Cycling the streets for tots

'Tour de Tots' taking riders from suburbs to Chicago for charity | PAGE 7
CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD
AND HOLIDAYS OF LIGHT
WITH THE MAGIC OF DISNEY
Cycling the streets for tots
'Tour de Tots' taking riders from suburbs to Chicago for charity | PAGE 7
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SPORTSWEAR
Animal shelter is on its way into Morton Grove

BY RICK KAMBIC
rkambic@pioneerlocal.com | @rict_kambic

Right-Way Rescue is ready to call Morton Grove home.

Village trustees voted 5-1 on Dec. 9 to approve plans for an adoption center at 5916 Lincoln Ave., a warehouse near Mason Avenue that has sat empty for approximately five years.

The approval process was speedy, as Wright-Way officials found and agreed to purchase the warehouse just days after a runaway school bus crashed through their Niles facility on Oct. 4.

“We couldn’t be more happy with how things have gone,” said Christy Anderson, the director and founder of Wright-Way. “Obviously we wish the crash never happened, but our supporters have been generous and Morton Grove has been very helpful throughout the process.”

As of Nov. 25, Anderson said the group raised $150,000 of their $1.1 million goal — enough for a down payment and the cost of renovation. Anderson said the construction would take approximately two months.

“The plan commission first recommended approval by a 4-2 vote on Nov. 18. Commissioner Saba Kahn and Chairman Ron Parkas opposed the conceptual plan, citing concerns of potential undue hardships on neighbors. Neighbors who openly opposed Wright-Way during that meeting also spoke during the Village Board’s first read of the plan on Nov. 25.

A new set of residents spoke out on Dec. 9, though they were only able to sway one trustee.

“It’s the wrong place to have that type of facility,” said resident Jim Quinn. “It may belong on Oakton Avenue over by the garbage dump, but it just doesn’t belong next to somebody’s house. I don’t see how you can envision that being good for anybody.”

Quinn said no tax money will come from Wright-Way, and neighbors will be bothered by noise and traffic.

Previous concerns were about noise from animals and odor from the building’s ventilation system. At the time, Anderson immediately agreed to route the ventilation exhaust out of the roof and assured trustees that the kennels are sound-proof.

Trustees also agreed that an animal shelter would be calmer than previous industrial uses of the building.

Residents Janice and James Cha also raised concerns before the Dec. 9 vote, but theirs related to Wright-Way’s operations.

The couple requested answers for how Wright-Way ensures appropriate adoptions while using the Internet heavily in marketing, how Wright-Way handles returns, what happens to mother dogs and what happens to animals that are not immediately adopted.

Wright-Way’s website was also called into question. The Chas asked why animals younger than two months old were shown and what happens to mother dogs and pups after they are shown.

Board President Bob Kahn and Chairman Ron Farkas recommended approval by a 4-2 vote, though they were only able to sway one trustee.

“The website displays ‘one month’ even though the dog or cat may be six or seven weeks old,” Anderson said. “I was told that’s the time it takes before any animal leaves the building. The internet heavily in marketing is not a guaranteed adoption, Anderson said, and no down payments are accepted if customers book an appointment to visit an animal found online. Wright-Way does over-the-phone and in-person screening prior to adoptions, and the staff reserves the right to decline adoptions, Anderson continued.

Wright-Way does accept returns and puts those animals back into the system, Anderson said, but councilors first attempt to train the pet and family. Animals not adopted within three weeks return to Wright-Way’s Central Illinois facility to enjoy open space before staff restarts the process, Anderson said.

Older dogs and cats are not excluded from Wright-Way, Anderson said.

“Ideally we wouldn’t separate pups from parents, but that’s not the reality of the situation,” Anderson said. “We pick up what is at the county-run humane societies. Sometimes the moms are with the pups and sometimes they’re not, but we’re known for not leaving moms behind.”

Shel Marcus was the only trustee to oppose Wright-Way’s new facility, though his objections didn’t involve perceived operations.

“Your name is well-known throughout the area as one of the better non-kill shelters, so that’s not an issue,” Marcus said. “My concern is the location, size and adaptability in terms of where this would be going. My position here is to see if this is a right fit for our community and my objection is nothing against your organization or the fine people who work for it.”

