

SEPTEMBER 22 -
NOVEMBER 19, 2026

LECOM
HEALTH

JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

WELCOME TO GLOBAL SUMMIT XVIII

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the lineup of this year's Global Summit – the quote by T.S. Eliot I read in high school comes to mind. In describing poets and poetry he wrote “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

At the Jefferson, our goal has always been to create one of the best conferences in the world, right here in Erie, Pennsylvania. That was the goal 18 years ago when the Global Summit was created with five speakers in two and a half days and 500 attendees, and it continues to be so today as we announce a Global Summit that could rival any conference with 17 events and over 30 speakers.

Since we opened our doors in 2008, the Jefferson Educational Society has built its mission on the belief that learning is itself an act of citizenship. Global Summit XVIII puts that belief to its most ambitious test yet: can a Summit built on appetite to learn keep finding new distances to go?

I believe it can. I've watched this community show up year after year – willing to sit with harder questions than most places would risk asking and continue coming back for more. That's not something every city still does. Erie does. It's why we keep chasing speakers most towns never get near, and we have no plans to slow down.

This year is extra special as we mark the 250th anniversary of America's independence and democracy. A milestone like this invites



two temptations: either to celebrate uncritically or to re-examine every grievance the country has accumulated along the way. We've tried to do neither. Instead, this year's speakers – historians, diplomats, journalists, artists, and citizens who've spent their careers examining complex questions – are here to help us look honestly at Erie and America as a whole.

Some of this year's speakers will look backward – at the Revolution, at the Civil Rights Movement, at the 400 years since slavery first arrived on these shores. Others will look forward to the future of partisan politics, the unfolding of global conflict, and the disruption that AI is already bringing to how we live and work. And this year we've deliberately brought more of Erie's own leaders and entrepreneurs onto that same stage, because there's world-class work possible and already in motion locally.

As you look through this year's events, know that none of this happens alone. We are deeply grateful to our sponsors, including LECOM, Erie Insurance, Tom Hagen, Bruce and Sarah McWilliams, Erie News Now, Logistics Plus, Gannon University, and to the many others you'll see in the following pages who make this work possible.

We set out 18 years ago to risk going too far, and years later, that's still the whole point. It's what keeps Erie one of the most ambitious, most exciting communities in the country – a place that dreams big and keeps proving it can back that ambition up. Whether you have been with us from the beginning or are just joining us this year, thank you for dreaming that big alongside us.

Ferki Ferati, Ed.D.
President
Jefferson Educational Society

Dear Friends,

Last year was my first as Global Summit chair, and I learned so much more about what actually goes into planning and executing a Global Summit. This year, our 17 events and more than 30 speakers arrive at a time when the questions we're asking carry more weight than usual.

America marked 250 years of independence, and this Summit doesn't let that milestone pass as a formality. We have a lineup built, in true JES style, around the country's hardest questions.

It starts when we open Sept. 22 with radio host and political commentator Hugh Hewitt on where the GOP goes after Trump, followed two days later by Steelers legend Terry Bradshaw on football and broadcasting. Then the Summit shows what global work looks like locally as U.S. Ambassador William Taylor joins Erie's own Jim Berlin to discuss how the community is shaping Ukraine's future (Sept. 29), followed by Bishop Sean Rowe's Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award presentation (Oct. 1).

October brings some of our biggest names yet: Nobel laureate Geoffrey Hinton on artificial intelligence (Oct. 5) and a moderated conversation with former First Lady Michelle Obama (Oct. 12). Constitutional scholar Jeffrey Rosen will examine whether we'll keep our republic (Oct. 19), and Sikh author Simran Jeet Singh instills life-changing wisdom the next night at the Warner Theatre (Oct. 20). That same week, global adviser Sally Painter and international human rights advocate Mariam Lambert take on the transatlantic alliance's stakes for Ukraine's children (Oct. 21),

To mark 25 years since 9/11, former Department of Defense general counsel Jeh Johnson joins former Homeland Security adviser Fran Townsend in conversation (Oct. 22) with a special appearance by Gov. Tom Ridge. For those of us old enough to remember that day,



it's one we'll never forget. For me personally, our family was never the same. My cousin, Sammy, a NYC firefighter, never made it out of the second tower. This October event will remind us to pause and honor those who sacrificed on that day and for years beyond it.

Late October turns the lens back on Erie itself, with our Lake Erie Launchpad entrepreneurs panel (Oct. 27) and Cincinnati's community development expert Stephen Leeper joins Erie's Tim NeCastro to look at a decade of downtown development built on Cincinnati's own playbook (Oct. 28) and see what's next. Writer Andrew Aydin and artist Nate Powell close the month out with the story behind *March, Run, and Vote*, a groundbreaking civil rights trilogy (Oct. 29).

November carries us through history and its consequences: Bestselling author of *The 1619 Project* Nikole Hannah-Jones on 400 years since slavery's arrival (Nov. 4), historian Rick Atkinson on the battles that built America (Nov. 9), and Sarah Botstein and David Schmidt, the producers behind the Ken Burns' documentaries that have changed our perspective of history for decades (Nov. 10). Radio host Michael Smerconish brings his Mingle Project promoting civility to Erie (Nov. 12), while political commentator Margaret Hoover joins us for post-election analysis (Nov. 17), and Anne Applebaum closes the Summit Nov. 19 with a hard look at how today's autocracies work together.

What strikes me most is how much the Summit itself has shifted. For years, our measure of success was the caliber of names we could get on a stage in Erie. This year's lineup is still full of those names, but the issues themselves – overseas conflict, AI, homeland security, economic development – are already being worked on, argued over, and decided by people in this region. The Global Summit isn't just bringing the world's biggest conversations to Erie anymore. It's recognizing that Erie is already having them, and we're showcasing that.

Thank you for making the space for it. Whether this is your first Summit or your 18th, we welcome you! I look forward to seeing you this fall.

Christina Marsh
Global Summit Chairwoman

President Trump, The MAGA Movement, and 2028: What's Next for the GOP

Hugh Hewitt has spent 26 years publicly asking politicians questions that are at times uncomfortable to answer, especially with millions of people listening. As host of "The Hugh Hewitt Show" on the Salem Radio Network and Salem News Channel, he has built a reputation on pressure-testing and policy-heavy questioning, interviewing numerous Republican presidential contenders over the past two decades and more than a few Democrats along the way.

Hewitt's instinct of interrogation has been a strength throughout his career, leading him to work in the Ronald Reagan administration for nearly six years, serving as assistant counsel in the White House and special assistant to two attorneys general before returning to teach constitutional law at Chapman University in California. Few commentators move as fluidly between the legal architecture of American government and the daily trends of MAGA-era politics or can speak to how much the GOP has changed since he was inside it, which makes him well-positioned to ask where the movement goes if its namesake is no longer on the ballot.

