

# ANNUAL REPORT



# BOARD & STAFF DIRECTORY

#### CHAMBER TEAM MAIN NUMBER 814-454-7191

| DEL BIRCH           | Business Outreach Specialist         |          | dbirch@eriepa.com      |  |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|----------|------------------------|--|
| GABRIELLE CATRABONE | Business Development Manager         | Ext. 152 | gcatrabone@eriepa.com  |  |
| JORDAN FULLER       | Director, Entrepreneurship           | Ext. 130 | jfuller@eriepa.com     |  |
| COLLEEN GROSS       | Director, Events and Programs        | Ext. 146 | cgross@eriepa.com      |  |
| JAMES GRUNKE        | President and CEO                    | Ext. 134 | jgrunke@eriepa.com     |  |
| CURTIS JONES        | Director, Government Affairs         | Ext. 148 | cjones@eriepa.com      |  |
| LESLEY RIDGE ALLEN  | Vice President, Business Engagement  | Ext. 141 | lridgeallen@eriepa.com |  |
| JACOB ROUCH         | Vice President, Economic Development | Ext. 135 | jrouch@eriepa.com      |  |

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

| <b>HAROLD (H.) BENDER</b> President                                                 | <b>BRENDA BENNETT</b> President                                            | <b>KATIE BOOL SHAFER</b> Manager, Community Relations                                 | AMANDA BROWN SISSEM<br>Edinboro Campus                                   | JAMES CARLUCCI<br>President                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
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| CHRISTINA MARSH Chief Community & Economic Development Officer Erie Insurance Group | FRANCES MCCORMICK Attorney Knox Law Firm                                   | BRIAN POLITO Superintendent School District of the City of Erie                       | JAMES RUTKOWSKI General Manager Industrial Sales & Manufacturing Company | NICK SCOTT JR. Vice President Scott Enterprises                |
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Marguette Savings Bank

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#### Dear Members:

As I reflect on the last few years and my time at the chamber, fostering connections between community and industry has undoubtedly been one of the driving forces behind our collective success.

Starting with the unveiling of *Erie Forward*, we launched into the next five years with a deep commitment to seeking practical yet transformative opportunities to lead Erie's economic evolution. The momentum culminated at Erie Homecoming 2019 with the first Opportunity Zone Prospectus, demonstrating our dedication to raising the bar of what's possible in our community.

The unprecedented challenges of 2020 did not deter us; instead, we rose to the occasion with resilience. We conducted the Implan Analysis of Wabtec, testified in Harrisburg for Erie County Community College, and responded swiftly with Erie ReStart amid the COVID shutdown. The absorption of the Erie Innovation District, the Boost Phase I & II initiatives, and the development of OZ Prospectus 2.0 which garnered recognition with awards from Forbes Magazine, the Site Selectors Guild, and the Erie Times News.

In 2021, we continued to evolve by absorbing Erie Regional Manufacturing Partnership, engaging Strategy Solutions for a strategic plan and board training, setting the stage for sustained growth and impact. In 2022, we saw further investment in our workforce efforts with the hiring of a Workforce Development Specialist through the ARP County Grant and the successful execution of the Manufacturers Job Fair. Initiatives like FIRE and ICE – EDA Build to Scale exemplified our commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and economic development.

Over the last 365 days, we continued to advance our mission with events like the Health Car Job Fair, the Civics Bee, and Business Day in Harrisburg. We've continued bringing industry and community together as demonstrated with the collaboration between Erie County Community College and the Erie Regional Manufacturing Partnership, reinforcing the skilled labor and manufacturing talent pipeline. Equally impactful was our role in facilitating the partnership between Millcreek Township and Altair for the Presque Isle Gateway project, showcasing our dedication to fostering strategic alliances that enhance our region's infrastructure.

As we move forward, fueled by the successes of our past and the opportunities on the horizon, I extend my deepest gratitude to each of you for your unwavering support and commitment to the chamber's vision. Together, we have laid the foundation for a thriving and dynamic community, and I am excited about the limitless possibilities that are ahead.

Sincerely,

James Grunke

President and CEO

Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership

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By breathing new life into our visual representation, we aim to convey our commitment to progress, collaboration, and the betterment of Erie.

The revitalization of our logo goes beyond a mere update; it signifies a transformative brand refresh that unifies the diverse sectors of the Chamber into one cohesive and powerful identity.

BUSINESS
+ BREWSKIS

THURSDAY
6.22.23

5:30-8 PM | ERIE ART MUSEUM

The refreshed brand was the catalyst to enhancing our online presence. Our website is a natural extension of our team, serving as a resource hub for regional businesses and those looking to invest in Erie.

The new website also includes more functionality for members to connect and collaborate through the member forum, online resource library, and member-to-member activities. It will also serve as a business news repository to celebrate economic growth and vitality throughout the region.



