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Erie casino likely hurt by Ohio vote

Kevin Cuneo



Ohio's vote to approve casino games is a blow to Presque Isle Downs & Casino, which attracts so many players from across the state line. A major casino is planned for Cleveland, and horse racing at Thistledown and Northfield Park will likely get a big infusion of cash. Cleveland Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert has spent nearly \$35 million, according to Associated Press, promoting four casinos across the state. With a big casino so close by, Presque Isle Downs must step up its gaming and racing operations. Table games become crucial here, and the local casino should upgrade amenities such as food and entertainment. A lot of horse owners and trainers that used to operate at Thistledown, but moved to Erie the past two seasons, will probably return to Cleveland, unless Presque Isle Downs can convince them to stay. ... Regardless of the outcome, GOP County Executive candidate Mike Kerner ran a brilliant campaign. He spent little money, but was out in the community every day, knocking on doors and making an impression wherever he went. In that sense, he borrowed a page from former County Executive Rick Schenker's playbook. Schenker campaigned door to door for months, winning many voters over by the force of his personality. It helped him defeat longtime incumbent Judy Lynch. ... Pete Nicolia sends word that Pio's Italian Restaurant and Pizzeria will host its annual Thanksgiving dinner for the needy for the 25th year. It will run from 5-7 p.m. at the East High School Cafeteria on Thanksgiving Day. If you'd like to volunteer or contribute food, such as a turkey, call Pio's at 456-8866. ... It always seems that Erie has a connection to so many big stories and events, and now it turns out that a character in George Clooney's new film, "The Men Who Stare at Goats," is based on Erie native Guy Savelli. He was featured in Jon Ronson's book, which inspired the film. Savelli, who lives in Chardon, Ohio, once dropped a goat stone dead at the Special Forces Lab at Fort Bragg, N.C., according to Ronson. ... **Theresa and Gene Natale must be proud of their daughter, Claire Natale, who's starring in a new short film, "Before We Get to Seattle."** Set in New Jersey, it was recently completed in Brooklyn. Claire Natale, a Mercyhurst Preparatory School graduate, is a hardworking actress in New York City.

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Penn State Behrend's record enrollment of 4,767 students includes 367 students served by the college's online World Campus, according to Chancellor Jack Burke. World Campus students are pursuing master's degrees in various fields. Burke also mentioned that Knowledge Park recently marked its 10th anniversary, which is hard to believe. It has 14 tenants and employs a total of 500 people. ... Linda Bolla said the Erie Maritime Museum will dedicate a newly installed Medal of Honor marker Sunday at the Trinity Cemetery grave site of Patrick Murphy, a heroic sailor who died in 1896 at the age of 73. Murphy, an Irish immigrant who came to America at age 14, settled in Erie in 1842. He won the Medal of Honor for heroism during the Civil War Battle of Mobile Bay when he served on the USS Metacomet. He spent most of the rest of his career serving onboard the U.S. Steamship Michigan. Sunday's ceremony will take place at 2:30 p.m. ... The West Seneca Marching Band, which performed so well at Saturday's Lakeshore Marching Band Championships in Erie, went on to even greater glory the next day in Syracuse, N.Y. The band

won the New York State Field Band Competition at the Carrier Dome. ... FBI agent Kelly Smith, who served in Erie until August, when he was transferred to the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C., is now living in Vienna, Va. ... Jason "Iggly" Imig, who recently opened 2189 Skateboards and Apparel at 2601 Peach St., said retail businesses in Erie's midtown area -- specifically on Peach from W. 21st Street south -- are booming. He said a new glass-blowing studio, art gallery and vegetarian deli are set to open soon.

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