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Erie Times-News

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Seeds from last summer's sunflower field at the Hagen History Center in Girard will be distilled into spirits at the Wilds Sonshine Factory in Kane. GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

GOLDEN COMEBACK

Girard sunflowers return both in fields and in bottles

Valerie Myers
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Remember all those sunflowers in bloom in Girard last summer?

They'll be back this summer — and not only as you'd expect.

A new crop of sunflowers will be planted at the Hagen History Center's Girard campus this spring.

And seeds harvested from last year's 1.2 million plants will be distilled to

make a unique sunflower spirit.

From seeds to spirits

The sunflower project is a partnership between Hagen History Center and The Wilds Sonshine Factory, a craft distillery in Kane, Pennsylvania, that makes spirits from sunflower seeds.

Wilds Sonshine Factory will provide seeds for the Hagen History Center field each spring and will oversee the harvest of the seeds each fall to make a unique sunflower spirit.

Seeds harvested in Girard last fall are expected to be distilled this spring.

"We plan to create a sunflower spirit specifically marketed toward the Erie area," Taylor McConnell said in an email

to the Erie Times-News. McConnell is general manager of The Wilds Sonshine Factory.

The company is arranging to have the spirit sold by a local liquor retailer.

"We are hoping to have the product developed and ready to hit the marketplace by this summer," McConnell said.

A growing celebration

Hagen History Center is planning a bigger and better sunflower event in 2026.

The yellow flowers "as far as the eye can see" caused a buzz in their first

See **SUNFLOWERS**, Page 2A

PA struggles to rein in AI

State weighs how far regulations should go as the tech sector surges

Mark Walters
USA TODAY NETWORK

Disinformation, personal privacy and labor market disruptions are on a list of concerns surrounding artificial intelligence spelled out in a committee's recommendations on the adoption and use of AI in Pennsylvania.

The January report is from the Joint State Government Commission, the nonpartisan research and policy development agency for the General Assembly. In hundreds of pages the report touches on potential perils of artificial intelligence and ways to consider handling the new technology that is coming to market perhaps faster than any technological advancement on the back of epic financial investments.

Make no mistake, Gov. Josh Shapiro wants his state in on the boom as he recruits data centers to Pennsylvania and promotes the state's research institutions as AI incubators.

In his budget speech Feb. 3, Shapiro

See **AI**, Page 2A

Dems call for refunds after tariffs ruled illegal

Idea of rebate checks floated amid skepticism

Jeanine Santucci
USA TODAY

After the Supreme Court ruled against President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs on imports, some Democrats are demanding that refunds be sent to Americans, the latest hypothetical plan to redistribute tariff



Newsom



Pritzker

income back to everyday Americans.

The nation's highest court on Feb. 20 ruled that Trump doesn't have

the power to unilaterally impose the tariffs he enacted under an emergency powers law, which he has used as part of his foreign policy strategy with ever-changing rates on targeted countries.

Democrats including California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker have demanded refunds of at least \$1,700 per household, with Pritzker sending the Trump administration an invoice for that amount per family

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