# YEAR IN REVIEW

#### **EVENT DETAILS**









#### **SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS (% GROWTH)**



#### **MEMBERSHIP**

79
New Members

560+
Members Representing over
46,500
employees

#### **MEMBER REFERRALS**

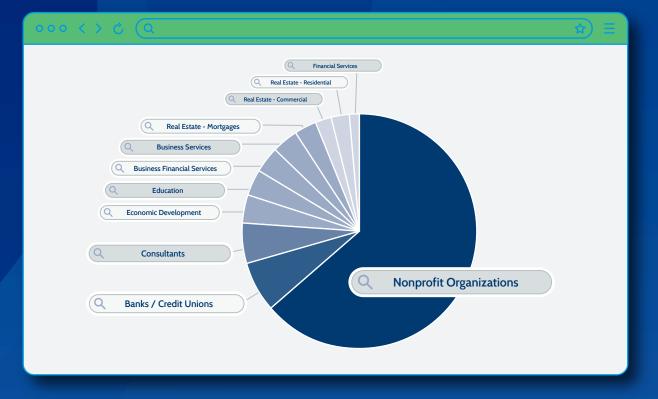


Referrals From Website Directory in 2023 **667**Average Annual Referral
Per Member

Over
4,700

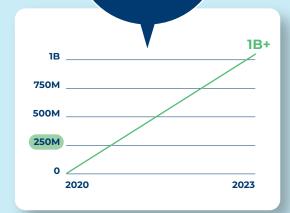
Referrals Per Day From
Website Directory

#### **MOST SEARCHED CATEGORIES**



#### PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

Initiate at least \$250 M in new or expanded



capital investment.

Since the start of Erie Forward in January 2020, there has been over \$1B of new capital investment in the community and additional \$500-\$700M planned.

ERCGP's activity has been varied in these investments but has predominantly involved connecting investors with key partners that has helped to facilitate an unprecedented volume and speed of investments in the Erie region.

Visit
250
Erie region businesses.

The formally documented visits have averaged over 220 per year but the actual total of visits by ERCGP is in excess of 400 annually.

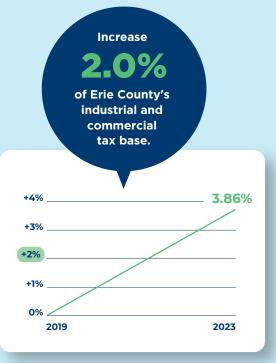
ERCGP has recognized that its system for all employees to capture visits with businesses must be formally documented and is developing a protocol for how to seamlessly capture these visits in our two main CRMs - Executive Pulse and Atlas.



This is the one goal where progress has been mixed. Overall, the regional economy is down nearly 1500 jobs, but the impact per targeted sector is mixed:



It is important to note that these numbers are based on 2019-2023. Since the end of 2020, the regional economy has 2,062 more people employed, demonstrating a very strong recovery from the impact of the pandemic. We are presently pursuing end-of-year numbers for 2020 to get a more accurate picture of the jobs performance from the center of the pandemic until now.



From 2019-2023 the industrial tax base is +1.7% and commercial is up 4.15% with a total blended increase of +3.86%.



EDDC, IRG, Data Inventions, White Thorn Digital, and Renaissance Center all have received OZ investments and ERCGP.

Facilitate the creation of

new spec sites and buildings to go to market.

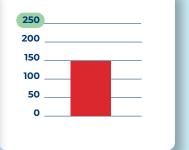


ERCGP has been an active player (Jake Rouch serves as Chair) in the work of the Enterprise Development Center of Erie County (EDCEC) - the land and building development arm of the Erie County Redevelopment Authority. EDCEC has built a warehouse for Berry Plastics to enable it retain and expand its workforce in Erie, acquired and is developing EMI, acquired and remediated Quinn T, and continues to search for land to build an 100+ acre industrial park for business expansion and attraction.

Assist and retain at least 5 at-risk businesses and save up to

jobs annually.





During the pandemic, the ERCGP did outreach to over 2,000 businesses to provide information, connections, and assistance on a wide array of fronts (grants, PPE, low interest loans, federal and state regulatory assistance, SBA loans, etc.).

In 2023, ERCGP served as the primary convening agent that worked with Snap-Tite Hose as it faced closer and the loss of \$150,000. Snap-Tite was able to stay afloat and find a new buyer who will not only retain the 150 jobs but will increase employment by 80-100 by June of 2024.

6 partiernic until now.

# Workforce Development & Talent Attraction



#### **Ownership Change Provides Fuel for Growth**

**About The Company:** Located in Erie County – with plants in Union City and Fairview – and a facility in Wexford Ireland – Snap-tite Hose produces the highest quality hose for firefighting, industrial, and agricultural use, as well as other uses.

**Challenge/Opportunity:** Though the company had \$15M in back orders, the company was facing working capital challenges that threatened the continued operations of this long-standing Erie County company with 150 employees.

How ERCGP Helped: The Erie Regional Chamber learned of the company's challenges during a business outreach visit in this year and immediately assembled several partners within the economic development ecosystem to identify ways to address the issue such as acquisition of real estate, factoring receivables, mezzanine/short-term financing, and working capital options. The discussion helped to delay the business closure by their private equity and prompted additional investment to keep the business afloat while it searched for a buyer. In June 2023, Snap-tite announced the temporary lay-off of 64 individuals. Recognizing that temporary layoffs could become permanent, the Chamber worked with ERMP members to identify over 70 open positions that these individuals could apply for should their status change.

**The Outcome:** A new owner was found (China parent company working through a Texas subsidiary) to acquire Snap-tite and inject the necessary working capital to enable them to grow. All laid off employees have been brought back and the company is now seeking to hire an additional 80 full-time employees by June 2024.