A native of Warren, Ohio, Hewitt is also a Cleveland sports fan and an alumnus of Camp Notre Dame in Fairview. He is also a Fox News contributor and the author of 14 books that take a closer look at the unfiltered strategies and priorities driving modern Republicanism. At the Summit, Hewitt will ask what Trump's movement has permanently changed about the GOP, what happens to it after 2028, and whether "MAGA" survives as anything more than a slogan once the man who coined it is no longer in office.

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Steelers Legend & Fox Sports Broadcaster Talks Everything Football

No one can spiral them into the end zone like Terry Bradshaw. The first player chosen in the 1970 draft, the 6'3" Bradshaw became one of the most prolific quarterbacks in history. He was the first quarterback to win four Super Bowl championships (1975, 1976, 1979 and 1980), making him a perfect 4-0 in Super Bowl play, an extraordinary feat that has only been duplicated once.

In those four performances, he completed 49 of 84 attempted passes (nine for touchdowns) for 932 yards (second all-time), with just three interceptions while amazingly calling his own plays, something rarely done when Bradshaw played and unheard of in today's NFL. He still holds the Super Bowl passing records for average gain per attempt in a career (11.10 yards) and average gain in a game (14.71 yards in Super Bowl XIV).

Widely acknowledged as today's preeminent NFL studio personality, Bradshaw segued to broadcasting as a guest commentator for CBS Sports' NFC postseason broadcasts (1980-82) and then joined CBS Sports as an NFL game analyst in 1984. He became a studio analyst on "The NFL Today" for four seasons beginning in 1990. Currently in his dual roles as co-host and analyst on "Fox NFL Sunday", he has been a primary force in making the show America's most-watched, and four-time Emmy Award-winning NFL pregame program.

The first NFL player with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Bradshaw continues to defy an easy pigeonhole: four-time Super Bowl champion quarterback, two-time Super Bowl MVP, and Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee. Multi-Emmy and award-winning broadcaster for Fox on "Fox NFL Sunday". An enduringly popular actor, he appeared in feature films and television series, being "called" "one of the most genuine people I have ever worked with" and "so down-to-earth and loveable" by Academy Award winner Kathy Bates. Add to that gospel/country singer motivational speaker, New York Times bestselling author, and breeder of championship quarter horses.

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President Trump, The MAGA Movement, and 2028: What's Next for the GOP

Hugh Hewitt

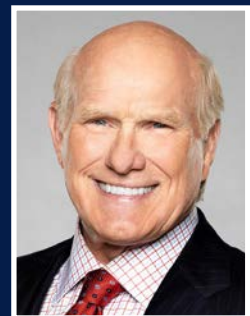
Tuesday, Sept. 22

7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

3207 State St.

Erie, Pennsylvania



Steelers Legend & Fox Sports Broadcaster Talks Everything Football

Terry Bradshaw

Thursday, Sept. 24

7 p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center

1 Sassafras Pier

Erie, Pennsylvania



AMBASSADOR
WILLIAM B. TAYLOR



JIM BERLIN

Making A Difference: How One Erie-Based Company is Working to Shape Ukraine's Future

Ambassador William B.
Taylor and Jim Berlin

Tuesday, Sept. 29
7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

Making A Difference: How One Erie-Based Company is Working to Shape Ukraine's Future

Ambassador William B. Taylor built his career out of navigating the world's diplomatic fault lines while Jim Berlin built a nearly \$500 million company from a \$120,000 purchase order and three employees in Erie. Together, they have ended up asking the same question: What does it take to keep Ukraine standing?

Taylor has spent three decades in some of America's hardest diplomatic postings, including Baghdad, Kabul, and Jerusalem, in addition to Ukraine, but his experience began in Vietnam as an infantry platoon leader. After leaving the military, he studied public policy from Harvard University and began coordinating assistance to eastern Europe. His combined military and diplomatic background led the State Department to deploy him to oversee critical, high-stakes reconstruction efforts in post-9/11 Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2004). But come 2006, he returned to his European start as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine from 2006 to 2009, then returned in 2019 as chargé d'affaires during one of the most consequential stretches in U.S.-Ukraine relations. Now a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, Taylor brings a vantage point few Americans share: he's watched Ukraine's fight for sovereignty since long before it made headlines.

When Ukraine made headlines in 2022 following Russia's invasion, it was Logistics Plus Founder and CEO Jim Berlin who helped deliver humanitarian aid and critical infrastructure, often shipping goods directly into Black Sea ports still under bombardment. He is a founding member of the G-7's Business Advisory Council for Ukraine's economic recovery and recently launched a new initiative to bolster economic ties with the U.S., positioning Ukraine as a destination for investment. Together, Taylor and Berlin will discuss what Erie's own citizens and diplomats are contributing to Ukraine's future and what they future might look like.

In Partnership with:



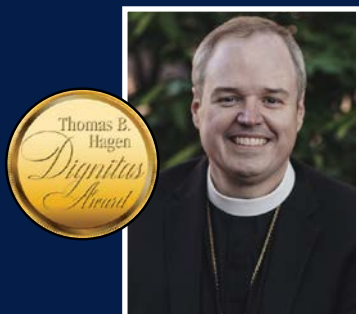
2026 Recipient of the Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award

In June 2024, the Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe was elected the 28th presiding bishop and primate of the Episcopal Church — the youngest person elected to that position since the 1700s. He took office that November as the church's chief pastor and CEO, for a nine-year term, arriving with a reputation for organizational learning and adaptive change that he's now applying to an entire national denomination.

Rowe's rise was built here as he was ordained bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania in 2007, after serving seven years as rector of St. John's in Franklin, Pennsylvania. He became the youngest Episcopal bishop in the U.S. at just 32. As ordained bishop, Rowe went on to lead the Diocese of Bethlehem from 2014 to 2018, then engineered an unusual but innovative partnership joining the Episcopal Dioceses of Northwestern Pennsylvania and Western New York from 2019 to 2024. It was an early experiment in the kind of structural rethinking he now applies on a national scale. His new approach to growing issues draws on his education as he holds a doctorate in organizational learning and leadership from Gannon University, alongside a bachelor's degree from Grove City College, and a Master of Divinity from Virginia Theological Seminary.

As presiding bishop, Rowe has been outspoken about a church that must change with the times or lose relevance to them, and he has put that philosophy to work as a former parliamentarian for the House of Bishops and a longtime leader across civic and churchwide governance bodies.

