

COMMUNITY ISSUES REPORT
10:00 PM (Monday- Sunday) 35 minutes
“Fox 66 News at 10”
1st Quarter 2007

January 2007

January 2

County Smoking Ban: Signed into law by Erie County Executive Mark DiVecchio. It ends months of debate by County Council. It now faces legal challenges to be filed by local tavern owners. :45

January 4

Parochial School Closes: Low enrollment has claimed another inner city Erie parochial school. This time Sacred Heart. The news comes after years of speculation and following the shutdown of other Catholic grade schools with low enrollments. :55

January 17, 2007

MLK March in Erie: More than 500 people braved inclement weather to march through downtown Erie in remembrance of civil rights leader Dr Martin Luther King Jr. 1:00

January 18

GAF to Close: Another Erie industry is closing it's doors. More than 150 workers will lose their jobs when the shingle maker on Erie's bayfront closes the doors in March after more than 100 years in Erie. :45

January 25

50 car pile-up on I-90: White-out conditions on I-90 leads to a 50 car pile-up. One person was killed and many others injured. The chain reaction crash led to the interstate being closed in both directions for many hours. It took more than 12 hours to clear the wreckage from the interstate. 3:45

January 9-30

Millcreek Teacher Contract Talks: Teachers negotiated with the Millcreek School Board all month long. At one point they threatened to go on strike if an agreement wasn't reached by the end of the month. But in the 11th hour, both sides reached a tentative agreement, averting a strike. :55

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2nd Quarter 2007

April 2007

April 3- 21 There is an economic issue of a sharp increase of natural gas prices. With winter approaching, the spike in natural gas prices was bad news. We examined the reasons for the increase, whether the increases were justified, and how to reduce gas use. 2:00

April 23- There is a murder outside an Erie bar that leaves one person dead and another injured. It's another killing in what's becoming a deadly summer on city streets. It's the second shooting death outside Llamas Bar on Erie's eastside. Area residents are concerned, and want this magnet for crime shut down. It's a community concern. Later this month, there's a peace vigil at the scene of the crime to remember the victim. 1:35

April 27 – National Fuel Gas announces a huge rate increase in time for the winter heating season. It's estimated the increase could hike heating bills this winter 30 to 50-percent. We talked to NFG about why such a steep increase, and talked to consumers to get their reaction, and to learn how they will pay their bills to stay warm this winter. 1:25

May 2007

May 8 – Pro-Life demonstrators out in force in protest of the opening of an abortion clinic. The clinic was fought for years before finally opening. Examined both sides of the abortion issue, along with security requirements for the new clinic, and protest tactics for those opposed to it. 1:55

May 6-12 - A local judge hands down a decision, ruling that county government does not have ultimate authority in the distribution of millions of dollars in revenue generated by casino gaming. That decision rests with the host municipality and those that adjoin that municipality. Our coverage includes the judge's ruling, what it means, what county officials are going to do, and the decision making process. 2:05

May 20 – Deciding whether tax dollars pay to move a local business off the bayfront to enhance future bayfront development. Local company maintains a production plant on Erie's bayfront. Develop

want it gone. The state may give the company money to move. We talked with local leaders who support the idea, and those who say it's a waste of millions of taxpayer dollars. 2:15

May 29 – It's announced that the radio wave therapy for cancer invented by John Kanzius of Erie may be receiving federal funding. That's announced by Congressman Phil English. Later in the month, Kanzius receives a visit by golf legend Arnold Palmer, who is considering raising money for the Kanzius research. CBS's 60 minutes is here when Palmer and Kanzius meet. 2:35

June 2007

June 2-4-7-8-10-11 The State of Pennsylvania new smoking ban went into effect September 11. Leading up to that day, we did multiple stories on how the community was preparing for it. How smokers were getting ready, how restaurants and bars were preparing, and what it was going to mean for establishments like our local casino Presque Isle Downs. We also talked to health officials about the benefits of the smoking ban, and what help is available for those looking to quit. The subject pretty much dominated our broadcasts the first half of the month. 1:55

June 16 The rising cost of local colleges, and mounting level of debt students take on themselves. We aired several reports that examined the sharp tuition increases of local colleges. Talked to students who were graduating thousands of dollars in debt, and examined the increasing role of grants in higher education funding. 1:35

June 29 We aired an overview of the campaign to keep West Nile out of Erie. Reviewed the placement strategy of poison to kill possibly infected birds, and plans to reduce the mosquito population. Gave advice to the public and how to handle dead birds, and how to reduce exposure to West Nile. 1:50

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July 2007

July 3 – The body of WWII veteran Richard Sargent was returned to his family in his hometown today for burial on July 4th. Sargent was killed in a plane crash during WWII and was only recently discovered and identified. The community of Girard turned out to welcome home this fallen hero. Scores of members of the motorcycle group the Patriot Guard escorted the casket from Cleveland to Girard. We featured coverage of Sargent’s return and his funeral. 2:00