Your Investment at Work: Your investment in the Chamber helps companies - large and small - navigate the workforce development system for training funds, people and training programs. The Chamber's partnership with Werkberry provides an opportunity to affordably advertise for talent, and our strong partnership with NW PA Job Connect keeps the Chamber tuned into the people and programs at the front line of job placement and funding opportunities to train new hires and skill upgrade existing employees.

# **Existing Industry Support & Entrepreneurship**



# Consistent, Strong Growth of Family Business Prompts Facility Expansion

**About the Company:** A family-owned metal fabrication company in Summit Township, Metalheads was established in 2016 by Ray Stempka, who started as a welding engineer and then retired as a general manager at the former GE Ground Transportation Division. Initially, the business focused on stainless steel welding and then expanded to metal art and sculptures created by son Adam Stempka.

**Challenge/Opportunity:** In addition to working for national firms like Cracker Barrel, Metalheads reputation grew dramatically when the firm introduced a line of metal American flags in a distressed motif that were well-received nationally. Sold online in various sizes including 2' by 4', each flag is handmade, painted, airbrushed, and signed by Adam Stempka. This success led Adam to create custom metal sculptures secured by commission including uniquely sculpted musical instruments and the majestic metal Nittany Lion that graces the campus of Penn State Behrend. It also spurred the formation of a new firm, Stempka Designs to showcase his custom metal sculptures.

**How ERCGP Helped:** The Erie Regional Chamber first conducted an outreach visit with Ray and Adam Stempka in January 2023 following significant media coverage for the unique guitar sculpture fabricated for country artist Luke Bryan in Nashville TN. The family recognized that they were outgrowing their original workshop as sales and commissions grew. Fortunately, they had enough acreage and approvals from Summit Township to erect a new building. A referral was made to our partner, the Erie County Redevelopment Authority, for financing.

**The Outcome:** The ECRDA worked with the Stempka's to finalize a nearly \$50,000 low interest loan for construction of a 32 ' by 60' workshop adjacent to their original building. When completed in July 2024, Metalheads and Stempka Design will be able to accommodate the continued growth of their original line of metal flags as well as the large-scale sculptures designed and fabricated by Adam from commissions awarded by private and commercial entities.

**Your Investment at Work:** Your investment in the Chamber supports an aggressive business retention and expansion program targeting established manufacturers, technology and logistics firms and Erie County's growing number of startups by entrepreneurs across all socio-economic segments. The Chambers retention program works closely with over 30 partners including a growing number of entrepreneurial mentoring programs that help aspiring entrepreneurs realize their business ownership dreams.

Case Study: Erie Air Service Challenge

# **Quality of Place, Advocacy & Sustainability**

#### **Fly Erie Fund**

Creating a Community Consortium for Airline Service Enhancement

**About The Company:** The Erie Regional Airport Authority (ERAA) manages commercial air service at Erie International Airport – Tom Ridge Field (ERI).

**Challenge/Opportunity:** In June 2023, United Airlines ended its twice daily service to Chicago – leaving Erie with only twice air service to one hub airport, Charlotte (NC) Douglas International Airport. Erie, like over 300 airports nationwide, saw air service reduced as legacy airlines are seeking to fly fewer routes on bigger planes to maximize profit and manage a shortage of pilots.

**How ERCGP Helped:** The Chamber immediately started working with the ERAA executive team and board to better understand all the variables at play that led to the loss of United and what steps could be taken to help attract additional air service. The Chamber conducted research on similar efforts around the country, interviewed airport consultants, talked directly to the three legacy carriers (United, American, and Delta), and worked with ERAA staff to assemble financial projections to better understand what would be needed to make ERI more competitive in the short and long term.

**The Outcome:** The Chamber created the case for and structure of the Fly Erie Fund – a three-year, \$1.5 million fund to help ERAA secure additional airlines, seats, routes, and destinations. The Fly Erie Fund will support airlines directly and not ERAA via CPE (Cost Per Enplanement) subsidies, revenue guarantees, and/ or marketing. The Fly Erie Fund will work alongside ERAA in its outreach to both legacy carriers and ultra low-cost carriers to secure more service to ERI. The Fly Erie Fund is a proactive effort that recognizes that air service is not a luxury, it is a vital piece of infrastructure for business, education, workforce attraction, and quality of place. Furthermore, air service is not an entitlement – the Erie region must unify to compete and approach future air service in a new, collaborative manner to be successful.

**Your Investment at Work:** Your investment in the Chamber helps enables the business community to channel their voice and actions collectively when facing a challenge to our quality of life and business. Equally, your investment in the Chamber helps support a vessel to introduce new concepts and assets to the region's leadership for consideration and adoption.

# **New Business Attraction & Investment**

Case Study: Enterprise Development Center of Erie County

#### A Change of ScenErie

Real estate investment and development to rebuild Erie's urban core and position the region for growth.

**About The Company:** The Enterprise Development Center of Erie County (EDCEC) was originally created as the corporation entity that owned, managed, and operated an industrial incubator on East 33rd & McClelland. When Develop Erie was broken up, the EDCEC was repurposed as the real estate development arm of the Erie County Redevelopment Authority (ECRDA). EDCEC's role is to function like the Greater Erie Industrial Development Corporation (GEIDC), which went bankrupt and led to the dissolution of Develop Erie.

