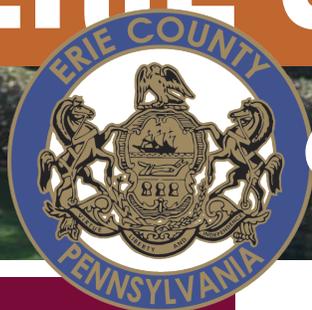


ERIE COUNTY



connection

Fall 2016

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LIBRARY GIVES HOPE TO LOCAL REFUGEES

Last year, about 400 people arrived in Erie with the intent of becoming Americans. They came mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Bhutan, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine. The International Institute of Erie, a field office for the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, was there to help these refugees transition into a new way of life.

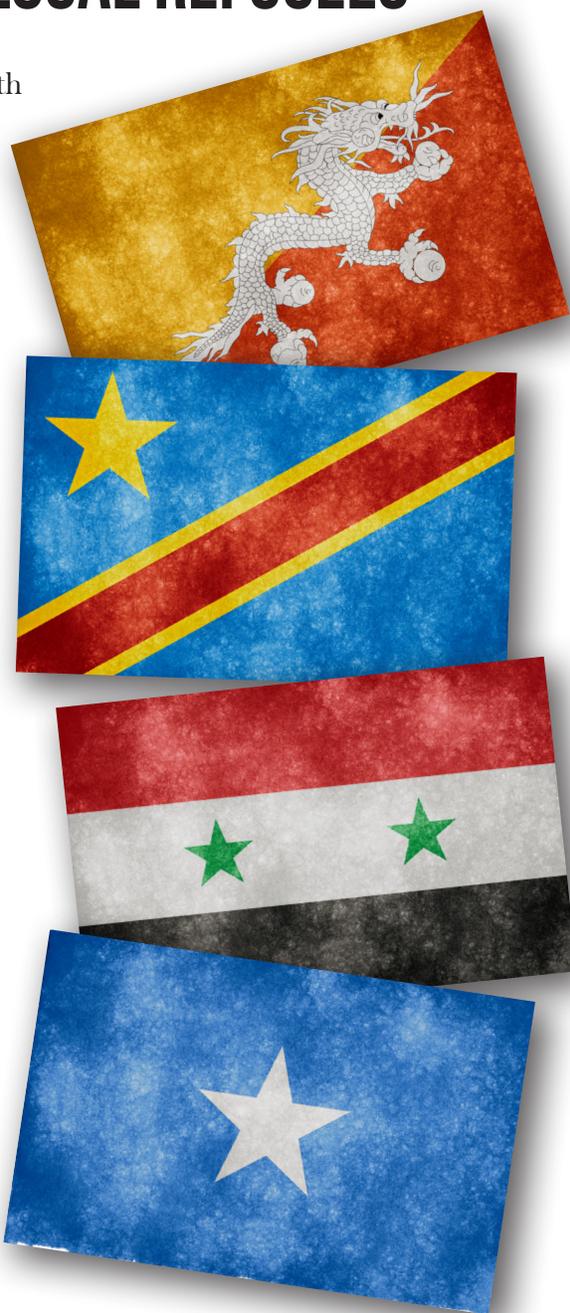
The Erie County Public Library was anxious to learn how it could best serve these new Erie County residents, and so a bond was formed between the two agencies.

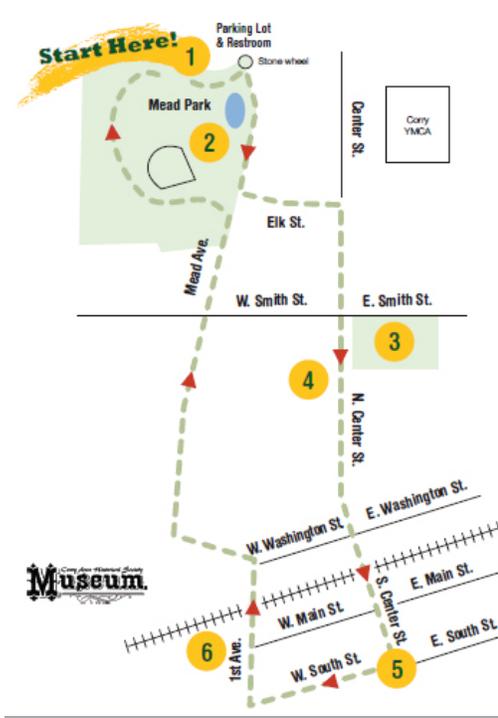
“Libraries are beacons of hope for some of the region’s most vulnerable populations, serving to build welcoming communities through civic and cultural integration,” said Chanel Cook, Erie County Public Library’s manager of outreach services. “We remain committed to creating opportunities and offering resources that will help our neighbors thrive.”

