGRA was, indeed, compliant with state laws, and also entitled to \$538,248 in gaming funds from the county.

When asked whether Davis agreed with the findings and if he intended to follow the recommendation of the au-

dit and pay the money, Davis said he has not yet decided.

"We have yet to conduct a legal review, as we received the report at the same time as everyone else," Davis said. "We will complete our due diligence and make a determination."

The report was initiated by Davis and a handful of other local politicians in July of 2024, expecting that it would expose excessive spending by ECGRA. But instead, the findings revealed that Erie County is more than half a million dollars delinquent in transferring its share of gaming revenue to ECGRA for distribution.

ECGRA said it has been working for years to get the county to recognize and

rectify an underpayment to the gaming authority via its year-end reconciliation process. In the recently released report, the auditor general confirmed the underpayment from a period of April 1, 2021, through March 31, 2024.

April Hutcheson, director of communications for the Office of the Auditor General, said it is ECGRA's decision on how it moves forward to collect the owed funds.

"Our audit lays out processes and recommendations for improvements, Hutcheson said. "It is up to the auditee to implement those recommendations."

ECGRA has maintained that it will continue to seek the owed funds and try to work with Erie County to

enter into a mutually-agreed upon reconciliation agreement that sets clear guidelines on how gaming funds are distributed each fiscal year.

Christina Vogel, who will be running on the Democratic ticket against Davis in the fall for the Erie County executive seat, is publicly calling on Davis to release the owed funds.

"As I have said throughout my campaign, we need to end the games, chaos and fighting within the county government," Vogel said in a press release. "I call upon Mr. Davis to quickly disperse the funds due to ECGRA and pledge to work with ECGRA as recommended by the auditor general."

Lights Over Lake Erie returns July 3

DOBBINS LANDING

Kevin Flowers

Erie Times-News USA TODAY NETWORK



Fourth of July fireworks explode over Dobbins Landing and the Bicentennial Tower in Erie on July 4, 2015. Lights Over Lake Erie will take place on July 3 this year. GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

The vibrant eruption of color and thundering sound returns to the the skies over Presque Isle Bay on July 3.

Mayor Joe Schember announced on June 5 that the city's annual Lights Over Lake Erie fireworks display returns to Dobbins Landing one day before the July 4 holiday.

The fireworks show, presented once again by Pyrotecnico Fireworks of New Castle, will begin at 10 p.m.

"We are grateful that we can continue this tradition," Schember said, noting that the event is co-sponsored by Highmark and the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority.

The event is funded in part by a \$15,000 events grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

"We know how much these fireworks mean to the community," said Julie Slomski, the Port Authority's executive director.

Where can you watch?

As is the case annually, residents and visitors can view the fireworks from various vantage points along Erie's waterfront, including the east and west bayfront bluffs and Bayview Park near East Second and Cherry streets; Presque Isle State Park; from a boat in Presque Isle Bay, or from almost anywhere that provides a view of the Bicentennial Tower.

Parking, shuttles available Gabi Watson, the city's events manager, said Dobbins Landing and the lower State Street area will be closed to vehicle traffic during the event.

The Erie Parking Authority will provide free parking at select downtown parking garages for those attending the fireworks. That includes the garages near West Seventh/West Eighth and Peach streets and East Eighth and French streets.

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Our meeting room, with new store front, has been improved, updated, and made conducive for public gatherings, with **special thanks to Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)**. Thank you for helping us continue our mission, which is to collect and preserve (or present to the Historical Museum Building) any article or articles pertaining to the history of the Corry Area, which encompasses the Corry Area School District. Your generosity is appreciated!

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