For a career that began and was shaped in northwestern Pennsylvania's own backyard before reaching the national stage, the Jefferson Educational Society and Erie businessman and civic leader Thomas B. Hagen honor Rowe with the 2026 Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award, given to individuals with ties to the region who have achieved greatness in their field and left a lasting impact on society.



2026 Recipient of the Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award

Episcopal Bishop
Sean W. Rowe

Thursday, Oct. 1
7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

Sponsored by:



The 'Godfather' of Artificial Intelligence on The New Frontier of Technology

The winner of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics for his pioneering work in artificial intelligence, Geoffrey Hinton has been called “the Godfather of AI” and is considered one of the most important intellectuals on the emergence of AI and its implications for business and society. It was Hinton, in 2012, who created the technology that would become the foundation for the AI systems that are emerging as potential gamechangers for business.

Hinton received his Ph.D. in Artificial Intelligence from the University of Edinburgh in 1978. After five years as a faculty member at Carnegie-Mellon, he became a fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and moved to the Department of Computer Science at the University of Toronto, where he is now an emeritus professor.

Hinton is a fellow of the UK Royal Society and a foreign member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His awards include the Nobel Prize in Physics, the David E. Rumelhart prize, the IJCAI award for research excellence, the Killam prize for Engineering, the IEEE Frank Rosenblatt medal, the NSERC Herzberg Gold Medal, the IEEE James Clerk Maxwell Gold medal, the NEC C&C award, the BBVA award, the Honda Prize, and the Turing Award.

But Hinton is not entirely a proponent of the rapid development of AI. Hinton's view is that the technology offers tremendous potential benefits to humankind, but we are at an important inflection point in which society needs to think hard about how to restrict the use of AI to avoid potential pitfalls.

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A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, Michelle Obama never imagined that she'd become First Lady of the United States. She never imagined that one day, she would inspire people all around the world and drive historic change. As the daughter of a city water-pump operator and a stay-at-home mom, girls like her aren't supposed to do any of that.

Obama has spent her life challenging us to reconsider where that “supposed to” comes from — and who determines it. She met her husband Barack in 1989 at the law firm Sidley Austin LLP, where she worked immediately after graduating from Harvard Law School. The two fell in love and married on the South Side of Chicago, not far from where she grew up. They stayed on the South Side to raise their two beautiful girls, Malia and Sasha, before moving to the White House. Of all the things she has achieved in her remarkable life, Michelle considers being a mother her greatest accomplishment.

Her life shows us that you don't have to look a certain way or act a certain way to fit in; you don't have to make a lot of money or come from a certain group or class or faith in order to matter. Each of us can write our own story. And when we share those stories with one another, we can lift each other up along the way.

That's why, as an author, Michelle speaks candidly about her experiences as a wife, mother, Black woman, and First Lady of the United States, telling her story in a way that empowers others to see the beauty in their own.

Her passion for storytelling has set sales and earned her global acclaim with her memoir, “Becoming”, which spent over 130 weeks on the New York Times Bestsellers list and won a Grammy, bestsellers “The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times” and “The Look”, and “The Michelle Obama Podcast” on Spotify, which upon its release in 2020 was the most successful original in Spotify history, among others, like production company Higher Grounds, which she co-founded with her husband in 2018.

At the core of Michelle's story is a belief not just in telling stories aligned with her values, but in living out those values — especially when it comes to strengthening the next generation. Through the Obama Foundation, she founded the Girls Opportunity Alliance, which supports adolescent girls' education and empowerment around the world. As part of When We All Vote, she urges young people to register to vote and get involved in the electoral process — reaching more than 100 million people during the 2020 election. And with Partnership for a Healthier America, she has worked to curb food inequity in our country — in 2022 alone, they helped donate more than one million meals for families in need.



The 'Godfather' of Artificial Intelligence on The New Frontier of Technology

Geoffrey Hinton

Monday, Oct. 5

7 p.m.

**Gannon University Yehl Room
at Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.,
Erie, Pennsylvania**



A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama

**Former First Lady
Michelle Obama**

Monday, Oct. 12

6 p.m.

**Erie Insurance Arena
809 French St.
Erie, Pennsylvania**



The US Constitution and Our Republic: Will We Keep It?

Jeffrey Rosen

Monday, Oct. 19
7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania



'The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life'

Simran Jeet Singh

Tuesday, Oct. 20
7 p.m.

Warner Theatre
811 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

The US Constitution and Our Republic: Will We Keep It?

In 2016, Jeffrey Rosen sat across from longtime friend Ruth Bader Ginsburg for a series of conversations that would become a bestselling book — one lawyer's attempt to get inside the mind of a justice who spent her career arguing that the Constitution's meaning could expand without breaking. It's the kind of question Rosen has spent his whole career chasing: not just what the Constitution says, but who gets to decide.

His newest book traces that fight to its origin point. "The Pursuit of Liberty: How Hamilton vs. Jefferson Ignited the Lasting Battle Over Power in America" (2025) argues that the dispute at the heart of today's politics — how much power the federal government should hold, and who should hold it — isn't new at all. It's the same argument two founders were having at the country's birth, one Rosen has spent decades tracing through law, biography, and, as CEO Emeritus of the National Constitution Center, through the institution built specifically to keep that argument alive for the public.

Rosen brings the eye of both a scholar and a journalist to the question. A professor of law at George Washington University and a contributing editor at The Atlantic, he previously served as legal affairs editor of The New Republic and a staff writer for The New Yorker — a career spent translating the Court's internal logic for readers who aren't lawyers. His other bestsellers, including "The Pursuit of Happiness", ask what the founders actually meant by the ideals they wrote into the country's founding documents.

For the year of America's 250th anniversary of independence, he will examine the U.S. Constitution, its lasting effects, and the possible future of our Republic.

In Partnership with:



'The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life'

Simran Jeet Singh, Ph.D., is the executive director of the Religion & Society Program at the Aspen Institute and author of the national bestseller "The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life".

Singh's thoughts on bias, empathy, wisdom, and justice extend across corporate, educational, and government settings. He is an Atlantic Fellow for Racial Equity with Columbia University and the Nelson Mandela Foundation, and a Soros Equality Fellow with the Open Society Foundations. In 2020, TIME Magazine recognized him as one of 16 people fighting for a more equal America.

Singh earned graduate degrees from Harvard University and Columbia University, and he writes regularly for major outlets, including Harvard Business Review, TIME magazine, and Religion News Service. He also wrote the award-winning children's book "Fauja Singh Keeps Going: The True Story of the Oldest Person to Ever Run a Marathon".

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, he now lives with his wife and two daughters in New York City, where he enjoys running, writing, and chasing his kids.

This event is part of the Dr. David and MaryAnne Kozak Gannon READS (Reading to Enhance the Awareness of a Diverse Society) program, in which Gannon University freshmen were given copies of the book to read and discuss in their freshman seminar courses.