**Challenge/Opportunity:** When GEIDC went bankrupt, all land and buildings they owned were sold out of bankruptcy, leaving no quasi-public entity available to tackle troubled real estate (brownfields) or proactively develop industrial land to be used for business expansion and/or attraction activities. EDCEC is a vital tool for Erie County to secure grants and low-interest loans to address the need for industrial property redevelopment and development.

**How ERCGP Helped:** The Chamber and ECRDA both recognized the need for a corporate entity to take on the vital function/role previously handled by GEIDC. The Chamber and ECRDA coordinated all work to repurpose EDCEC to handle that role and ensured that it would be governed by a collective of interests from throughout the community versus a self-appointing Board of Directors.

**The Outcome:** EDCEC has built a warehouse for Berry Plastics, enabling it to retain and expand its workforce in Erie; acquired and is re-developing the former Erie Malleable Iron (EMI) property on the West 12th Street corridor into what will be known as Ironworks Square; and acquired and remediated the former Quinn T Paper Manufacturing Company property at 140 East 16th Street. EDCEC continues to search for land to build a 100+ acre industrial park for business expansion and attraction.

**Your Investment at Work:** Your investment in the Chamber provides companies and individuals looking for sites, buildings, and market information a central gateway to efficiently identify opportunities to make investments in Erie and create jobs. By maintaining working relationships with the real estate community, land and building owners, utilities, local government offices, and state government departments, the Chamber is able to provide prospects with accurate and efficient information to help potential investors accurately assess Erie as a place to grow their business.

# Regional Competitiveness & Collaboration

Case Study: Infinite Erie

#### **Transcending Politics & Transforming Change**

A regional collaborative effort to speed the realization and impact of strategic initiatives.

**About The Company:** Infinite Erie was created to coordinate not only the development of Erie County's investment playbook but to provide technical assistance for aspiring projects, to identify state, federal and philanthropic funding opportunities for projects, and to actively advocate for these projects with decision makers.

**Challenge/Opportunity:** The American Rescue Plan (ARP) earmarked over \$1 trillion for investments in communities across the United States. Those communities that were organized, collaborative, and had projects cued up and ready-to-go were in the best position to secure funding. While ARP was a once-in-a-lifetime investment, the Federal and State government have competitive funding for community projects on an annual basis and those who are best prepared will yield the greatest success in securing that funding.

**How ERCGP Helped:** The Chamber spent a the last month of 2021 and first few months of 2022 developing a framework of how to best organize and structure a community collaborative of leaders (public, private, elected, community, and philanthropic) to identify, coordinate, and assist projects to compete for funding, as well as the structure for how the community's voice will be synchronized behind the portfolio of projects when advocating with the federal or state government. The Chamber leadership serves on the governance of Infinite Erie and Chamber staff helped guide early thought and activity in the areas of Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Infrastructure and Industry Clusters.

**The Outcome:** Infinite Erie was formally organized in the Spring of 2022 and developed Erie's Investment Playbook. The Investment Playbook has been broken into four portfolios and Action Teams have been organized around those portfolios: Anchor Investments, Neighborhoods and Main Streets, Infrastructure and Industry Clusters, and Inclusive Entrepreneurship. The Chamber is now leading the Infrastructure and Industry Cluster portfolio.

**Your Investment at Work:** Your investment in the Chamber supports your active involvement in the design of initiatives that help our region compete more effectively for a higher quality of life for all citizens and a more business friendly environment. The Chamber consistently collaborates with businesses, non-profits, governmental entities, and community groups to design programs, initiatives, and organizations that will impact our continued growth, development and improvement with information to help potential investors accurately assess Erie as a place to grow their business.

## **INVESTORS**

Altair Real Estate Services American Tinning & Galvanizing Company ArentFox Schiff, LLP Barber National Institute Bayada Pediatrics Cathedral Preparatory School & Mother Teresa Academy Child Development Centers City of Erie CMIT Solutions of Erie Community Health Net Country Fair County of Erie, Government Curtze Food Service **Custom Engineering Company Decision Associates** E. E. Austin & Son, Inc. Erie Beer Company Erie County Community College of PA Erie Federal Credit Union Erie Homes For Children & Adults, Inc. Erie Insurance Group Erie VA Medical Center Erie Water Works

Ford Office Technologies Gannon University Great Lakes Automation Services, Inc./AMi Great Lakes Insurance Services Group LLC Greater Erie Economic Development Corporation **Griffith Properties** Hamot Health Foundation Industrial Sales & Manufacturing Company Insurance Management Company IET 24, FOX 66 & YourErie.com Knox McLaughlin Gornall and Sennett, P. C. MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP Marquette Savings Bank McCormick Structural Systems, Inc. McInnes Rolled Rings Mercyhurst University Merrill Lynch Pierce Fenner Smith, Inc. Millcreek Township Offices National Fuel Gas Distribution Corp. Northwest Parker Philips

Penelec Penn State Erie. The Behrend College PennWest University Perry Construction Group Inc PNC Financial Services Group Reed Manufacturing Company Scott Enterprises Smith Provision Company, Inc. Snap-tite Hose Spectrum - Charter Communications Summit Township Supervisors Team Hardinger The Erie Community Foundation Times Publishing Company **Transportation Solutions** Uber Technologies, Inc. UPMC Health Plan ValueMomentum Inc. VisitErie Widget Financial

#### **ABOUT ERIE FORWARD**

Launched in 2019, *Erie Forward* is the five-year economic development initiative of the Erie Regional Chamber designed to recruit, attract, expand, and retain businesses in a manner that ensures economic development throughout the region meets the interest and needs of a diverse population and creates opportunities that lay a foundation for sustainable economic success for generations to come. Our team at the Chamber wholeheartedly believes our work contributes to our collective responsibility to assure our economy can provide for the wealth and well-being of all our citizens. Erie Forward provides us with a thoughtful and thorough blueprint to guide that process.