With encouragement from the International Institute of Erie, the library created a special collection of specific interest to non-native patrons. The International Collection houses foreign language books, ESL materials, and citizenship information. The International Institute has provided brochures, posters and other helpful items to round out the collection.

The International Institute has helped the library to gather worthwhile materials for the International Collection and has made recommendations for books, CDs and DVDs.

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ERIE COUNTY RESIDENTS SHOULD

take a hike

In 2015, the Erie County Department of Health, with the help of local businesses, set up the Let's Move Outside program, which highlighted 15 walking trails throughout Erie County - in Erie, Corry, Fairview Township, Girard, Harborcreek Township, Millcreek Township, North East, Union City, Edinboro, Waterford, McKean, Lawrence Park, Albion, Lowville and Greenfield Township. Although

the contest aspect of this project is over, these well-marked hiking trails remain for the enjoyment of everyone.

We encourage you to take advantage of the amazing trails here in Erie County. With its cooler weather and beautiful fall foliage, autumn is the perfect time for a hike. Here are our picks for the top five trails that you should explore before the snow falls.

Corry's Trail of Simple Pleasures:

Corry, one of just two cities in the county, is located at the junction of Erie, Warren and Crawford counties. Over the past 150 years, Corry has evolved from a railroad boomtown into a thriving community.

Trail Head: Mead Park, 974 Mead Ave.

Trail Hours: Open year-round, dawn to dusk.

Amenities: Restrooms, playground and benches at trail head. Additional benches are located halfway along the trail in Corry

City Park.

Parking: Available at the trail head.

Is Trail Handicap Accessible? Yes

Trail Length: 3 miles

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Contact: Corry Area Chamber of Commerce, 814-665-9925, Mondays-Fridays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Girard Trail: The first settlers to arrive in the "town on the hill" were merchants and farmers. When the Erie Extension Canal opened in 1844, Girard was a growing

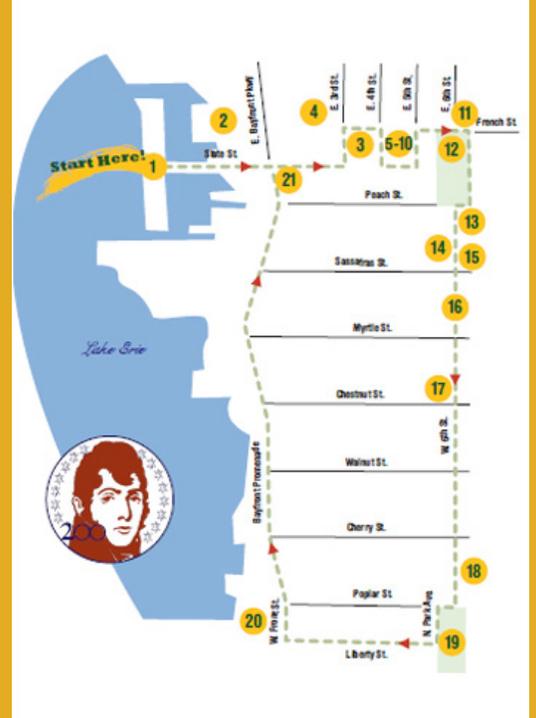
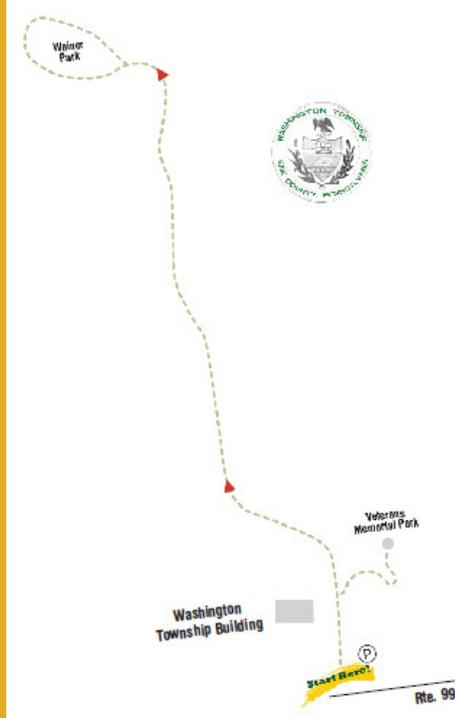
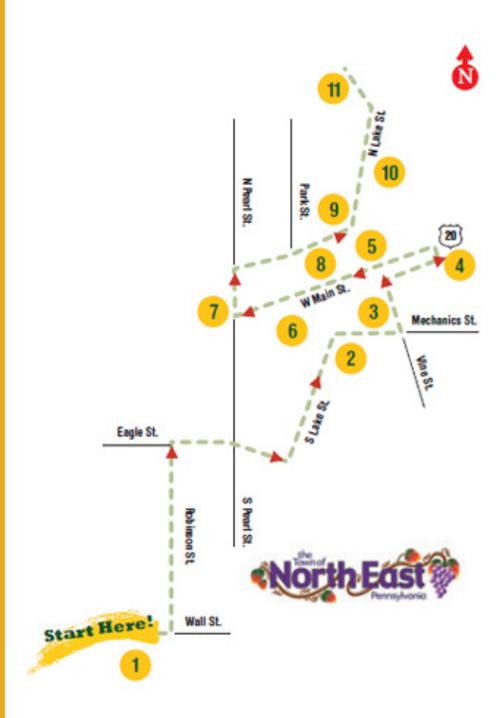
community. In 1846, it was incorporated as the Borough of Girard. The town received fame when showman Dan Rice started wintering his circus here in 1855.