In Partnership with:



Why the Transatlantic Alliance Matters: Protecting Ukraine's Children and Europe's Next Generation

Following the catastrophic stories emerging from conflict escalation in Ukraine in 2022, Mariam Lambert decided to leave a 20-year career as a civil servant at the European Patent Office to aid children. As co-founder and CEO of the Emile Foundation, she has spent the years since traveling to more than 27 countries — Brazil, the Emirates, the Vatican, and Saudi Arabia, as well as to institutions such as the U.N., the European Parliament — building the international coalition needed to track down children forcibly deported due to armed conflict and protect them.

Alongside that search, Lambert has personally delivered emergency relief to frontline civilians and hospitals, work that took her, in June 2025, to the GLOBSEC Forum in Prague to speak on a panel about protecting children in armed conflict. Her goal now is structural: an international mechanism, backed by law rather than goodwill, that can make the return and care of those children fast rather than fought-for.

Sally A. Painter has spent three decades building the kind of institutional relationships Lambert's mission now depends on. As co-founder and CEO of Blue Star Strategies, she advises governments and global businesses on the foreign policy fights that shape the future. She is a key leader and trusted adviser in the European space, representing global businesses and governments on their most important investment and foreign policy issues, including NATO, EU, and OECD accession and the historic legislation passed by the U.S. Congress that allows their citizens to enter the U.S. visa-free. That expertise was forged in the Clinton administration, where she advocated for U.S. companies bidding on overseas contracts, and at Tenneco, where she helped build the Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue from scratch. Today she serves the same transatlantic architecture from the Atlantic Council's Future Europe Initiative and GLOBSEC's international advisory board, work that has earned her honors from the governments of Bulgaria, Hungary, and Latvia.

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America's Homeland Security: 25 Years After 9/11

Before Sept. 11, 2001, there was no Department of Homeland Security. Tom Ridge, then serving his second term as governor of Pennsylvania — after starting his career as an Assistant District Attorney in Erie — was working in his garden in Erie when America came under attack. Shortly afterward, he fielded a call that pulled from his position as governor to build the office from nothing. A Vietnam infantry staff sergeant and Bronze Star recipient before he ever held elected office, Ridge became the first-ever Secretary of Homeland Security, standing up an agency to guard against a category of threat the country had not organized itself to fight.

Fran Townsend helped run that fight from inside the White House. As President George W. Bush's Homeland Security adviser and chair of the Homeland Security Council from 2004 to 2008, she drafted the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act and authored the government's own lessons-learned review of Hurricane Katrina — a career-long habit of writing the rules after the crisis exposed where the old ones failed. That habit had started as a federal prosecutor across three administrations and continued as deputy National Security adviser for combating terrorism. She now runs her own independent consulting business.

Jeh Johnson inherited the department Ridge founded and Townsend helped shape. As secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama, Johnson oversaw 229,000 employees across 22 components, from TSA to the Coast Guard. He was in Manhattan on Sept. 11, 2001 — his birthday — and later, as general counsel of the Department of Defense, helped write the legal architecture for the counterterrorism mission that followed.

Now 25 years after the terrorist attacks on America, Johnson and Townsend come to Erie to ask what that system got right, what it missed, and what still needs to change.

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SALLY PAINTER



MARIAM LAMBERT

Why the Transatlantic Alliance Matters: Protecting Ukraine's Children and Europe's Next Generation

Sally Painter and
Mariam Lambert

Wednesday, Oct. 21
7 p.m.

Yehl Room at Gannon University's
Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.
Erie, Pennsylvania



JEH JOHNSON



FRAN TOWNSEND



TOM RIDGE

America's Homeland Security: 25 Years After 9/11

Jeh Johnson, Fran Townsend,
and special appearance by
Tom Ridge

Thursday, Oct. 22
7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

Lake Erie Launchpad: Emerging Erie Entrepreneurs

Tuesday, Oct. 27
7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania



STEPHEN LEEPER



TIM NECASTRO

Looking Back While Forging Ahead: Examining Erie's Economic Development

Stephen Leeper and
Tim NeCastro

Wednesday, Oct. 28
7 p.m.

Yehl Room at Gannon University's
Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

Lake Erie Launchpad: Emerging Erie Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs and Innovators, meet Funders and Investors. This event will showcase five to six Erie-based entrepreneurs making business presentations to a panel of angel investors and successful business owners and entrepreneurs with real funding on the line as Erie plans its next chapter.

In partnership with:



Looking Back While Forging Ahead: Examining Erie's Economic Development

Stephen Leeper has spent two decades turning \$2 billion into a thriving city. As the founding president and CEO of the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC), he took on downtown Cincinnati and Over-the-Rhine — neighborhoods once written off — and rebuilt them into six of the city's premier civic spaces, 210 restored buildings, and nearly 1,700 new apartments. Before that, he did the same for Pittsburgh, financing PNC Park, Heinz Field, and the North Shore's revival as executive director of the Sports & Exhibition Authority. Leeper's specialty focuses on the machinery — the loan funds, the financing structures, the patient civic groundwork — that makes a downtown's comeback possible.

Tim NeCastro has been building that same machinery from inside Erie for nearly three decades, using Leeper's blueprint. He joined Erie Insurance in 1996 and rose through finance, operations, and sales to become president and CEO in 2016, leading the company into new states along the way. But it is his work off the balance sheet that connects most directly to Leeper's. As founding board president of the Erie Downtown Development Corporation, an organization built and structured specifically after the 3CDC model, NeCastro has spent years applying Cincinnati's playbook to his own hometown, serving as board president of the Mazzini Charitable Foundation; on the executive committee of the board for The Erie Community Foundation; and as board chairman for Infinite Erie, a coalition that is working to create more than \$1 billion in transformational change throughout Erie County.

A decade ago, downtown Erie's future was an open question. Leeper and NeCastro will look at what the past 10 years of investment built, what Cincinnati's comeback can still teach Erie, and whether the momentum already underway is enough to carry the region forward for the next 10 years.

Sponsored by:



March, Run, Vote: Storytelling and the Fight for Democracy

In 2008, Andrew Aydin was a congressional staffer who asked his boss, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, why Lewis had never told his own civil rights story in the medium that first inspired him: comic books. Lewis's answer became a decade-long collaboration. Aydin co-wrote "March", then "Run", graphic memoirs that translated Lewis's fight for voting rights into a form young readers would actually pick up — and the results speak for themselves: a National Book Award, a Robert F. Kennedy Book Award, Printz and Sibert Medals, and multiple Coretta Scott King honors. Aydin has since founded the Appalachia Comics Project and co-founded Good Trouble Productions, extending that same belief — that comics can carry history's hardest stories.