Parking was briefly brought up, to which village staff said Wright-Way is required to have 17 spaces and the proposed building has 20.
Cyclists ride from Niles to Chicago for ‘Tour de Toys’

BY NATASSIA WASINSKI
For Sun-Times Media | @natwaz

Don’t put those bicycles in storage just yet. Amling’s Cycle and Fitness’s Holiday Toy Ride takes off Friday, Dec. 13.

The Niles bike shop organizes the winter “Tour de Toys” to deliver unwrapped gifts to Toys For Tots, a program of the U.S. Marines.

Amling’s owner Joe Reichert and his partner, Julie Keating, first participated in a toy drop-off 11 years ago. The attention they got for riding a tandem bike to the car-centric event sparked an idea.

“It was really a ‘feel good’ event,” Reichert recalled. “On the way home we thought, we can do this. We can make this a real bike ride.”

The following year, a group of 35 cyclists joined the couple and biked from Niles to Chicago to deliver toys. Over the past decade, the fleet do-gooders has grown to more than 100.

“While bicycle riding isn’t typically thought of as a winter sport, the ride is a great way to get some exercise, fresh air and most importantly to ensure all children have a wonderful holiday,” Reichert said.

The ride was cancelled only once in the event’s history due to inclement weather.

Reichert remembers one particularly cold year, when the temperature reached a low of 8 degrees.

“It was wee bit chilly,” Reichert said. “Still, everyone rode and had a good time.”

Keating said biking through the elements isn’t too bad with several layers of clothing. “Once you start pedaling the bike, you start generating body heat and feel warm,” she explained. “It’s only that first 20 minutes that it’s cold out there.”

The upcoming Holiday Toy Ride kicks off at 6:30 a.m. at Amling’s, 8140 N. Milwaukee Ave.

The finish line of the 12 mile trek is the Mystic Celt Bar and Grill in Lakeview, where participants will drop off gifts and be treated to a complimentary buffet.

“Every year when we start handing toys over to the Marines, I always choke up,” Keating said.

There is no cost to participate other than bringing a new, unwrapped toy.

Keating noted this year’s donation goal is to match the event record of 1,000 gifts. Amling’s will provide trailers to stow the goods.

“People really get connected,” Reichert said. “The more riders we can get, the more toys we can give, the better.”

For more information and to register for Amling’s Holiday Toy Ride, visit www.toyridechicago.com.
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Seniors welcomed at Hanukkah luncheon

BY KARIE ANGEll LUC
For Sun-Times Media | @KareAngellLuc

For more than a quarter century, the Sisterhood of the Wilmette Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah has hosted local seniors at an annual Hanukkah luncheon.

The tradition continued Dec. 5 as Hanukkah concluded for 2013.

Seniors from North Shore residences and group homes were escorted by staff or volunteers and welcomed by more volunteers from the Sisterhood.

Some used canes. Others walked in slowly past silver menorahs and unlit candles.

Other guests were brought in via wheelchairs to their place in the Spak Auditorium at 3220 Big Tree Lane. The procession moved slowly, but purposefully with the intent to share a meal, and for this, Dorothy Levant, manager of Robineau Residence in Skokie, was grateful.

"Every brick of this synagogue is built with kindness," said Levant, who brought seniors from Robineau. "Every year, the Sisterhood makes sure the seniors are not forgotten and makes sure every person feels like a king or a queen for the day."

Seven senior resident facilities were included at this year's luncheon.

Bob Borre, who resides at Robineau, said he hasn't really celebrated Hanukkah in his past, but proudly wore a dark yarmulke skullcap to honor Judaism and Hanukkah.

Borre, who spent 40 years in Wilmette and 40 years in Glenview, was also grateful for his pal Scott Franklin, who spent many years residing in Morton Grove.

It was Franklin who made Borre feel welcome when Borre first entered the group home. Robineau's mission champions, "Jewish values for positive aging."

"Being at Robineau is a whole new life for me," Borre said, within earshot of Franklin.

A hot meal with traditional latkes warmed the soul on a cold but sunny December day. Making the meal possible is a Sisterhood membership which draws from all over Chicago, its roots cultivated on the North Shore.

