



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

**EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR'S  
REPORT  
FOR  
APRIL  
2023**

**March 2023**

**Meeting with Executive Director**

**Ongoing Social Media Management**

**Ongoing Consulting**

**March Comms**

**IMPLEMENTED**

- 39 Total March posts
- 33 Total graphics created
- Strategic Marketing Planning with Kate Philips and Executive Director
- Press Release and Distribution
  - Beehive Network
  - Special Events
- Press Events
  - Beehive Network Recipients
  - Special Events

**IN PROGRESS | 2023 Grant Releases and Graphics**

- Holiday Graphics
- 2022 Annual Report

**IN PLANNING**

- Parks Fields & Trails 2 year report
- ECGRA Playbook
- Roadshow Tours

**Tammi Michali**

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**From:** Mary Wassell <wassell@parkerphilips.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2023 11:03 AM  
**Cc:** Kate Philips  
**Subject:** RELEASE: ECGRA Grants Drive Economic and Community Development Through Regional Events



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: Kate Philips

[philips@parkerphilips.com](mailto:philips@parkerphilips.com)

215.850.4647 | mobile

**NEWS\*\*\*NEWS\*\*\*NEWS\*\*\*NEWS\*\*\*NEWS\*\*\*NEWS\*\*\*NEWS**

## **ECGRA Grants Drive Economic and Community Development Through Regional Events**

*Invests Over \$200,000 In 2023 Erie County Special Events*

**Erie, PA (March 16, 2023)** – The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) awarded \$211,997.18 for their 2023 Special Events Grants, which will be distributed to 49 Erie County nonprofits and municipalities.

“Since 2008, ECGRA has been committed to making transformative investments across Erie County — and through these special events we are igniting economic and community development,” said Dr. Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA. “Every single one of these organizations help to foster civic pride by bringing our community together and driving Erie forward.”

The Special Event Grants Program, which funds up to 5% of events that take place within Erie County, promote the region economically and culturally. They are driving tourism, attracting talent to the region, and helping sustain Erie traditions that make Erie County a special place to visit and call home.

“As a nonprofit organization celebrating 110 years of serving the most vulnerable in our region, EHCA is grateful to all of our community partners for their role in our mission,” said Samantha Giddings, Development Specialist, Erie Homes for Children and Adults (EHCA). “And ECGRA is one of those caring partners that provide EHCA with funding opportunities to help us assist individuals with disabilities to live rich and fulfilling lives.”

**Below is a breakdown of the 2023 Special Events Grants approved:**

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
Albion Area Fair	Albion Area Fair	\$12,707.00
AmeriMasala	AmeriMasala	\$2,116.00
Asbury Woods Partnerhsip	2023 Series of Events	\$1,520.11
Borough of Edinboro	Boro with the Works	\$1,625.00
Borough of Union City	UC Police Deptment National Night Out	\$230.00
Borough of Wesleyville	Wesleyville Community Days	\$965.50
CAFE	Celebrate Erie/Lights over Lake Erie	\$20,000.00
Community Blood Bank of NWP	Donor Appreciation Day	\$1,400.00
Crime Victim Center of Erie County	50th Anniversary Celebrations	\$4,594.55
Downtown North East	Gibson Park 2023 Open Market	\$887.00
Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Foundations	Barber National Institute Events 2023	\$17,683.00
Edinboro University Foundation	2023 Highland Games & Scottish Festival	\$2,525.00
Erie Bird Observatory	Celebrate Spring Birding	\$265.00
Erie County Veterans Memorial Park	Dedication of Erie County Veterans Memorial Park	\$300.00
Erie Downtown Partnership	2023 Event Series	\$6,000.00
Erie Homes for Children & Adults	Golden Gatsby Gala/Victory Ride/MOVE Show of Talents	\$3,011.20
Erie Lions Club Save An Eye Fund	Save An Eye All-Star Football Game	\$1,068.00
Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership	Erie Homecoming 2023	\$5,000.00
Erie-Western PA Port Authority	ERIEBANK 8 Great Tuesdays	\$6,866.00
Film Society of NWP	Eerie Horror Fest	\$9,255.00
Goodell Gardens & Homestead	2023 Series of Events	\$2,050.00
Harborcreek Community Engagement Team	Harborcreek Community Events	\$915.00
Harborcreek Township	Concert in the Park, Light Up Night	\$1,400.00
Holy Trinity RC Church	30th Annual Zabawa	\$6,925.00
Humane Society of NWP	The Mutt Gala, Rock & Rescue, Trails & Tails 5K	\$7,500.00
Jefferson Educational Society	JES Programming/Global Summit	\$19,300.00
Lake Erie Fanfare	40th Annual Drum Corps Competition; 27th Annual German Heritage Festival	\$5,000.00
Lake Erie Greek Cultural Society	Panegyri	\$3,000.00
Lawrence Park Township	Laser Lights and Music Events	\$37.50
McKean Community Development Group	McKean Community Day	\$500.00