**Erie Forward** focuses on five key pillars of economic development:

New Business Attraction and Investment



Existing Industry Support and Entrepreneurship



Workforce Development and Talent Attraction



Quality of Place, Advocacy, and Sustainability



Regional Competitiveness and Collaboration



To learn more about Erie Forward, visit www.eriepa.com/erie-forward.



The Erie Regional Chamber provides three avenues for entrepreneurship to thrive in Erie: the FIRE Accelerator, ICE Angel Education program, and the ICE Angel Fund. Each component strengthens the entrepreneurial ecosystem by attracting businesses, bolstering local entrepreneurs, educating potential angel investors, and providing a mechanism to deploy investments to local entrepreneurial ventures.

#### **About FIRE Accelerator**

The FIRE Accelerator is the flagship entrepreneurship program for the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership (ERCGP). The program came under the umbrella of the chamber in 2020 to be the catalyst for the organization's growing role in developing the regional ecosystem to drive innovation within legacy industries and attract leading startups and creative companies to establish or grow their roots on the shores of Lake Erie.

FIRE Accelerator is integral to business retention and expansion -- a primary economic development driver. By operating in the chamber, cohort participants have access to over 700 business and community leaders and mentors and over 40 economic development agencies operating at the state and local levels.

In 2023, the cohort focused on innovative companies within the manufacturing and construction space. Over 160 applications from 36 countries came pouring in – marking the most applications received in the program's history. With the help of the selection committee, four companies moved on to participate in the program from September through December. With the completion of this year's cohort, the program's portfolio now includes 41 companies that have gone on to raise over 100 million in follow-on investment while simultaneously growing their businesses to over 60 million in revenue across the portfolio.

#### **Meet the 2023 Cohort**

**Avatour** is a remote collaboration platform designed to facilitate on-site meetings. With an aim to bridge geographical gaps, Avatour is set to revolutionize the way teams collaborate and innovate.

**Erie Development Company** is at the forefront of developing products that improve the production and distribution of renewable energy. Their mission extends to incorporating these technologies into building facilities, making renewable energy accessible to underserved communities.

**FIXED HHS** has created a platform connecting homeowners with the handyman services they need. It's about making home maintenance effortless and convenient for everyone.

**Visionify** is on a mission to revolutionize Environmental, Health, and Safety standards through the power of Vision AI applications. Their innovative solutions are set to make workplaces safer and healthier.







## ICE Angel Fund: Launching Erie's First Private Angel Investment Fund to Unlock Hidden Capital Throughout the Region

ICE Angel Fund 1 LLC is Erie's first private angel investment fund, an initiative led by the Erie Regional Chamber with support from partners like Ben Franklin Technology Partners and Appalachian Investors Alliance.

Entrepreneurs in our region have historically been challenged to find risk capital to support the growth of their business, often having to look for capital sources outside of our region and state. There was an opportunity for private investors to take advantage of this gap in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to step in and make investments into early-stage companies to provide access to necessary capital and achieve a return while retaining and growing entrepreneurial companies and jobs in our backyard.

In 2021, the Erie Regional Chamber applied for and secured a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Build to Scale program. This grant provided capital to offset the costs of establishing the ICE Angel Fund.

Two short years later, the ICE Angel Fund has officially launched and has started reviewing investment applications. The fund is designed to provide critical investments in startup and early-stage small businesses within the region.

#### **ICE Angel Education**

In its second year, the ICE Angel Education program provided seven weeks of education to entrepreneurs and investors alike. It is designed to prepare entrepreneurs to secure investment and educate high networth individuals to make investments into entrepreneurial ventures. The program is run in partnership with the Angel Capital Association and covers topics such as fundamentals of angel investing, returns and portfolio strategy, risks of angel investing and valuation.

To learn more about FIRE and ICE, visit eriepa.com/startups-and-entrepreneurship.

### **FIRE Accelerator Portfolio Companies**

#### Cohort 1

CityGrows
INFRA
JAUNTIN'
Myriad
Compliable
SimpleSense
SmartDrivinc

#### FindParts

Cohort 2

Fletch Mimirium Saara N-GEMS United Aircraft Technologies Vita Inclinata Technologies

#### Cohort 3

Arlene Vetro Leverage4Data M3 Unmanned Systems SafeFlight WerkBerry

#### Cohort 4

Kwema

WeatherCheck

Accelerate Wind Algeon Materials Muse Engine nmodes PSNergy SenseGrass

#### **Cohort 5**

Adaptive Pulse Bodha.ai DataQ Elevate Eureeka First Ascent Sloop.ai SportAl ZenHammer