Two women from Glencoe, for example, are Jackie Rosenwasser and Eva Sern. Rosenwasser lived in Wilmette for 35 years.

Judy Walder of Chicago, who was "very, very active in the Sisterhood," is former Sisterhood president. Walder lived in Wilmette for about 25 years, the same length of time the luncheon has been served.

Walder's children attended New Trier High School. Today, she has six grandchildren.

"I have had the honor of being a chairman of this event for a minimum of 10 years, let's say, if not more," said Walder, with a smile, counting the years with gesturing. "It [the luncheon] has grown in size but most of all, it has grown in community and in smiles and in wonderful memories."

"I talk to the staff each year of the various facilities, and they say this is one of the highlight trips that their residents take. So, we look forward to having them and I think that they look forward to being here."

Seniors could participate in bingo. All received a gift bag. The cantor and children from the congregation nursery school sang. "We all clap a lot and smile a lot," said Walder.

This year's luncheon welcomed 150 guests.

Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah is located at 3220 Big Tree Lane in Wilmette near the Edens Expressway. The congregation's new rabbi is Annie Tucker. Her installation ceremony was scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 7 with a Shabbat service, reception and dinner.

For more information, visit bhce.org/.
Myron & Phil's ditching fire-scarred location, looking for new home

BY NATALIE HAYES
For Sun-Times Media
@NatHayReporter

It's been a tumultuous year for Myron & Phil's, the iconic Lincolnwood steakhouse that caught fire last spring on the same night the restaurant's 95-year-old founder suddenly passed away.

Mark Freedman (son of founder Myron Freedman) planned to remodel the gutted interior and eventually reopen the smoke-damaged restaurant at 3900 W. Devon Ave., which caught fire the night of May 8.

The Lincolnwood Fire Department later determined the flames were sparked by a faulty electrical fixture in a storage room at the back of the building, and although the fire didn't reach the building's interior, toxic smoke left the kitchen and dining areas unusable.

The day after the fire, Freedman had said he hoped to reopen Myron & Phil's in about a month's time.

But after fighting with his insurance company for the past seven months to recover the damages, the Edgewater resident has had a change of heart.

"No one wants to see us leave, but we would fit in another location better," Freedman said, adding that Myron & Phil's would not be reopening at the restaurant's 43-year location at Devon and Proesel Avenues.

This week Freedman auctioned off the remaining tables and chairs that were left in sitting in the shuttered restaurant in a liquidation sale, and boxed up the memorabilia his father Myron and uncle Phil Freedman collected and displayed on the walls over the years.

Freedman said his plan is to start fresh with a spin-off concept of Myron & Phil's that would open in a new spot.

The new version of Myron & Phil's, Freedman said, could reopen in Lincolnwood, but other North Shore-area suburbs — including Glenview, Wilmette and Highland Park — are also being considered.

"When we first had the fire in May, the damage didn't seem that bad, but we had to tear everything out because of the smoke," Freedman said, "so we're finding it's a better idea to move on to a new location."

Myron & Phil's was one of the few remaining family-owned steakhouses in the area. It had a strong following of regulars, who mostly kept coming back because not much about the place had changed since it opened in 1971.

The new concept, Freedman said, would have touches of the original steakhouse, but with a more casual, modern vibe.

"It won't be another tablecloth steakhouse, but it will embrace the restaurant's history with a more contemporary feel," Freedman said.

Although he's leaving a big part of his past behind by ending the Myron & Phil's era, Freedman is determined to carry on the family restaurant legacy with a fresh concept molded to the modern-day dining experience.

"We've appreciated 43 years of business, and I've done my best to make everyone happy," Freedman said. "My desire is to return and be bigger and badder than ever."
POLICE BLOTTER
The following incidents were listed in the official bulletin of the Niles and Morton Grove police departments. Readers are reminded that an arrest does not constitute a finding of guilt. Only a court of law can make that determination.