Mercy Center for Women	Women Making History, Pedal for Mercy, Music Trvia Night	\$1,200.00
Mercy Hilltop Center	Community Outreach Fair	\$400.00
Nonprofit Partnership, The	22nd Annual Keystone Nonprofit Conference	\$3,882.00
Orthodox Church of the Nativity	Troika Festival	\$2,287.50
Pinracks	Guys & Dolls	\$750.00
Presque Isle Light Station	Tower Tuesdays & Erie Land Lighthouse Events	\$297.00
Presque Isle Partnership	2023 Events	\$4,692.50
SafeNet	Community Outreach and Big Backyard Events	\$3,942.50
Saint Joseph Church Bread of Life Community	Oktoberfest 2023	\$4,450.00
Saint Patrick's Church	Erie Irish Festival	\$7,746.92
SSJ Neighborhood Network	St. Paul's Italian Festival	\$5,412.74
St. Stanislaus Catholic Church	Taste of Poland/Parish Festival	\$250.00
Union City Pride	Purse Bingo, French Creek Festival, Festival of Trees	\$1,273.00
Waterford Community Fair Association	2023 Waterford Community Fair	\$9,250.00
Wattsburg Agricultural Society. Inc.	Erie County Fair at Wattsburg	\$12,345.06
YMCA of Corry	Block Party Chainsaw Carving and Music Festival	\$3,072.10
YMCA of Greater Erie	YMCA Apple Festival	\$400.00
Young Artists Debut Orchestra	2023 Series of Events	\$4,500.00
Youth Leadership Institute of Erie	Global Youth Service "Health Awareness Day"	\$1,200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$211,997.18</b>

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## Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 22, 2023  
12:00 noon  
5240 Knowledge Parkway  
Erie, PA 16510

### AGENDA

1. Community Assets – Arts, Culture, Heritage Review
2. Good of the Order

ECGRA  
5340 Fryling Rd # 201  
Erie, PA 16510

April 10, 2023

ECGRA Staff & Board of Directors,

Thank you for awarding a Special Events Grant to Mercy Hilltop Senior Center. The \$400 award will help us hold a successful Community Outreach Event on Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the center. We hope that some of you will be able to attend.

We strive to reach out to the older adults of the region and offer services and programs to support their independence. We appreciate ECGRA's assistance in furthering this mission.

Gratefully,



Dina Scribner

Executive Director

814-790-5965

[dscribner@mercyhilltopcenter.com](mailto:dscribner@mercyhilltopcenter.com)

## ERIE SEIZES OPPORTUNITY



Karen Bilowith



Gerald Blanks



Ferki Ferati



James Grunke



Charles Hagerty



Gary Horton



Gary Lee



Chris Marsh



Rhonda Matthews



Tina Mengine



Joe Schember



Perry Wood

### *Erie leaders unite to invest in inclusive growth*

In order for a community to understand when it's winning, it has to establish its goals. Right now, Erie County is winning. And, we know this because community and economic development leaders are committed to moving Erie toward the financing and implementation of a clearly defined Playbook — Erie's Investment Playbook. • The Playbook is a set of 35 tangible initiatives and transformational projects that keep Erie's collective eyes on the infinite horizon toward renewed economic and community growth. • The Playbook spells out exactly what Erie needs to put plans into action. Infinite Erie — designed to ensure ongoing collaboration between the public, private, and civic leaders — is led by the Erie Action Team, which is charged with coordinating Erie County's inclusive growth strategies to deliver transformative change.

See THOMAS, Page 3B



Your Turn  
Kim Thomas  
Guest columnist

An influx of federal investments has created an opportunity for cities and counties to secure long-term, sustainable, and equitable growth.