#### Cohort 6

Avatour Erie Development Company Fixed HHS Visionify

## EVENT SPOTLIGHT





#### **SIGNATURE EVENTS**

Our signature event series began with an evening under the stars to honor businesses committed to progress during *Celebration of Excellence* at The Ambassador Banquet and Conference Center. Over 250 people gathered as we recognized several awardees for their incredible contributions to Erie and its business community:

Tullio Award Winner: Tom Tupitza

Small Business of the Year: Gordon's Butcher & Market

Forward Award: Onex Inc. (Ashleigh Walters) Emerging Leader: Kimberly Miller (Springhill Suites)

By June, our events were in full swing with another sold-out **Annual Member-Guest Golf Outing** and our first ever golf clinic for new-to-the-game golfers. One hundred and twenty golfers braved the elements to enjoy the award-winning course at The Kahkwa Club before warming up inside for the evening dinner. July brought clear skies and beautiful weather during the **Member Appreciation Night** at 8 Great Tuesdays. Over 100 members enjoyed tunes by The Groove and snacks from The Cork while taking in a breathtaking sunset over the bay.

Summer quickly turned to fall and it was time to dare to dream with our community trailblazers at *Erie Homecoming 2023*. This year, we were honored to host over 30 speakers who shared their dreams from the stage including retired vice admiral from the US Navy, Matthew Kohler, who shared how his Erie roots were foundational in his naval career. Jared Fleischer from ROCK Ventures rallied the crowd in the afternoon when speaking about the parallels between Erie and Detroit stating Erie has every opportunity to be a top-tier mid-sized city in the coming years.

*Erie Homecoming* attendees were some of the first Erieites to hear from Christian Siembieda, new owner of the Renaissance building, on why he's investing in Erie. Additionally, First Ascent Biomedical, Gannon University, Allegheny Health Network and Highmark announced a partnership to expand operations in Erie including a CLIA certified Laboratory, workforce development pipelines, and a health economic study.

The event also showcased tremendous exhibitors who make or build incredible things in Erie, providing an opportunity for the businesses to connect with the community. Over 25 organizations represented multiple industries from local food and beverage, manufacturing, and more. Thanks to the generosity of Diverse Erie and Associated Springs, 29 minority-owned and diverse business owners received scholarships to attend the event and strengthen their connection to Erie's business community.

#### **Showcasing Investment in Erie**

The Erie Regional Chamber's networking events provided an opportunity for business leaders to get a behind-the-scenes look at several spaces that recently received significant investment and underwent renovations to be best-in-class facilities in our community.

During *August's Business After Hours*, attendees were treated to the newly-renovated rehearsal hall at the historic *Warner Theatre*. Over 150 attendees enjoyed an evening full of conversations and connections while touring backstage and learning about its history. *Cathedral Preparatory School* also

welcomed us for another Business After Hours to showcase their Salata Innovation and Technology Center.

Erie Forward investors were also treated to a private tour of the expERIEnce Children's Museum's \$18M expansion in the heart of downtown Erie. These opportunities not only allow us to witness the physical transformations of iconic spaces, but feel the pulse of community synergy. It exemplifies the power of collective investment, turning visions into reality for a thriving Erie.

#### **Chamber Programs**

In our ongoing commitment to providing education and professional development to Erie's professionals, we launched our second year of the *Take Action* program focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This year's program focused on four essential roles responsible for implementing diversity initiatives within an organization – c-suite, human resources, managers, and young professionals. In partnership with OpenedEyes, the program focused on creating inclusive environments by fostering culturally conscious conversations to inspire growth. Over 66 attendees had an opportunity to embrace learning about the skills and knowledge needed in today's dynamic, global business landscape.

This year, the Chamber launched a brand-new program – *Leadership Academy* – where over 46 professionals at different career stages dove deep into skills needed to lead in today's business environment. In partnership with High Performance – an HBK company – program graduates learned the ins and outs of self-leadership, effective team leadership, communication, and setting a strategic direction. Congratulations to our first graduating class!

Lastly, *Erie Ambassadors* continues to inspire professionals about the incredible things happening throughout the community during the 10-week program. This year, program participants had an opportunity to go behind the scenes at various government agencies, tour Wabtec, explore locations at the heart of Erie's tourism industry, meet local investors and developers leading Erie's renaissance in downtown and beyond, visit North East's business district, and tour two of Erie's largest food processing facilities – Shearer's Foods and Troyer Farms.

#### **New: National Civics Bee and Business Day in Harrisburg**

As the Erie Regional Chamber continues expanding its advocacy and government affairs activities at the local, state, and federal levels, so too will we expand opportunities for members to engage in the civic process. This year, we were honored to partner with the US Chamber of Commerce and The Civil Trust to host the first-ever *Erie Civics Bee* as part of the *National Civics Bee* initiative. The National Civics Bee is an initiative aimed at encouraging more young Americans to engage in civics and contribute to their communities. The competition is designed to inspire middle schoolers to become better informed about American democracy, to engage









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# 2024 EVENTS

respectfully and constructively in the community, and to build greater trust in others and institutions. Middle school students from public, private, charter, and home schools are invited to take part in the first-round civics essay competition, second-round live local competition, and the top finalist moves on to represent Erie on the state stage alongside middle schoolers from across the Commonwealth. In its first year, over 77 students submitted essays from school districts throughout the region. Twenty students were then selected to compete locally. The top three candidates that moved onto the state competition were Tristan Hiner from Erie Day School, Logan Thompson from Fairview Middle School, and Nyh'Vairon Nicholson from The Eagles Nest School of Academic Distinction.