NILES

BATTERY
Angkham Souvonghkan, 34, of 7900 Caldwell Ave., Niles, was charged with domestic battery on Dec. 1. A family member told police that Souvonghkan pushed her to the ground and attempted to choke her following an argument. The woman also accused Souvonghkan of punching her in the head several times while she was on the floor and threatening to grab a knife and kill her before he climbed out a window and ran from the residence, police said. Officers located Souvonghkan when he reportedly returned to the apartment building less than one hour later. He had a Dec. 2 court date.

RETAIL THEFT
Ganna Kosovych, 49, of 2000 Parkside Drive, Park Ridge, was charged with felony retail theft after she allegedly stole jewelry valued at $385 from Kohl's at the Golf Mill Shopping Center on Dec. 1. She has a Dec. 18 court date.

Elaine Seymour, 44, of St. Mary, Jamaica, was charged with retail theft on Dec. 2 after she allegedly stole chewing gum, cosmetics, food, vitamins and feminine wash from a store on the 5600 block of Touhy Avenue. Police said Seymour reported that she was on vacation and planning to return to Jamaica the next day. She was given a Dec. 18 court date.

DUI
Abraham Solomon, 37, of Des Plaines, was charged Nov. 30 with driving under the influence of alcohol. He is scheduled in court Dec. 27.

THEFT
Pablo Garcia, 46, of Chicago, was charged Dec. 3 with retail theft after allegedly taking a Leatherman multi-tool from Menards, 6301 Oakton Street, without paying for it. He is scheduled in court Dec. 31.

MORTON GROVE

BATTERY
Julius M. Thomas, 23, of Chicago, was arrested Nov. 30 with battery after allegedly throwing an I-Pass transponder at a co-worker and hitting that individual in the head. Thomas also allegedly threw a landscaping rock at the co-worker, hitting that individual in the shoulder. He is scheduled in court Jan. 13.

CRIME BRIEFS

NILES

BATTERY
A 24-year-old Chicago man told police that a friend began "throwing punches" at him on the morning of Nov. 28 outside a restaurant on the 9100 block of Golf Road. Police said the man reported that his nose started to bleed, but he refused medical treatment and later told police he did not want to pursue charges against his friend.

THEFT
A 23-year-old Niles man told police on Dec. 1 that he received a message on Facebook from a woman who threatened to "blow up" his house if he didn't remove a specific photograph from Facebook within five days.

MORTON GROVE

BURGLARY
A home in the 6500 block of Menard Avenue was broken into on Nov. 29. Police say access was gained via an unlocked door, and that no items have been reported missing so far.

THEFT
A bicycle was stolen from an unlocked backyard in the 5700 block of Carol Avenue on Nov. 11.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE
A string of Christmas lights hung on a house in the 6500 block of School Street were cut and rendered useless sometime on or before Dec. 1.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX LEVY FOR MORTON GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 70
I. A public hearing to approve a proposed property tax levy for Morton Grove School District No. 70 for 2013 will be held on December 16, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. at the Park View School, 6200 Lake Street, Morton Grove, Illinois.

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony to the taxing district may contact Dr. Phil Collins (847/965-6200).

The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes extended for the year 2012 were $10,701,477.00.

The estimated property taxes to be levied for 2013 are $11,139,304. This represents a 4.09% increase over the previous year.

The property taxes extended for debt service and public building commission leases for 2012 were $559,533.

The estimated property taxes to be levied for debt service and public building commission leases for 2013 are $526,233. This represents a -5.95% increase over the previous year.

IV. The total property taxes extended for debt service and public building commission leases for 2012 were $11,261,010.

The estimated total property taxes to be levied for 2013 are $11,665,537. This represents a 3.59% increase over the previous year.

Ad#696260 Pub: 12/12/13
Local teachers give ‘F’ to new pension law

With 25 years of teaching under his belt, Steve Senf had expected to step down from his technology post at Emerson Middle School in five years.

Sandy and Mike Deines, both retirees from Maine South High School, were recently looking to upgrade their 12-year-old van. But the educators say their spending plans have been put on hold since the passage of landmark legislation last week to overhaul Illinois' public pension system.

"I just couldn't do it," Sandy said of investing in a new family vehicle. "The economic decision I made today was based on that vote."

Senf said instead of retiring in 2018, he would likely work a decade more in order to make up for the shortfall in his expected retirement benefits.