# Thomas

Continued from Page 18

The members of the Action Team are: Chairwoman Karen Bilowith, president and CEO of the Erie Community Foundation; Chris Marsh, chief diversity and community development officer at Erie Insurance; Perry Wood, executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority; Ferki Ferati, president of the Jefferson Educational Society; Gary Lee, the chief administrative officer of Diverse Erie, otherwise known as the Erie County Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission; Erie Mayor Joe Schember; James Grunke, CEO of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership; Gerald Blanks, CEO of the Greater Erie Economic Development Corp.; and Tina Mengine, CEO of the Erie County Redevelopment Authority. Also on the Action Team are Rhonda Matthews, Ph.D., founding board member of Erie's Black Wall Street, who leads the Infinite Erie Inclusive Entrepreneurship Delivery Team; Charles "Boo" Haggerty, president of the Hamot Health Foundation, who leads the Infinite Erie permanent supportive housing and homelessness initiative; and Gary Horton, founder and CEO of the Urban Erie Community Development Corp., who leads the Infinite Erie Burton School Revitalization Delivery Team.

A historic influx of federal investments has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity for cities and counties to make transformational investments that can secure long-term, sustainable, and equitable growth. Erie County is ahead of similarly sized communities thanks to this collaborative effort. Driven by a thorough process, which included more than 50 Erie stakeholders and the review of Erie's many community-informed strategic plans, Erie's Investment Playbook was created by urban policy experts Bruce Katz and Florian Schalliol of New Localism Associates.

One of the 35 priorities identified in the Playbook is the Millcreek Township Presque Isle Gateway District. The project is considered transformational and able to attract outside funding — case in point, \$3.5 million of state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funding awarded already.

Millcreek Township should celebrate its latest win — considered a milestone in any transformational economic development project — securing the sites. The \$3.5 million RACP grant showcased the commonwealth's confidence in the project, and it enjoys the support of the district's legislative leaders including state Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-49th Dist., and Rep. Ryan Bizzaro, D-3rd Dist. Through the purchase of various blighted or soon-to-be blighted properties along West Eighth Street, Millcreek Township asserted its commitment, which will leverage even more funding.

Big things are happening that can help Erie County define its future. Infinite Erie leaders were optimistic after reading recent op-ed, "Erie Co. must connect every corner with elevated broadband service," by Joel Deuterma-



Florian Schalliol, left, and Bruce Katz are shown July 8, 2022, on lower State Street on Erie's bayfront, near the Bicentennial Tower, background. Katz and Schalliol are the authors of a newly released comprehensive plan called Erie's Inclusive Growth: A Framework for Action, created by New Localism Associates. Among other things, the plan champions more bayfront development in Erie. Katz is the founder and Schalliol is a project director of New Localism Associates, based in Arlington, Virginia. FILE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS



Perry Square is shown July 15, 2021, in Erie. State Street bisects the east side, left, and west side of the popular park. GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS FILE

president and CEO of Velocity Network, Inc. (VNET). Deuterma points out that Erie has a chance to get it right as we meet a pivotal economic development juncture — deploying infrastructure funding to install future-proof fiber across the entire county.

Infinite Erie leaders are optimistic because companies like VNET — an Erie-grown company employing nearly 100 people — care about providing Erie County with the absolute best broadband available as well as building toward a more equitable future.

Like so many other things, the COVID-19 pandemic shed a light on the wide broadband infrastructure gaps, exposing deficiencies and shortfalls.

Depending on where they live in Erie County, there are families facing permanent equity barriers due to lack of access to reliable broadband. As part of our Infinite Erie goals, every family deserves reliable, high-speed internet access, which is exactly what Deuterma is advancing. We applaud the idea that we should approach this opportunity with, as Deuterma calls it, future-proof implementation.

Excellent and accessible broadband is a necessity that impacts nearly every aspect of life. Broadband has the power to deliver true equity to our communities and ensuring this basic need to the hardworking families and businesses across our county is of grave impor-

ance. While we do not all start at the same starting line, we deserve to make it across the same finish line. And, through the key investment of broadband, the equity gap separating Erie County will begin to close.

Infinite Erie is working to implement the Investment Playbook by positioning Erie to attract and secure more public and private sector funding than like-size regions. Identified as one of the initial 35 priorities, Erie County is prepared to optimize the tremendous broadband investment opportunity on the horizon. I encourage readers to check out the Playbook at <https://bit.ly/41SQQ6o> and learn more about the exciting projects in various stages of development identified as our region's top priorities, already positioned to attract funding.

Deuterma proposes that we set the bar high — which is happening across Erie County in places like Millcreek Township — and it is now our job to ensure that momentum continues. Eyes from around the state are on Erie County — we must continue to take a leadership role and execute in unison from our northwest corner of the commonwealth.