Trail Head: First Presbyterian Church, 260 Main St. E.

Trail Hours: Open year-round, dawn to dusk.

Amenities: Public benches are located along the trail. Public restrooms are available at the Country Fair gas station.

Parking: Available at the First



Presbyterian Church, as well as at the Girard Borough Municipal Building, 34 Main St. W., and streetside.
 Is Trail Handicap Accessible? Yes
Trail Length: 3.5 miles
Difficulty: Easy
Contact: Girard Borough, 814-774-9683.

North East Heritage Path: The area in and around North East was used by the Eriez Indians long before settlers moved in and incorporated the community as one of Erie County's 16 original townships in 1802. With North East's unique microclimate, agriculture soon became an important part of the economy. Today, North East's agricultural heritage continues – the borough lies within the largest grape-growing region in the eastern United States. It is home to nine wineries, as well as other food-related industries, including Welch's.

Trail Name: North East Heritage Path
Trail Head: Lake Shore Railway Museum, 31 Wall St.
Trail Hours: Open year-round, dawn to dusk.
Amenities: No public bathrooms; bathrooms are available for museum visitors.

Parking: Available at the municipal lot, Lake Shore Railway Museum, Mercyhurst North East, and streetside.
 Is Trail Handicap Accessible? Yes
Trail Length: 1.5 miles
Trail Difficulty: Easy
Contact: North East Chamber of Commerce, 17 E. Main St., 814-725-4262.

Veterans Memorial Park Trail: Washington Township is a progressive community recognized for its natural beauty and "rural quality of life." The Township's extensive park system provides recreational green space access for all residents, and its planned commercial development corridors are home to businesses, services and light industries. A national shopping center is conveniently located at the I-79 interchange.

Trail Head: Veterans Memorial Park adjacent to the Washington Township Administration Building, 11800 Edinboro Road, Edinboro
Trail Hours: Open year round from dawn to dusk
Amenities: Port-a-johns (May through September), Picnic Pavilions, Basketball court, Horseshoe Pits
Parking: Parking lots are accessible from Route 99

Is Trail Handicap Accessible: The trail is a natural surface.
Trail Length: 1.5 mile
Trail Difficulty: Easy
Contact for Trail: Washington Township 814- 734-3117

Perry 200 Commemoration Trail: Before the War of 1812, Erie was a rustic frontier town. Wartime activities accelerated the town's growth and maturation, and it wasn't long before Erie transitioned into a bustling port city. Today, evidence of these early years exists in the buildings and sites of downtown.