"My wife and I had [previously] sat down and we had planned what we were going to do," he said. "For [lawmakers] to take that away is just unbelievable ... I am very hurt and upset."

The controversial law, which takes effect June 1, comes under fire by unions and public employees who challenge the constitutionality of renegoting on benefits.

The overhaul is designed to grant reprieve to Illinois' grossly underfunded pension system by saving $160 billion over 30 years. 

The cost savings come from cutbacks to pension payments by as much as $1.5 billion a year for state workers, including university employees and teachers outside Chicago. The law also pushes back the retirement age for employees 45 and younger.

Deines said she expects to collect $40,000 less in retirement benefits over the next 25 years due to the changes. Senf estimated a six-figure loss.

Former Carpenter Elementary School art teacher Freid Klonsky said he wouldn't get 25 percent of the pension he is owed in 20 years time.

"But I'm not the typical retiree," he said. "The typical retiree is a 70-year-old living downstate on less than $40,000 a year after being a teacher for 30 years. That's who this is affecting."

Prior to retiring last year, Klonsky taught for three decades in Park Ridge-Niles School District 64, where he also served as president of the teachers' union.

Pankaj Sharma, a teacher at Niles North High School and president of the Niles Township Federation of Teachers, said politics are primarily to blame, not a faulty retirement system.

"There is not a pension problem in Illinois," he said. "We have a major revenue problem, which has existed for decades."

According to Klonsky, Illinois' public employees are taking the fall for 60 years of financial mismanagement by lawmakers.

"It's an unfair burden to place on one small group of people when the state didn't meet their obligations," Klonsky said.

Local educators claim they've held up their end of the bargain by putting 9 percent of their earnings into the state system. They point out "career teachers" also don't collect social security.

Mike Deines said he contributed to the pension pool every month for 35 years with the expectation that he would one day receive the money he had earned.

"That faith on my part kept me working day in and out," he said.

Teachers support closing corporate tax loopholes, ending wheeling-and-dealing between lawmakers and businesses, and implementing a progressive tax structure as alternative solutions to solving the state's revenue woes.

But since "teachers aren't allowed to be prosperous," Sandy Deines said, going after public pensions is a politically easier maneuver.

Consequently, pension reform as it stands, she and other teachers say, only exacerbates the gap between the highest earners and everyone else.

"This is not how to build a strong middle class, nor how to attract high-quality individuals into teaching and other public service professions," Sharma said.

While the union coalition We Are One Illinois prepares for a legal fight with Springfield, public school teachers and retirees said they're preparing for the worst by curtailing their spending now in order to save.

"It's not as merry of a Christmas this year," said Sandy Deines.

District 67 looks to upgrade fire alarms at schools

Golf School District 67 is seeking to replace outdated fire alarm systems at its recently revamped schools to better comply with village standards.

Despite meeting state regulations, both Golf Middle School and Hynes Elementary Schools are due for an upgrade, Superintendent Beth Flores reported to the board of education Dec. 5.

The district has requested a matching grant from the State Board of Education to help offset the cost, which Flores said would be approximately $100,000.

Flores solicited a letter of support from the Morton Grove Fire Department for the application.

Fire Chief Thomas Friel's response outlined some of the "non-compliance issues and concerns" with the school's current systems, including the synchronization of horn strobes and the lack of smoke detectors in some hallways.

He also noted that fire panels at both schools limited the ability of responding firefighters to differentiate the specific status of an alarm within certain locations.

"As a result, first responders will experience difficulty in determining the appropriate level of resources to deploy in the event of activation. ... Unfortunately, the fire systems for both schools, as currently designed, are not capable of providing all the necessary protection or information," Friel stated.

Flores was quick to point out that the Fire Department's letter was a recommendation of best practices.

"It's not to say we're not safe," she said. "It's a difference of opinions."

She added, "Whether we meet standards or not, we believe we need a new fire alarm system."

The upgrades were initially tucked into a series of capital projects that took place at Golf and Hynes over the summer. Also with new fire sprinklers, major improvements included air conditioners, boilers, ductwork, plumbing, and secured entrances.

The district had to pare down its original request and put a referendum on the ballot twice before residents approved the $8 million construction plan. The smaller bond issue referendum passed by about 6 percent of the vote.