Nate Powell drew the story Aydin and Lewis were telling. A cartoonist since he began self-publishing as an Arkansas teenager in 1992, Powell brought March's images to life — the fire hoses, the bridges, the courtrooms — work that earned the trilogy its National Book Award and Powell his own string of Eisner and Ignatz Awards. He has carried that same instinct for visualizing difficult history into "Lies My Teacher Told Me" and his upcoming graphic novel "Diana", out this October.

Aydin and Powell will discuss what a hand-drawn medium can do that other forms of civic storytelling can't and why the tools that first taught Lewis nonviolent resistance may be exactly what's needed to explain the fight for democracy to the generation that didn't live through the first one.

Sponsored by:



ANDREW AYDIN



NATE POWELL

March, Run, Vote: Storytelling and the Fight for Democracy

Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell

Thursday, Oct. 29
7 p.m.

Yehl Room at Gannon University's
Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

'The 1619 Project': Examining the Origins of Slavery 400 Years Later

In 1619, a privateer ship brought 20 enslaved Africans ashore at Jamestown, Virginia. Four hundred years later, Nikole Hannah-Jones traced a line from that ship to the present day and published it in The New York Times Magazine. The result, "The 1619 Project", reframed American history around a simple, contested argument: that slavery isn't a chapter of the American story but its foundation, and that the nation's institutions — its economy, its politics, its inequities — still bear that origin's shape.

The project became one of the most banned texts in the country, targeted by federal legislation, and a presidential commission convened specifically to counter it. Few works of journalism in recent memory have provoked a government response of that scale — a fact Hannah-Jones treats less as a threat than as evidence of how much is still at stake in who gets to tell the country's founding story.

A Pulitzer Prize, Peabody, and Emmy-winning journalist at The Times, Hannah-Jones has increasingly moved from reporting the story to building the institutions that keep it being told.

Four hundred years after Jamestown, Hannah-Jones returns to the question that made her famous: not just what slavery's legacy did to America, but also who gets to decide how — and whether — that history gets told at all.

In Partnership with:



'The 1619 Project': Examining the Origins of Slavery 400 Years Later

Nikole Hannah-Jones

Wednesday, Nov. 4
7 p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center
1 Sassafras Pier
Erie, Pennsylvania



From the Revolution to World Wars, the Battles That Defined America

Rick Atkinson

**Monday, Nov. 9
7 p.m.**

**Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania**

From the Revolution to World Wars, the Battles That Defined America

Rick Atkinson's career sort of began when he was born in Munich, Germany, to a father in the U.S. Army. His nomadic childhood at U.S. Army posts instilled a sense of curiosity in him that when paired with a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalism career, produced two of the most ambitious narrative histories in America: The Liberation Trilogy, tracing the U.S. Army's campaign through North Africa and Europe in World War II, and still unfolding is the Revolution Trilogy, reconstructing the founding generation's fight for independence with the same granular, ground-level detail.

"An Army at Dawn", the first Liberation volume, won Atkinson his first Pulitzer; "The Guns at Last Light", the third, became a #1 New York Times bestseller praised as "history written at the level of literature." He then turned the same method on 1775 America: "The British Are Coming" and its follow-up, "The Fate of the Day", rebuild the Revolution battle by battle, using the eyewitness detail more often reserved for wars fought in living memory. His work has made him a historical adviser to Ken Burns' PBS series "The American Revolution", timed to commemorate the conflict's 250th anniversary.

Atkinson's authority comes from having covered war as a journalist, reporting from Berlin, Somalia, Bosnia, and Iraq as an assistant managing editor at The Washington Post. A three-time Pulitzer winner and former Omar N. Bradley Chair of Strategic Leadership at the U.S. Army War College, he brings both a soldier's eye for logistics and a novelist's eye for character to the question of what happens when a nation must fight to survive?

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SARAH BOTSTEIN



DAVID SCHMIDT

The Producers Behind Ken Burns' Award-Winning PBS Documentaries

**Sarah Botstein and
David Schmidt**

**Tuesday, Nov. 10
7 p.m.**

**Yehl Room at Gannon University's
Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.
Erie, Pennsylvania**

The Producers Behind Ken Burns' Award-Winning PBS Documentaries

David Schmidt grew up minutes from Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown, spending his summers in costume at Colonial Williamsburg and digging in the dirt at Historic Jamestown's archaeological site. It was the kind of childhood that, for Schmidt, became a career, and resulted in "The American Revolution", a six-part, 12-hour PBS series he produced and co-directed alongside Ken Burns and Sarah Botstein. It premiered last fall.

Schmidt's path to that project began with Florentine Films as a researcher and apprentice on "The Roosevelts", then won the Jane Mercer Footage Researcher of the Year award for his work on "The Vietnam War", in which he collaborated closely with writer Geoffrey C. Ward. He went on to produce Benjamin Franklin with Burns in the early 2020s before returning, fittingly, to the history that first pulled him toward the field.

Botstein has been in that same editing room for nearly 30 years, long enough to have shaped the modern Ken Burns documentary as much as anyone besides Burns himself. Her credits — which cover jazz, Prohibition, international wars, Hemingway, the Holocaust, incarcerated populations, and now the American Revolution — span nearly every major turn in American history that PBS has documented this century. She also helped build what happens after the broadcast, developing curriculum for PBS LearningMedia's Ken Burns Classroom, and she is already at work on a three-part series on Lyndon B. Johnson and the Great Society.

Schmidt and Botstein will pull back the curtain on what it takes to turn years of archival footage and research into the documentaries that shape how millions of Americans understand their own history.

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The Mingle Project: Restoring Civility in Our Society Through Gathering

Michael Smerconish has spent decades doing something increasingly rare in American media: avoiding standard partisan talking points and having productive discussions with people who disagree with him, on air. As host of a daily SiriusXM program heard nationwide and CNN's Saturday morning "Smerconish," he's built a career on the premise that civil disagreement isn't just possible — it's good broadcasting.

That instinct started in print. A longtime columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News and Sunday Philadelphia Inquirer, Smerconish built a readership by refusing to write for an ideological team, a habit that carried into his eight books, including the novel "TALK" — optioned for television by Warner Brothers — and his latest collection, "Clowns to the Left of Me, Jokers to the Right: American Life in Columns". He's donated all the proceeds of five of those books to charity and taken his voice beyond the page and the airwaves entirely with a one-man live show, "Things I Wish Knew Before I Started Talking", which is available on streaming platforms.