Erie County got it right when Erie Insurance, the Erie Community Foundation, and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority funded an effort that resulted in the formation of Infinite Erie and our leaders coalesced around the Playbook — now is the time to lean in further.

Kim Thomas is the executive director of Infinite Erie.

# Local organizations awarded ECGRA grants for special events

BY REBEKAH WALLACE  
rebekah@thecorryjournal.com

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority announced its 2023 Special Event Grants on March 16, and listed among the recipients were Union City Pride for several different events, Union City Borough for the police department's National Night Out and YMCA of Corry for its upcoming chainsaw carving festival.

Corry YMCA is getting

\$3,072.10 toward its Chainsaw Carving and Music Festival. The event is scheduled for June 15 to 18 in Corry City Park and will be held in conjunction with CorryFest, which is sponsored by Corry Area Chamber of Commerce, and an annual alumni weekend put on by the Corry High School Alumni Association.

The woodcarving event was approved by City Council on Feb. 20.

According to Lisa Cox, the Y's director of properties and development, ECGRA pro-

vides a specific portion of the budget, which for this event was roughly \$50,000. The money will help pay for the carving company, Bear Hollow Carving out of French Lick, Indiana, along with other expenses such as renting a dumpster and portable toilets.

Besides the main attraction of chainsaw carving, the event will include live music, vendors, artisans and family-friendly activities for children.

◀ See ECGRA, P.2

# UC Borough Council OKs 14 apps for Renaissance Grant funds

BY MARYANN MOOK  
Staff writer

Union City Borough Council, during its March 13 meeting, approved 14 applications for round two of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority Renaissance Grant. The recommendations are based on properties that will help fight blight by making improvements.

The remaining balance of funds available is \$48,785, and the total amount requested on the applications is \$49,968. It was recommended to Council that all applications be approved and the last recipient, based on previous awards of the Renaissance Grant, receive a reduced amount of the total amount the applicant requested.

"We were able to issue money to all ap-

plicants for the amount requested, except one will be a reduced amount because there weren't enough funds," Borough Manager Cindy Wells said. "We will be reapplying for more funds during the next grant round."

The purpose of the Renaissance Grant Program is to remove housing blight, reverse deterioration, incentivize and spur private investment, make neighborhoods and communities more attractive, increase the market value of homes and improve the municipal tax base.

This second round of funding includes residential properties on North Main Street, Route 97 within the borough limits, South Main Street, East High Street, West High Street, South Street and First Avenue through Sixth Avenue.

◀ See Funds, P.2

# ECGRA

(Continued from front page)

Y staffers are looking forward to putting on the event, Cox said.

"What excites me about it is, it's a new event that's never been held in this area," she said. "Our excitement is the possibility of the economic impact it's going to have on the community. We are hoping that it will draw thousands of people. So, not only will it help the economy

downtown and in the local area, but it will also help to collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and build CorryFest back up."

Union City Pride was awarded \$1,273 for three different events, which member Cindy Wells said was the amount the group applied for. The events being supported by the grant funds are an annual Purse Bingo, French Creek Festival and a Festival of Trees.

Purse Bingo took place on Saturday, Wells said, so part of the funding will be used to offset the costs for that fundraiser.

Typically, the money raised by Purse Bingo is used to sponsor fireworks at the French Creek Festival, which is scheduled for July 7 and 8. There is also a color run, car cruise-in, music and games for kids.

The Festival of Trees takes place in early December and is also used as a fundraiser.

Union City Pride is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring pride in and celebrating the heritage of the Union City community.

Wells, who is also Union City Borough manager, applied for an additional special events grant for the po-

lice department's National Night Out, which happens on the first Tuesday of August. ECGRA awarded the borough \$230 to be put toward the community event, which includes free food and prizes for those who attend.

"Anything they do, there's no charge whatsoever," Wells said.

The Special Events Grants Program funds up to 5% of events that promote the region economically and culturally, drive tourism, attract talent to the region and help sustain Erie-area traditions.

# Funds

(Continued from front page)

The grant is made on a 1:1 matching basis, and the maximum grant award is \$5,000.

The following types of improvements are permitted: doors and windows visible from the street; roofs, soffits, gutters and down-

spouts; exterior lighting; porches, stairs and steps; painting, siding and shutters; and chimney and masonry repairs.

Grants will be awarded based upon the level of improvements and the vitality and significant impact the project would make to a neighborhood.

Applications must be approved by Union City Borough Council