Learning smoke detectors weren't located throughout the entire buildings alarmed a few board members. The need to upgrade the alarm system after all the recent construction got at least one official fired up about who should foot the bill.

Tom Sikoral initially suggested the district's architect should be held liable if the buildings were found to be out of compliance.

Flores explained that the firm got the all-clear from inspectors after the board made cuts to the capital plan to save money.

"There's nothing we can do now," she said. "These were decisions that were made and approved."

Sikoral retorted that perhaps the Village of Morton Grove should pay for any upgrades it requires above Illinois' minimum standards.

"Go to the village mayor," he said. "This is a joke."
Gary McGrath's Audi dealership could get more than $5.25 million in Morton Grove tax money over the next 20 years once he moves into town from Glenview.

Terms of an agreement, which also includes a potential second incentive package, were approved by Morton Grove trustees during their Dec. 9 meeting.

McGrath agreed to purchase 8 acres of Kraft's Corporate Headquarters along Golf Road in Morton Grove earlier this year after working with Glenview officials on prospective property and failing to find any that were accessible enough.

The current Audi dealership is 1 mile north on Golf Road, but it sits on 1.9 acres and a large portion of its inventory is stored elsewhere. McGrath said modern customers want results fast, so he needs all of his cars on site.

The contract gives McGrath $250,000 up front for construction needs, and then 75 percent of the village's sales tax revenue generated by the dealership will be reimbursed for 10 years or until $5 million is paid. Then for 10 more years, McGrath will get 25 percent of sales tax revenue back.

Before voting, trustees emphasized the money is not simply being handed over and that McGrath has to generate the tax money before it can be returned.

Most municipalities now offer incentives to businesses to help with needs or burdens, to which Village Administrator Ryan Horne said McGrath faces a steep price for the property and extensive construction to repurpose it.

“We have to recognize that there is strong competition out in the marketplace, and area municipalities do compete with each other,” Horne said. “We try to partner with businesses because when they're successful, we're successful. This piece of property currently generates zero sales tax dollars. This is a big opportunity for us.”

Part of McGrath's hardship is buying all 8 acres, though not using a portion of it for several years, if at all. About half of the land will be used for the relocated Audi dealership, while McGrath plans to at some point buy and relocate another dealership.

If McGrath acquires a new dealership, he would be reimbursed 33 percent of the village sales tax generated by his salesmen for 10 years, and then 25 percent over the next 10 years.

The current Audi dealership in Glenview reportedly sells 20 cars per month, but McGrath expects 60 will be sold each month after moving to the larger site in Morton Grove. If another dealership is relocated or started from scratch, McGrath expects to sell an additional 40 more cars per month.

Horne admitted that McGrath may abandon the second dealership plan and sell portions of the land, but said the sales tax incentive agreement would not transfer to whomever buys the land.

Morton Grove believes returning sales tax to McGrath would benefit the community by creating jobs and providing an attraction that would spawn more nearby commerce.

“This is not a short-term scenario, and the partner we're going to be having is one of the most reputable automobile dealerships in the Chicago area,” Trustee Shel Marcus said. “I look at this as a win-win situation, even though it may take between 10 and 20 years to blossom.”

The nine-month construction project is expected to start any day.
Morton Grove police chief retiring in April

BY RICK KAMBIC
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@rick_kambic

Poli Chief Mark Erickson has decided to retire in April, just weeks after his 30-year anniversary with Morton Grove.

Erickson was hired as a patrolman in March 1984 and served in nearly every position within the department before being appointed chief of police in September 2009.

"It's a lot of things. I'm 55 years old and 30 years is the max-out on the pension," Erickson said. "It's a man's job. The police department is in great shape, so I look forward to a smooth transition."

Police and fire chiefs are typically promoted from within the department before being appointed chief of police in September 2009.

"That's the old days," Erickson said. "I remember eight years ago when I was first appointed deputy chief we got chief from Chicago. He was here for four years and then retired. It was a first at the time."

Though he didn't feel comfortable disclosing if either Stromberg or Fennelly are interested in becoming chief, Erickson said they would both be very qualified.