That show's title doubles as his thesis: that the country's civility problem isn't about what people believe, but about being knowledgeable and able to sit across from someone and talk. His new venture, The Mingle Project, takes that idea out of the studio entirely, following Smerconish's belief that isolation, technology, and political polarization are dividing American society in a way that only bringing people together face-to-face can fix.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Lehigh University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Smerconish lives in the Philadelphia suburbs, where he and his wife raised four children — the kind of ordinary life, he would argue, that needs defending right now.

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A Post Election Conversation with Margaret Hoover

Take a closer look at the midterm elections this year with Margaret Hoover, host of PBS' "Firing Line with Margaret Hoover", a public affairs, multi-platform program that engages in long-form interviews and a rigorous exchange of ideas with the guiding principle that civil discourse is a civic responsibility.

Hoover served in The White House under President George W. Bush, in the Department of Homeland Security, on Capitol Hill and on two presidential campaigns, giving her an insightful background of electoral politicking. She is the president of American Unity Fund, a political organization focused on achieving full freedom and equality for LGBT Americans. A bestselling author, her writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Daily News, The Daily Beast, CNN, and Fox News.

She also serves on the boards of Stanford University's Hoover Institution, the Hoover Presidential Foundation, the Belgian American Educational Foundation, The Markle Foundation, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Raised in Colorado, Hoover has lived in China, Mexico, Bolivia, and Taiwan. She speaks fluent Spanish and studied Mandarin Chinese.

Sponsored by:



The Mingle Project: Restoring Civility in Our Society Through Gathering

Michael Smerconish

Thursday, Nov. 12

7 p.m.

Yehl Room at Gannon University's
Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.
Erie, Pennsylvania



A Post Election Conversation with Margaret Hoover

Margaret Hoover

Tuesday, Nov. 17

7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society
3207 State St.
Erie, Pennsylvania



The Author of 'Autocracy, Inc.' On How Dictators Are Working Together to Run the World

Anne Applebaum

Thursday, Nov. 19
7 p.m.

Yehl Room at Gannon University's
Waldron Campus Center
124 W. Seventh St.
Erie, Pennsylvania

The Author of 'Autocracy, Inc.' On How Dictators Are Working Together to Run the World

In 2024, Anne Applebaum's book "Autocracy, Inc: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World" climbed the charts as a New York Times Bestseller and was recognized as a "Best Book of the Year" by multiple publications, including The Economist, Financial Times, Foreign Affairs, and The Times, indicating its significance and impact.

It lives within a larger canon from Pulitzer Prize winning historian, journalist, commentator on geopolitics and acclaimed keynote, Anne Applebaum, whose work examines the challenges and opportunities of global political and economic change through the lenses of world history and the contemporary political landscape.

Applebaum doesn't just write about authoritarianism; she witnessed it from 1988 to 1991 when she covered the collapse of communism as Warsaw correspondent for The Economist. Informed by her expertise in Europe and her years of international reporting, Applebaum shares perspectives on — and the far-reaching implications of — today's volatile world events. And as technology allows a new scale of media manipulation to authoritarian governments and changes the tenor of political discourse, she scrutinizes the misinformation, propaganda, and criminal exploitation that influence global affairs, as well.

From Syrian refugees to Putin's disinformation narratives, from the EU and the European financial crises to responding to terrorism, from solutions to transition-government corruption to political populists' game-changing campaign language, Applebaum provides both background and up-to-the-minute insights that are vital to understanding the risks and opportunities of today's world political and economic climate. For many years, Applebaum wrote a biweekly foreign affairs column for The Washington Post, and she remains on the beat today as a staff writer for The Atlantic.

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THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY PRESENTS: GLOBAL SUMMIT XVIII

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 - THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

2026 HEADLINER



A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama

Monday, October 12 | 6 p.m.

Erie Insurance Arena

Featuring: Michelle Obama



President Trump, the MAGA Movement, and 2028: What's Next for the GOP

Tuesday, September 22 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Hugh Hewitt



Steeler Legend & Fox Sports Broadcaster Talks Everything Football

Thursday, September 24 | 7 p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center

Featuring: Terry Bradshaw



Making a Difference: How One Erie-Based Company is Working to Shape Ukraine's Future

Tuesday, September 29 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Jim Berlin (left) and Ambassador William B. Taylor



2026 Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award Recipient

Thursday, October 1 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Bishop Sean W. Rowe



The 'Godfather' of AI: Geoffrey Hinton on the New Frontier of Technology

Monday, October 5 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Geoffrey Hinton



The US Constitution and Our Republic: Will We Keep It?

Monday, October 19 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Jeffrey Rosen



Gannon READS: "The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life"

Tuesday, October 20 | 7 p.m.

Warner Theatre

Featuring: Simran Jeet Singh



Why the Transatlantic Alliance Matters: Protecting Ukraine's Children and Europe's Next Generation

Wednesday, October 21 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Mariam Lambert (left) and Sally Painter



America's Homeland Security: 25-Years After 9/11

Thursday, October 22 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: (from left) Jeh Johnson, Fran Townsend, and Tom Ridge



America's Homeland Security: 25-Years After 9/11

Thursday, October 22 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: (from left) Jeh Johnson, Fran Townsend, and Tom Ridge



ERIE REGIONAL CHAMBER
AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Lake Erie Launchpad: Emerging Erie Entrepreneurs

Tuesday, October 27 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Erie entrepreneurs, innovators, funders, and investors



Looking Back While Forging Ahead: Examining Erie's Economic Development

Wednesday, October 28 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Steve Leeper (left) and Tim NeCastro



March, Run, Vote: Graphic Storytelling and the Fight for Democracy

Thursday, October 29 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Nate Powell (left) and Andrew Aydin



'The 1619 Project': Examining the Origins of American Slavery 400 Years Later

Wednesday, November 4 | 7 p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center

Featuring: Nikole Hannah-Jones



From the Revolution to World Wars, the Battles That Defined America

Monday, November 9 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Rick Atkinson



The Producers Behind Ken Burns' Award-Winning PBS Documentaries

Tuesday, November 10 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Sarah Botstein (left) and David Schmidt



The Mingle Project: Restoring Civility in Our Society through Gathering

Thursday, November 12 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Michael Smerconish



A Post Election Conversation with Margaret Hoover

Tuesday, November 17 | 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society

Featuring: Margaret Hoover



The Author of 'Autocracy, Inc.' on How Dictators Are Working Together to Run the World

Thursday, November 19 | 7 p.m.

Gannon University Waldron Campus Center

Featuring: Anne Applebaum

GLOBAL SUMMIT XVII RAISES THE BAR (AGAIN) IN QUALITY SPEAKER LINEUPS



The Global Summit keeps growing, and 2025 was proof. Thousands of attendees turned out across 18 events to hear from over 20 speakers, making it the largest Global Summit in our history.