In May, the Chamber hosted fifteen Erie business leaders in Harrisburg during our first **Business Day** *in Harrisburg*. The two-day trip included an opportunity for the Erie business delegation to meet with representatives, state agency leaders, and elected officials including but not limited to: the Representative Joanna McClinton, speaker of the house; representatives from Senator Casey and Senator Fetterman's offices; the Harrisburg Chamber; Pennsylvania Chamber of Bureau and Industry; Deputy Secretary Kerry Kirkland from the Pennsylvania Department of General Services; the Governor's Action Team; and the Pennsylvania Black Caucus.

We look forward to new opportunities as the year progresses and hope that you'll join us. Learn more by visiting www.eriepa.com.

#### **Erie Ambassadors: A Showcase of Participating Businesses**

Marquette Innovation Center

Erie City Hall

Erie County Courthouse Federal Courthouse

Wabtec

NI

New Life and Spirit Revival Center ExpERIEnce Children's Museum

Erie Art Museum

**EMI Tour** 

Hagerty Events Center

Oliver's FEED Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority

PACA

Shearer's Foods Troyer Farms The Bean

Arrowhead Winery NFI Empire

Burch Farms Elsie Greer House Bed and Breakfast

Calamari's Erie Food Tour VooDoo Brewery







#### **JANUARY**

Tuit Talk (23) Meet & Greet (30)

#### **FEBRUARY**

Connect for Coffee (7) Business After Hours (15) Business & Brewskis (27)

#### MARCH

Civics Bee (6) Erie Ambassador Launch (13, 20, 27) Business After Hours (21)

#### **APRIL**

Connect for Coffee (3) Erie Ambassadors (3, 10, 17, 24) Career and Job Fair (25) Business & Brewskis (30)

#### **MAY**

Celebration of Excellence (3) Business Days (TBD) Erie Ambassadors (1, 8, 15) Business After Hours (16)

#### JUNE

Meet & Greet (4) Annual Golf Outing (6) Business After Hours (20) Business & Brewskis (25)

#### JULY

Connect for Coffee (10) Tuit Talk (18) Business After Hours (25)

#### AUGUST

Business After Hours (15) Tuit Talk (28)

#### SEPTEMBER

Meet & Greet (9) Fall Member Fest (17) Business & Brewskis (24)

#### **OCTOBER**

Erie Homecoming (2-3) Connect for Coffee (9) Tuit Talk (23) Demo Day

#### NOVEMBER

Meet & Greet (5) Business & Brewskis (19) Career and Job Fair (21)

#### DECEMBER

Annual Meeting (4)
Business After Hours (12)











# **SPONSORS**

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following sponsors whose generous support was instrumental in making 2023 a record-breaking year for chamber sponsorship. Our sponsors' commitment to our mission supported our signature events, dynamic networking opportunities, enriching professional development initiatives, and impactful programs for the thriving business community we serve.

Thank you for your invaluable contributions and unwavering belief in fostering a vibrant and prosperous business environment:

#### **TRACK SPONSORS**







#### **SPONSORS**

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**Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority** 

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Allegheny College

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Amazon

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Barbs Family Learning Group Daycare LLC

Barnhart Transportation, LLC

Bates Collision

Bayada Pediatrics

BayCrete Inc.

Bayfront Benefit Solutions, Inc.

Bayfront NATO, Inc.

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Ben Franklin Technology Patners

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Professional Realty

Berman Bedding, Inc.

Birkmire Trucking / Big Box Rentals

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Blue Pike Properties

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Caflisch Pallet & Wood Services

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Chosen, Inc.

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Church and Murdock Electric

City of Erie

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Cobblestone Inn & Suites Coldwell Banker Select, Realtors

Colony Pub & Grille

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Community Blood Bank of NW PA

Community Health Net

Concrete Services Corp

Connecto Electric, Inc Conte Wealth Advisors

Contine Corporation

Cornerstone Construction GS LLC

Corry Community Development Corporation

Country Fair

County of Erie, Government

Courtyard by Marriott Erie Bayfront Hotel

CPR Cell Phone Repair Erie

Creative Imprint Systems, Inc.

Crime Victim Center of Erie County, Inc.

CT Consultants, Inc. Curaleaf

Curtze Food Service

Custom Engineering Company Cypress Creek Renewables

D

Dahlkemper Custom Jewelers

Dahlkemper Landscape Architects & Contractors

DALRT, INC.

DBC Remodeling & Construction

**Decision Associates** Dee's Cigar Store

Dinner Is Served By Lisa

Disabled Veteran Solutions Disaster Recovery Adjusters LLC

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Doing Better Business

Doleski and Wolford Orthodontics, P.C. Doug Yaple Vacuum Cleaner Centers



E. E. Austin & Son, Inc.

Eagle's Nest Leadership Corporation Ear, Nose & Throat Specialists of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters

Early Connections

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Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Erie

Environmental Remediation & Recovery, Inc. Epic Web Studios

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Erie Ambassadors Erie Apparel

Erie Art Museum

Erie Beer Company

Erie Bronze & Aluminum Company Erie Construction Council, Inc.