"I would recommend either one of them," Erickson said. "I've been very blessed with two of the best deputy chiefs I could ask for. They have tremendous work habits, they're ethical and they're honest."

Mayor Dan DiMaria praised Erickson for both growing up in Morton Grove and devoting 30 years of service toward his neighbors' safety.

"That's what Morton Grove is all about — family," DiMaria said.

Morton Grove firefighters pushing to help needy for holidays

BY RICK KAMBIC
rkambic@pioneerlocal.com
@rick_kambic

Morton Grove firefighters are collecting food and money to help residents in need this holiday season.

The Firefighter's Association of Morton Grove first distributed collection bins in October and will be collecting all the donated non-perishable food items on Friday, Dec. 13.

Firefighter Erik Miller runs the program and said approximately 61 families are signed up to receive boxes of food and wrapped toys. Miller said those families account for approximately 120 adults and 200 children.

"We've been doing this for over 25 years as a way for us to give back to the community, especially in this tough economic time," Miller said. "The amount of families in need has unfortunately quadrupled over the years."

Families were chosen after being referred to the firefighter's association by local churches and schools, Miller said.

"Aside from collecting non-perishable goods, we've also been accepting monetary donations to cover the cost of toys, ham and turkey," Miller continued. "We sent letters to local businesses in November and received some generous cash donations."

Residents who want to donate food before Friday are encouraged to find collection bins in the lobbies of Produce World, the Moose Lodge, the Park District's Prairie View Community Center, Village Hall, the American Legion Civic Center and fire station 4 — located at 6250 Lincoln Ave.

Cash and checks will still be accepted at fire station 4 until Friday, Dec. 20.
HELP SQUAD
Don't just wrap gifts, wrap up your finances!

HELP SQUAD
BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH

For many people, the last few weeks of the year are all about shopping for gifts, wrapping presents, decorating the Christmas tree, baking cookies, planning Christmas dinner, going to holiday parties and figuring out how the heck you're going to spend New Year's.

But there's something else that needs to be done before the end of the year: reviewing and wrapping up your finances!

Help Squad consulted with Ruthie Schwartz, a financial coach and the owner of her Deerfield-based financial planning and insurance advisory firm, Money In Motion.

Schwartz gave us eight financial tips on what to do and review before Dec. 31. It's advice that will not only give you financial protection you might need, but it could give you the gift of extra holiday money!

1. Rebalance your portfolio:
   This year particularly, stocks have been up. Therefore, the balance of your portfolio has most likely changed. Take a look at the percentages of your investments in each asset category and make sure they still fit your financial goals. For example, if you had 50 percent of your assets in stocks and 25 percent in bonds, the increase in value might have changed those percentages.

2. Consider letting go of investments that are showing a loss:
   You might want to sell an investment that is trading at a loss for the purpose of reducing your taxes. It can offset taxes from some gains you have made on other investments.

3. Establish an emergency fund:
   If you don't have one already, establish an emergency fund that could cover at least six months of expenses if you need it. Make sure the money is easily accessible in the form of a fairly liquid type of low-risk investment (such as a money market fund.)

4. Give a tax-deductible charitable contribution:
   Before Dec. 31 is a great time to give a monetary gift to a cause you really believe in. You can write off the donation on your taxes, and at the same time feel good about helping an organization in need.

5. Claim your energy efficient property tax credit:
   Did you know that if you purchase residential alternative energy equipment such as solar hot water heaters, solar electricity equipment, including washers and dryers, or even a solar roof, you might be eligible for a tax credit worth 30 percent of the purchase price and the labor? Talk to your accountant if you've purchased any of this equipment. Also, the credit is good every year until 2016!

6. Spend down your Flexible Savings Account:
   Need some new eyeglasses? How about a cleaning at the dentist? Now's the time to get in those last-minute appointments and use up the rest of your flexible spending dollars for 2013. All plans are different, but a lot of plans require you to "use it or lose it." Also, if you have medical bills that need to be paid which were not covered by your insurance, pay them before Dec. 31 with your flexible spending dollars!

7. Buy an electric or plug-in hybrid car:
   If you've been considering buying a hybrid vehicle, you might want to do some shopping before the year's end. If you buy one, you could be eligible for a tax credit of up to $7,500!