July 9-18th – This month was dominated by coverage of the nearly 4 year old murder case of Erie pizza deliveryman Brian Wells. Called the Erie Pizza Bomber case, the FBI and federal authorities unsealed the indictments in the case against Marjorie Diehl Armstrong and Kenneth Barnes. The US Attorney held a news conference to detail the indictments and how they believe the crime occurred. The days leading up to the announcement, and the days following, were filled with coverage about a crime that captured international attention. The pizza bomber case dominated every newscast during this period. :45

July 20 & 23 – We featured coverage of Erie’s Stryker Brigade in training at Fort Indiantown Gap. Pa. The local Army National Guard unit is training there. We sent a news crew, at the invitation of the Guard, to document the training and what our local soldiers are experiencing. A new Stryker Brigade Guard unit is now under construction in nearby Cambridge Springs. 1:45

July 26-27 – Three local teenagers took a swim in a rain swollen creek and caused a major rescue efforts, when two of the three teens were swept into an underground tunnel that carries the creek beneath the streets of downtown Erie. Our coverage featured the daring rescue of the boys from the Millcreek tube, and what it took to find and retrieve the victims from underground. Subsequent coverage included an interview with the victims and their rescuers about the experience, and what can be done, if anything, to keep that from happening in the future. 2:15

August 2007

August 1- Erie Bayfront Convention Center opens for business. It has been 10 years and 90 million dollars in the making. Today the BCC holds its first public event. We had live shots in every show today and field anchored our 5-630 show, featuring the BCC our entire first block each half hour. Our coverage continued at 10 and 11pm. 3:45

August 2-Following the collapse of a bridge in Minneapolis, there is concern about the safety of our bridges in Pennsylvania. Our local coverage looked at the status of our bridges, what PennDot plans to do in light of the bridge incident in Minneapolis, and what our local lawmakers think about the condition of area bridges. 2:55

Augst 4 -6 – Three swimmers attempt to conquer Lake Erie. A Canadian swimmer leaves the shores of Presque Isle headed for Long Point, while two Erie swimmers attempt to swim from Canada to Erie. The Canadian makes it. One Erie swimmer fails, and the other aborts her attempt, only to try the next day. Sonya Pyle succeeds in her quest and breaks the previous record for a female swim across Lake Erie. We accompanied Pyle across the lake on her swim and had exclusive coverage in all of our shows during the event. 3:20

August 12-16 - A Mercyhurst college student gives birth to a baby in her college apartment and then suffocates the newborn. She disposes of the infant in a plastic bag and never calls authorities for help. She is eventually charged with homicide. Our coverage was the first to report the incident, and covered all aspects of the investigation, community reaction, what could have happened, and what help is available for students facing pregnancy alone. This event dominated our coverage most of the week. 2:45

August 15-18 Celebrate Erie takes place in downtown Erie. It is the largest summer festival in the city. We featured live reports from Perry Square beginning Thursday with the Taste of Erie, and continued our coverage throughout the week. Stories appeared in most of our shows starting 8/15. 1:55

August 27 - A tire to energy plant is proposed for Erie. Many people are opposed to it. There are huge environmental concerns and many unanswered questions. Many public meetings are being held to discuss the issues, but those proposing the plant are not participating. Todays coverage was at one of those public meetings. 2:15

August 28 – The city's LERTA tax forgiveness program is about to expire. City and school district officials are looking at whether to renew it, change it, or not. Currently the program offers new construction free of taxes for ten years anywhere in the city, residential or commercial. Todays coverage was of a study meeting with city council and the school board. :45

September 2007

September 1 – The new thoroughbred horse racing track opens at Presque Isle Downs and Casino. The entertainment and gambling complex is a new major employer in the area. The track opening was much anticipated. Our coverage included the fan reaction to the new track and an assessment of what it means to the community.

September 2-3 We broadcast the Jerry Lewis Labor Day telethon for MDA.

September 5 – The Erie Seawolves baseball team enters the play-offs. Our coverage includes the fan excitement about the team, and an assessment of what it means to Erie to have a team in the playoffs.

September 10 – The 329th US Army Medical Unit returns home from Iraq after a one year deployment. Our coverage includes plans for the return, interviews with family members, coverage of their joyful return, and interviews with returning soldiers.

September 16 – Another good news story. The 298th Army Reserve Unit from Franklin, Pa. returns home from Iraq. Our coverage includes their return to Franklin, interviews with town residents, family members, and the soldiers.

September 18 – 19 – Mercyhurst college student Terri Rhodes is charged with homicide in connection with the death of her baby, born in a college apartment. Our continuing coverage of this bizarre case involves the charges against her, and why it took so long for prosecutors to arrest her, and why a judge would grant a murder suspect bond to go free pending her trial.

September 21 – An Erie animal enforcement officer is attack by a pair of pit bull dogs while answering a call at an Erie home. Police who were with the officer, shot and killed the dogs. The animal enforcement officer received only minor injuries. The story raises questions about why the enforcement officer is not armed, and should he be?

September 22 – The Canadian dollar is stronger and is now equal in value to the US dollar. That means Canadian shoppers coming to Erie get more for their money. We talked to local retailers about the change in the currency rate of exchange and what it means for them, and it will stimulate more cross border business.