Erie County Bar Association

Erie County Community College of PA

21 20

## MEMBER LIST

Erie County Technical School Erie Day School Erie Dental Co. Erie Downtown Development Corporation Erie Energy Partners LLC Erie Events Erie Federal Credit Union Erie Food Tours Erie Homes For Children & Adults, Inc. Erie Insurance Group Erie KOA Kampgrounds Erie Masonic Temple Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority Erie Molded Plastics, Inc. Erie Pennzoil 10 Minute Oil Change Erie Philharmonic Frie Reader Erie Regional Airport Authority Erie Renaissance & Erie Development Company Erie Restoration Inc. Erie Retinal Surgery, Inc. Erie SeaWolves Erie Technology Incubator at Gannon University Erie VA Medical Center Erie Water Works Erie Yacht Club ERIEBANK Erie-Western PA Port Authority Escape Game Erie LLc Essentra Components Estate Services Inc. expERIEnce Children's Museum

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

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F3 Metalworx Families United Network Inc. Famous Supply Fastest Feedback FASTSIGNS FedEx Ground First National Bank of Pennsylvania FishUSA, Inc. Five Iron Golf Erie FIXED-HHS LLC Flagship City Comedy Flagship Community Bank Flagship Niagara League Flexcut Tool Floor Expressions By Greg Thomas Flynn's Tire & Auto Service Focus CFO Ford Office Technologies Forest Counseling LLC

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#### Н

Hammocks at Millcreek Hamot Health Foundation Hand Microsurgery & Reconstructive Orthopedics LLP Handled With Care Facility Hansen's Errand Service, Inc. Harrington, Inc. Hart Strategic Solutions **HBKS** Wealth Advisors Heart to Heart CPR and First Aid Heritage Elder Law & Estate Planning, LLC Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Hill Barth & King LLC Hilling-Pfeffer Insurance Historic Square Agency LLC Holiday Financial Services Corp. Holiday Inn Erie Home Aides Honey Baked Ham & Cafe Hope Direct Healthcare LLC Housing Authority of the City of Erie HRI Commercial Food Service Hubbard-Bert Inc. Division of HUB International Hudson Lofts Huffman Family Chiropractic LLC

Industrial Sales & Manufacturing Company Insurance Management Company Interim Healthcare International Recycling Group Iron Point Financial

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#### K

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Lilly Broadcasting Lions Eve Bank of NW PA. Inc. Little Caesars Lloyd Walker Loesel-Schaaf Insurance Agency Logistics Plus Loyal Christian Benefit Association

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South Shore Party Rental 23

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Summit Township Supervisors
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The Erie Community Foundation
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The Original Popcorn House

The Plastek Group

The Reserves Network

The Vargo Company
The Warren Company

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Thefastmall eBay Selling Services

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TM Industrial Supply, Inc

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Transportation Equipment Supply Company

Transportation Solutions
TRICRYOTHERAPY LLC

TICL L C ILLD L

TriState Capital Bank

Truck-Lite Co. LLC

Turf Management Services



Uber Technologies, Inc.
United Way of Erie County
UPMC Hamot
UPMC Health Plan
Urban Engineers, Inc.
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Yardmaster of Pennsylvania LLC YMCA of Greater Erie YORK-Seaway Your Part Time Controller



ValueMomentum Inc.
Van Air, Inc
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Venango Machine
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Wagner Giblin Insurance Agency Waldrich Coburg NA, Inc. Walker Filtration Waste Management of Northwest PA WCTL FM Weber Murphy Fox, Inc. weCreate Wegmans Food Markets Weichert Realtors - The Pro Group Werkberry, LLC Werkbot Studios, LLC Westminster Group Westwood Racquet Club, Inc White Oak Wealth Partners White Pine Center for Healing Whitethorn Digital Widget Financial Wilkins Company, Inc. Wm. T. Spaeder Co., Inc. Women's Care Center Wonderful Chippers Food Group WQLN Public Broadcasting of NW Pennsylvania



## 2024;

# CELEBRATING OUR 150TH ANNIVERSARY

As we stand on the threshold of our chamber's illustrious 150th anniversary, we celebrate not just a milestone in years but a legacy of unwavering service to our community. For a century and a half, the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership in all its iterations has been a stalwart champion, a guiding light, and a force for positive change. Our role as a leader, facilitator, and connector has been the driving force behind numerous projects that have left an indelible mark on the region's landscape and fostered a sense of shared community.

In commemorating this historic milestone, our 150th anniversary becomes a testament to the enduring commitment we hold towards our community. This year's Celebration of Excellence will not only recognize businesses doing inspiring, innovative, and transformational work but also a festivity to commemorate the progress over the last century and a half. Throughout the year, we will weave a tapestry of historical features and member highlights, each thread reflecting our unwavering dedication to service.

Our commitment to fostering an environment where collaboration thrives, opportunities abound, and community bonds strengthen remains unshaken as we look to the next 150 years. We will continue charting a course for a future where our chamber continues to be a driving force for positive change, a catalyst for growth, and a beacon of service to the community. Here's to 150 years of unwavering dedication, and to the countless years ahead, where we will continue to serve, connect, and lead with passion and purpose.

Visit **eriepa.com** throughout the year to celebrate with us!