Trail Name: Perry 200 Commemoration Trail
Trail Head: Dobbins Landing, Foot of State Street.
Trail Hours: Open year-round, dawn to dusk.
Amenities: Restrooms and concessions available at the base of the Bicentennial Tower (hours vary).
Parking: Parking available at trail head.
 Is Trail Handicap Accessible: Yes
Trail Length: 3.5 miles
Trail Difficulty: Moderate
Contact: Jefferson Educational Society, 814-459-8000.



NEW MINDSET



NEW RESULTS

ICE HOUSE TRAINING INVIGORATES COUNTY WORKERS

You may have heard some Erie County employees talking about Ice House training and wondered what that is. The Ice House Leadership Program is a training curriculum developed by Gary Schoeniger and Clifton Taulbert. The program is based on life lessons learned from Taulbert's Uncle Cleve, a black man who started his own business in the Mississippi Delta during the height of legal segregation.

Ice House is technically a training program for to encourage entrepreneurial thinking, but at its core it is really about changing mindsets. It consists of four main parts. First, identifying, communicating and pursuing new opportunities - a core skill for the 21st century workforce. Second, acquiring new knowledge, identifying helpful resources and validating new opportunities. Third, interacting with local leaders who can reinforce key concepts, present guest lectures and provide critical guidance. And fourth, identifying problem-solving opportunities in communities and industries of interest.

Not unlike many U.S. small to mid-size markets, Erie County has experienced significant decline. One

of the reasons for this is that we forget that our region was originally built by entrepreneurs. When you come to understand that almost all net new jobs are created by startups, it makes sense to shine a bright light on entrepreneurship as a key growth strategy for any community. This is why Ice House training can be so valuable to the employees and citizens of Erie County.

One important symptom of sustained decline has been that our community, collectively, has learned to live with a scarcity mentality. Instead of focusing on taking calculated risks and pro-actively investing in our future growth, we've learned how to "do more with less." It is this scarcity mentality and learned helplessness that the Ice House Leadership Program community deployment will change. This program instills confidence and problem-solving attitudes in everyone that experiences it. We will change to a community of forward thinking, positive people that are genuinely investing our time and talents to change our future for the better. It is up to us to take ownership of our destiny as a community and a county.

**Want to experience
Ice House for yourself?**

Erie County employees
Training of County employees
will continue. If you are a County
employee and are interested,
ask your supervisor to schedule
you in a training session.

Erie County residents
Gary Schoeniger, founder of
the Ice House program, is giving
a free community keynote on
September 13 from 5 - 7 p.m.
please register by emailing [info@
InnovationCollaborators.com](mailto:info@InnovationCollaborators.com).

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



MEET RYNE RUTKOWSKI

Q What is your job title, what does your job entail and why do you enjoy it?

A My job title is Quality Assurance Coordinator for the Department of Public Safety. I review 9-1-1 calls and radio dispatches to make sure our employees are following procedures and protocols. I also do some records management and work with the solicitor to provide documents for court. I like it because I know what we all do here at Public Safety has an impact on so many lives in the community on a daily basis.

Q If you had to pick another job to start doing tomorrow, what would it be?

A If I had to pick a new job it would be a career firefighter. I love everything about the job and I already do it as a volunteer, so why not get paid?

Q What do you do in your free time to relax and recharge?

A I'm not sure it fits everyone's definition of relaxing or recharging, but when I'm not busy at work or the fire station I spend as much time with my 1-year-old son as I can. Watching him discover the world around him is easily the best part of my day.

Q What is your biggest pet peeve?

A That's a tossup between leaving cabinet doors open and using the shoulder of the road inappropriately.

Q If you won the lottery, what would be the first thing you would spend the money on?

A If I won the lottery I'd pay off debts for myself and my family first. Life is better without bills!

Q What is your favorite type of music? Genre, style, decade?

A I really do enjoy all types of music – I don't think I could pin it down to one. I was a band geek all the way through college so I've grown to appreciate everything. Just depends on my mood.

Q What are three things left on your bucket list?

A Vacation to one of the National Parks out west and not drive on any interstates to get there. Build a hot rod. Fly a helicopter.

Q What is the last movie you saw, and what did you think of it?

A My wife and I have this thing where we try to find the worst D-List movies to watch at home. Even if I could remember the name of the last one, it was so lame its name wouldn't be worth mentioning. Okay, it was Frozen (for the third time) and it's actually not that bad.

Q If you could eat only one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

A My mom's chicken fried steak, my wife's grandma's noodles as a side, and apple pie for desert.