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October 2007

October 1-2-4 Fatal Hit and Run Accident

A man hits a couple walking across a busy street, killing the man and critically injuring the woman. He intoxicated driver flees the scene. He is caught several days later. Our coverage is of the accident, the search for the suspect, his arrest, his arraignment and the long road to recovery for the woman who survived the mishap. 1:15

October 5 Strike by OCY Workers

The county employees of the Office of Children and Youth go on strike after contract talks fail to produce a settlement. After several days, a local judge orders some back to work. Negotiations continue and ultimately reach a settlement. No one knows the impact the strike had on the children served by OCY. :55

October 6 Anonymous Donors gives Erie \$100 Million

Someone anonymously donates \$100 Million to the Erie Community Foundation. It is to be distributed among several dozen local organizations. Groups that service children, seniors, the poor, and others will receive up to \$2 million dollars. It's more money than they have ever collected. It will change Erie. There's tremendous opportunity. It becomes a national story. Media outlets come to town wondering who the mystery donor is. While many know, no one will say. It was one of the top 10 stories of 2007. 1:35

October 22 MRSA in Local Schools

Several people around the country, suffering from MRSA, have died. Now, several local schools report cases of MRSA. Parents and students are concerned. Every school district disseminates the news to parents differently. Some districts are very open, some are not. This is a continuing series of stories as more and more schools report MRSA in the classroom. :55

October 28 Fuhrmann's Cider Mill Destroyed by Fire

Erie's historic cider mill is destroyed by a ravaging blaze. It appears to be accidental. But the fire happens right in the midst of the autumn apple harvest. People are shocked and saddened that the cider mill is close. Some organize fund raisers to help rebuild. There is such a ground swell of support that it concerns the mill's owners and they ask everyone to slow down. This was a series of stories over several weeks, starting with the fire. 2:15

November 2007

November 6 – Election Day

Our election coverage began days before the election with profiles on various races and political analysis of the candidates. We covered the election process throughout the day and then had election results throughout the evening. Our coverage continued the next day with a wrap up on the races, and the winners and losers. 1:55

November 9 – Airport/Golf Course Agreement

The Erie Airport Authority, Millcreek Township, and the City of Erie work an agreement to make it possible for the airport to expand it's runway. The project needs to acquire several holes of the Millcreek Golf Course. In exchange for that property, Millcreek will take over the Erie Golf Course, which the city had wanted to sell. Millcreek will acquire several million dollars in debt. It appears to be a win win that took a long time to settle. 1:45

November 14 – Ravine Park Up May be Sold

The Erie Port Authority owns property along Erie's bayfront that is in an upscale residential neighborhood. It's heavily wooded and is designated as a park. It's never been developed as such, but the neighbors have become accustomed to using it, even encroaching on parts of it. Now the Authority wants to sell it to put it back on the tax roles. Neighbors who don't border the park don't like that idea. There is controversy and City Council has stalled the sale. :55

November 20 – Families Evacuated from Homes Due to Mysterious Gas Leak

The holidays are hearing, people are getting ready for Christmas, and then all of a sudden an entire neighborhood is seeped in a mysterious layer of natural gas. It's bubbling from a nearby creek and is at explosive levels in the basements of some homes. State officials evacuate the neighborhood. We broke the story and lead the coverage until the families were allowed back in their homes 32 days later. It took a long time to determine where the gas was coming from and to plug a leaky gas well nearby. A church owns the leaky well, and the neighbors have hired an attorney to represent them. 1:15

November 25 30 – Convicted Killer Escapes from Prison

For the first time in history, an inmate has escaped from SCI Albion. It's a convicted killer, who hid in a garbage can being removed from the prison. A manhunt is launched and the small Albion community is in fear. There were many problems at the prison leading up to the escape, and in how the prison handled the aftermath. This was a major story for the remainder of the month, and became one of our top 10 stories of 2007. 2:55

December 2007

December 6 – Two Firefighters Arrested for String of Arson Fires

There was a string of arson fires in the Saegertown area of Crawford County going back as far as summer. All of the fires were in homes that were either vacant or otherwise unoccupied. Investigators today arrested two local volunteer firemen, teenagers, for setting the fires. They were charged with arson and face 600 years in prison. 2:15

December 11 – The Erie Zoo Gets a New Polar Bear

The Erie Zoo received a new polar bear. It replaces a polar bear that died last year. The Erie Zoo is one of the regions most popular attractions, so this was the lead story everywhere and on all of our newscasts. :55

December 12 – Woman Sentenced for Using her Baby as a Weapon

A woman, Chytoria Graham, who was fighting with her boyfriend, used her baby as a weapon, swinging the child like a baseball bat. She was sentenced today to five years in prison. It was a story that made national news. :45

December 20 - Report Blames Prison Escape on Complacency

While the manhunt continues for an escaped killer, a new report reveals that complacency among prison staff led to the inmates escape. Many prison employees failed to follow procedures. The prison warden was relieved of her duties, a new warden was brought in, and more disciplinary action is expected. Meanwhile, there is still no word on where escaped convict Malcolm Kysor could be. 1:55