The energy was unmistakable from the very first night, when more than 8,000 people packed the Erie Insurance Arena to hear Steve Scully sit down with the 44th President of the United States, Barack H. Obama in Erie's single largest indoor ticketed event. From there, the lineup continued as Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Kelly opened up about resilience on and off the field in "A Journey of Perseverance," astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson brought the cosmos down to earth, and former Vice President Mike Pence joined Paul McNulty for a candid look at faith, family, and liberty in American politics today.

By the time the series wrapped with an evening alongside Henry Louis Gates Jr. of "Finding Your Roots," the energy was still high, and we channeled that into this year's lineup. Every speaker we bring to the Jefferson becomes part of our network, opening doors to the next round of world-class voices. If 2025 was our biggest year yet, 2026 is shaping up to think even bigger.

GLOBAL SUMMIT I (2009)

- E.J. Dionne, Kevin Fickenschier, M.D., George S. Howard, Stephen Porter, William A. Smith.



E.J. DIONNE

GLOBAL SUMMIT II (2010)

- Paul Kennedy, Elaine C. Kamarck, Harvey A. Bender, G. Terry Madonna, Dave Porter, Alan J. Russell.



PAUL KENNEDY

GLOBAL SUMMIT III (2011)

- General Michael Hayden, Joel Barker, Freddie H. Fu, M.D., Francis Fukuyama, Alice M. Rivlin, Steve Scully, Michael J. Songer.



ALICE M. RIVLIN

GLOBAL SUMMIT IV (2012)

- Karl Rove, David Brooks, Ira Byock, M.D., Barry Casselman, Tom Flynn, Robert Kirschner, Norman Ornstein.



KARL ROVE

GLOBAL SUMMIT V (2013)

- Harry Markopolos, Howard Dean, M.D., Crislyn D'Souza-Schorey, David Gergen, William Kristol, Brian Lamb, Thomas E. Mann, Ian Morris, Richard Norton Smith, Edith Widder.



HARRY MARKOPOLOS

GLOBAL SUMMIT VI (2014)

- Sister Joan Chittister, Donna Brazile, Stephen Burt, Laura Bush, Bruce Katz, Charles C. Mann, Michele Ridge, Gregory Skomal, Michael Steele.



SISTER JOAN CHITTISTER

GLOBAL SUMMIT VII (2015)

- Cokie Roberts, Danielle Allen, Anthony Atala, M.D., Nile Gardiner, Norman Gevitz, Bas Lansdorp, Aaron David Miller, Eric Raimy, Darrell West, Gov. Tom Wolf.



COKIE ROBERTS

GLOBAL SUMMIT VIII (2016)

- Doris Kearns Goodwin, Antoine von Agtmael, Fred Barnes, Rev. Jeffrey Brown, Lesley Lee Francis, Robert Hass, Andres Lozano, M.D., M.R. O'Connor, David Orr, Gov. Tom Ridge, Donald Sheehy.



DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

GLOBAL SUMMIT IX (2017)

- Andrew Card, Bruce Katz, Jay Cost, Steve Scully, Philip Rucker, Tara Palmeri, Byron York, Douglas Brinkley, Jackson Janes, Caitlin Welsh, Ellen Jorgensen, Lt. Gen. James Dubik, Ret.



ANDREW CARD

GLOBAL SUMMIT X (2018)

- David Ignatius, Ashley Swearingen, Ian Morris, Leonard Calabrese, D.O., Sebastian Gorka, Gen. Michael Hayden, Michael Eric Dyson, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Howard Dean, Elise Jordan, Bill Plante, Ann Compton, Steve Scully, James Fallows, Deborah Fallows, Chris Matthews.



MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

GLOBAL SUMMIT XI (2019)

- Camille Busette, Patricia Glibert, Nile Gardner, Avi Loeb, Chuck Hagel, Tom Ridge, Sean Spicer, George Will, Karen Tumulty, Alexi McCammond, Mary Katharine Ham, Steve Scully, Michael Smerconish, Edna Greene Medford, Susan Page, Eleanor Smeal



SUSAN PAGE

GLOBAL SUMMIT XII (Digital 2021)

- Camille Busette, Rashawn Ray, Ali Zaidi, Avi Loeb, Jeffrey Brown, Nile Gardiner, Gerald Seib, Dr. Michael Saag, Steve Scully, Susan Page, Karen Tumulty, Dr. Leana Wen, David Ignatius, Christopher Hill, April Ryan, James Fallows, Deborah Fallows, Steven Ascher, Jeanne Jordan.



APRIL RYAN

GLOBAL SUMMIT XIII (2021)

- George W. Bush, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Jeffrey Rosen, Andrew Card, Camille Busette, Thomas "Mack" McLarty, Barbara Perry, Stacy Cordery, Anita McBride, Steve Scully, Clayola Brown, DeWitt Walton, Robert Pape.



GEORGE W. BUSH

GLOBAL SUMMIT XIV (2022)

- John Calipari, Jon Wertheim, Karl Rove, Elizabeth Strickler, Rashawn Ray, Anahita Panahi, José Muñoz, Reuben Jacobson, Fiona Hill, Jay Cost, John C. Austin, James Fallows, Rev. Charles Brock, Tom Bodett, John Dickerson, Allen Carroll, Al Hunt, Judy Woodruff, Avi Loeb, Dawn Wright, Josh Fryday, Baher Ghosheh.



JUDY WOODRUFF

GLOBAL SUMMIT XV (2023)

- Peter Baker, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, Brian Freedman, Richard Florida, Bruce Katz, Matt Weidinger, David Urban, Rich Lesser, Richard Reeves, Della Clark, Tom Nichols, Robert Garland, Maj. General Edward Bolton, Jr., Ret., Laura Coates, Karen Tumulty, Val Demings, and Michael Steele.



VAL DEMINGS

GLOBAL SUMMIT XVI (2024)

- Liz Cheney, Sr. Joan Chittister, Stephen A. Smith, Jon Wertheim, Charles Marohn, Tristan Hoag, Heather Cox Richardson, Tom Nichols, Lara Schwartz, Michael Strain, Joe Davis, Marian L. Tupy, Fred Biletnikoff, Maj. General Ed Bolton Jr., Ret., Angela G. Neal, Dr. Karen J. Bolton, Lia Van Liew, Harold Holzer, Chris Matthews, Tara Setmayer, David Urban, Steve Scully, Eddie Glaude, Jr.



LIZ CHENEY

GLOBAL SUMMIT XVII (2025)

- President Barack Obama, Jane Arbuckle Petro, David LaMotte, Chris Whipple, Lindsay Chervinsky, Jim Kelly, Mark Gitenstein, Adrian "Woj" Wojnarowski, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Richard Berry, Greg Fischer, William Peduto, Vice President Mike Pence, Paul McNulty, Michael McFaul, Ach Melnick, Yvonne Drebert, Mike Thomas, Journey Gunderson, Charles Liu, Juan Williams, Larry Sabato, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.



PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

THOMAS B. HAGEN

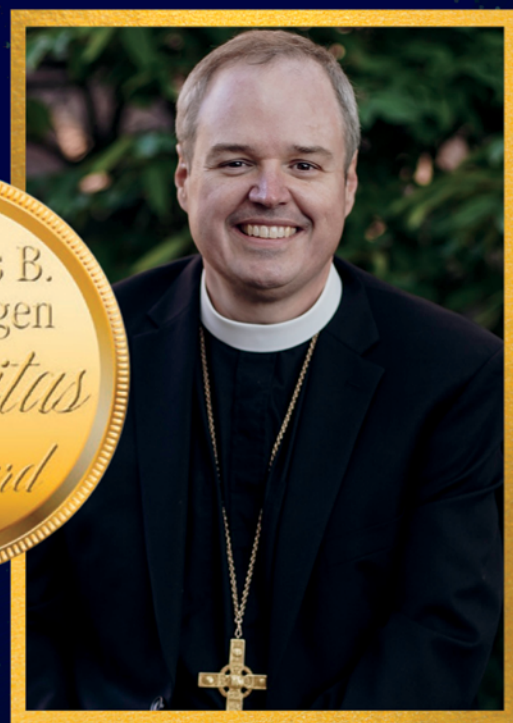
Dignitas Award

Each year since 2011 during the Global Summit, we recognize an Erie native, or someone who has spent significant time in the community, with the **Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award**. The award, named for one of Erie's leading citizens, Thomas B. Hagen, honors individuals who have achieved greatness in their fields, made significant contributions to the vitality of American democracy, and have a lasting impact on society.



Rev. Charles Brock (left), 2022 Honoree, with Thomas B. Hagen.

OUR 2026 HONOREE BISHOP SEAN ROWE



PREVIOUS HONOREES

2011 Steve Scully

2012 Barry Casselman

2013 Harry Markopolos

2014 Sister Joan Chittister

2015 Drs. John and Silvia Ferretti

2016 Hon. Tom Ridge

2017 Lt. Gen. James Dubik, Ret.

2018 James Fallows & Deborah Fallows

2019 Eleanor Smeal

2021 Robert Pape

2022 Rev. Charles Brock

2023 Maj. Gen. Edward L. Bolton, Jr. Ret.

2024 Fred Biletnikoff

2025 Dr. Jane Arbuckle Petro



“ THE GLOBAL SUMMIT IS LIKE SOMETHING PEOPLE CANNOT ACCESS UNLESS THEY GO OUTSIDE OF ERIE. THIS IS WHAT THEY LOOK FOR AT NATIONAL CONFERENCES OR ON YOUTUBE, **WHEN IT'S RIGHT HERE.** ”

- ANGELIA S., JES MEMBER



Above: Sister Joan Chittister joined U.S. Rep Liz Cheney and Steve Scully in conversation for the largest single ticketed event in Bayfront Convention Center history for Global Summit 2024.

Clockwise (from center): JES President Dr. Ferki Ferati poses with President George W. Bush, the first U.S. President the JES hosted at a Global Summit in 2021.

JES Vice President Ben Speggen moderates a conversation with Fiona Hill at Global Summit 2022.

Heather Cox Richardson and Tom Nichols engage our Global Summit audience in a critical pre-Presidential Election conversation in 2024.

Michael Eric Dyson evokes several standing ovations throughout his Global Summit 2018 lecture.



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BECOME A PART OF OUR GROWING COMMUNITY

Becoming a JES member means more than access to inspiring programs, well-researched articles, and renowned speakers — it's being included in a community dedicated to lifelong learning through perspective expanding civil dialogue and civic progress. Your membership and support helps bring bold conversations, timely publications, and meaningful change to every corner of Erie County.

**TAKE YOUR SEAT AT THE TABLE.
BECOME A JES MEMBER TODAY.**



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EARLY-BIRD PRICING

General Admission (single event) - \$25

General Admission Pass (all events*) - \$250
Valued at \$450

Preferred Seating (single event) - \$50

Preferred Seating Pass (all events*) - \$350
Valued at \$900

REGULAR PRICING

General Admission (single event) - \$35

General Admission Pass (all events*) - \$350
Valued at \$630

Preferred Seating (single event) - \$60

Preferred Seating Pass (all events*) - \$550
Valued at \$1,080

EARLY-BIRD PRICING FOR EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER ENDS ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2026
AND FOR EVENTS IN NOVEMBER, EARLY-BIRD PRICING ENDS ON OCTOBER 15, 2026.

PLEASE NOTE: PRICING DOES NOT INCLUDE PROCESSING FEES OR ENTERTAINMENT TAX.
PREFERRED TICKETS AND PASSES INCLUDE SEATING CLOSER TO THE STAGE.
*PASSES AND JES MEMBERSHIPS DO NOT INCLUDE JES SPECIAL EVENTS.

Tickets & Check-In: There are no physical tickets for events with the exception of October 12. Registrants' names will appear on a master list at check-in tables. A valid ID (such as a driver's license or state-issued ID) will be required.

Registration Policy: All registrations must be completed online or by phone prior to the day of the event. There will be NO ticket sales day of at the venue spaces.

Admission for Students: Free for all Erie County students with valid enrollment verification (e.g., student ID). Advance registration required.

Scholarships: Don't let cost stand in the way of learning! The JES offers scholarships covering up to 100% for those in need.

PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS TODAY!
JESERIE.ORG/GLOBAL-SUMMIT-XVIII
OR BY CALLING JES: 814.459.8000



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Study **THE PAST.**
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The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie believes in offering courses, seminars, and lectures that explain the ideas that formed the past, assist in exploring the present, and offer guidance in creating the future of the Erie region.

JES MISSION

The Jefferson Educational Society was created as a Pennsylvania nonprofit organization on September 29, 2008, and on that same date received tax-exempt status by the federal Department of the Treasury under Employment Identification Number 26-3460486.

The JES operates under a 501 (c) (3) educational nonprofit charter, though it does not offer degrees or programs for formal academic credit. The Jefferson was founded to stimulate community progress through education and research activities. Its mission also includes a commitment to operate in a nonpartisan, nondenominational manner without a political or philosophical bias.

As such, the JES follows the examined truth wherever it leads and is neither liberal nor conservative, Democratic nor Republican in philosophy or in action.

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Your donations to the JES ensures the continuation of community progress through programming, publications, and public policy initiatives.

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