ERIE COUNTY WELCOMES THAD PLASCZYNSKI DIRECTOR OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

Thad Plasczynski - a Navy veteran, registered nurse and experienced manager - has joined the county as the first Director of Veterans Affairs.

Thad was born and raised in Lower Burrell, near downtown Pittsburgh. After graduating from high school in 1976, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served at the Bethesda National Naval Medical Center in Maryland. He was honorably discharged from the Navy in 1982.

Thad went on to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees in polymer science from Pennsylvania State University. This led to a job as a technical service representative at Lord Corp., where he stayed for 15 years. He moved on to Rohm and Haas, a manufacturer of specialty chemicals, where he stayed for five years.

Thad then decided to go back to school to pursue a degree in nursing and became a registered nurse, licensed in Pennsylvania. He worked as an operating room and

recovery room nurse at LECOM Health.

Thad is excited about his new role overseeing the Department of Veterans Affairs and looks forward to positively impacting the quality of life for our local veterans and their loved ones.

"As a nurse, I was able to positively influence a very limited number of patients in the operating and recovery rooms each day. But there is virtually no limit to how many veterans can be helped by the Veterans Affairs office on any given day," Thad said. "There is no better feeling than seeing a veteran smile when you assist them."

Thad plans to locate and organize available veteran resources, so that when veterans or their loved ones visit the Veterans Affairs office, they can easily access all the benefits that they so richly deserve.

Thad and his wife Laura have lived in Erie since 1989. They have a son, Hunter, who is 21. Thad said he loves that Erie experiences



all four seasons and how living near Lake Erie provides endless recreation year round.

Please stop into the Veterans Affairs office on the first floor of the Erie County Courthouse to welcome Thad.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Together the two agencies are able to supply precisely what is needed to help non-native Erie County residents reach their goals of employment, language and citizenship.

The Erie County Public Library presents monthly tours of the library for clients of the International Institute, and for other local agencies that assist immigrants. Participants have the opportunity to sign up for library cards and learn about the ways the library can educate and entertain. The new cardholders are most enthusiastic about the library's Internet Lab and

the DVD collection, in addition to the International Collection.

"For many of the refugees that come to Erie, the library is one of their first stops, and therefore one of their first impressions of the United States. Our beautiful waterfront makes a good impression, as does the atmosphere of the library," said Marcy Hall, library assistant at Blasco Library. "Many of the refugees have never been to a library before, and if they have, it's not been a free library. They are always amazed at all that is available, from children's programs to citizenship materials to English learning resources. Sometimes we forget how fortunate we are in

our country to have access to so much information for free. It's one of those things you may not think of until you see what others don't have."

The Erie County Public Library is happy to be able to assist these new Erie County residents and grateful for the support of the International Institute of Erie.





Finance Department honorees: Sue Ellen Pasquale, Jen Ertle and Tracey Fugagli



Corrections Department honorees: George Funkhouser, Faith Houghton, Rich Houghton, Mitch Carman, Ron Bryant, Mike Holman and Warden Kevin Sutter



Health Department honorees: Ron Salisbury, Chelsey Erickson, Karen Tobin and Director Melissa Lyon



Office of Children and Youth honorees: Darlene Krol, Ashley Csuhata, Rebecca Viszneki and Director Lana Reese

Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper recognized employees for their contributions at the annual Employee Recognition Ceremony on Aug. 2.

In total, 133 county employees celebrating career milestones were recognized for their public service. The honorees represented 2,157 total years of service to the county.

“I have often spoken of my mission to move Erie County forward,” Dahlkemper said in presenting the awards. “Each one of you is vital to that mission, as you have shown through your dedication to your community, your neighbors and our entire region.”

Also at the ceremony, Dahlkemper recognized several county departments for their recent achievements: the Finance Department, which received a Certificate for Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association; the Erie County Prison, which received 100 percent compliance during its 2016 inspection by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections; the Office of Children and Youth, which was recognized for its Erie County Collaborative Independent Living Program by the National Association of Counties; and the Department of Health, which was recognized for its Pumped for Work program and its Lake Erie Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring and Response Strategies program by the National Association of Counties.

The county executive said she was proud to have the opportunity to honor so many employees for their achievements and service.

“Your hard work helps us do more every day for the citizens of Erie County,” she told employees.



2016 County Picnic was huge hit