8. Review your insurance policies:
   The end of the year is a great time to review your insurance policies and make sure your loved ones are protected if anything happens to you. Have you had a life change, such as a new baby, a job status change, a marital status change, an illness? Consider all these things and decide if you might need more insurance. Also, this is a great time to gently review with parents or elders the benefit of long-term care insurance.

This is an area of investing that is often overlooked and can make a huge difference in their life, as well as yours.
Park Ridge Presbyterian Church invites you to join us for our Christmas Worship Services Tuesday, December 24, Christmas Eve 5 pm Family Service 10:30 pm Musical Prelude 11 pm Candlelight Service

Please join us as we celebrate the Birth of Christ Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service Tuesday, December 24 at 7:30 pm Everyone is always welcome Morton Grove Community Church Presbyterian 8944 Austin Avenue (Lake and Austin) Morton Grove, IL (847) 965-2982 • www.mgcppresbyterian.org

Come! Experience the Heart of Christmas Join us for Christmas Worship Christmas Eve Tuesday, December 24 4:00 pm Worship/Communion with Children's Story 8:00 pm Candlelight with Strings 10:30 pm Prelude Concert 11:00 pm Candlelight with Sanctuary Choir & Strings Christmas Day Wednesday, December 25 10:00 am Festive Worship with Harp

Zion Lutheran Church 600 W Lawrence Avenue Norridge, IL 60706 (708) 453-3614 Rev. Luther John Bajus, Pastor Christmas Eve 7:00 pm Holy Communion Christmas Day 10:00 am New Year's Day 10:00 am Serving the Community Sharing God's Promises

Mary, Seat of Wisdom Catholic Church 300 W Granville at Cumberland In Park Ridge Tuesday, Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve, No morning Mass today Early Evening Masses at 3:00 & 5:00 pm 11:00 p.m. Solemn Mass of Christmas (preceded by a special program at 10:30 p.m.) Wednesday, Dec. 25 – Christmas Day 8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 am 5:00 p.m. today Wednesday, January 1st Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Tuesday, Vigil Mass at 5 p.m Wednesday Masses 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.

To advertise in this section, call Penny at 630-978-8277
This state ain’t ready for pension reform

Unfortunately, we’re not ready to face the future (Detroit) if we don’t seriously act on state pensions. It’s a problem that has been recognized and ignored for years. As a former state legislator told me years ago, all new money for education will go to pay retired teachers to stay home. New teachers will get less.

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Who needs expensive Christmas ornaments?

$60? Yikes! For one Christmas tree ornament. And that's not the highest price I've seen on the Internet. It is common for ornaments to cost $20, $40, $50 and beyond.

That's a lot of money, even if your idea of what things should cost is frozen in 1968, as is my idea of what things should cost.

And it's difficult these days to tell what exactly constitutes a Christmas ornament. Everything, from frogs to pickles, is an ornament today, a costly ornament.

Don't get me wrong. I am not anti-ornament. The reason I know what ornaments cost and what's available is that the Sassone household has a lot of them — including a pickle.

What I really like about ornaments is that they can be saved and used again and again and then passed on.

An old ornament is a magnet to which warm Christmas memories adhere.

Thus, my favorite ornaments are old ones from Christmas trees past. My very best ornament is a small dried-out, leather-looking boot. On it is written in my Aunt Mary's hand, "Baby Paul's first Christmas." (No, it doesn't also say, "Buy Bonds and Help Beat the Kaiser")

My next favorite ornament is a blue plastic bell. This ornament is crusted with a whitish-brown substance. The bell and its crust are what is left from one of my mother's great experiments.

When I was a kid, flocked Christmas trees were all the rage. They were very expensive. A flocked tree let people know you had made it. (Draping plastic covers on your furniture was another status symbol of this Time of Bad Taste.)

We couldn't afford a flocked tree. Not that anyone in the family wanted such a tree — except my mother. She was a fashion-conscious person. So, she bought a spray can of Flock-O, or whatever it was called, and flocked her own tree. A lot of Flock-O oozed onto the ornaments. And apparently the ingredients of Flock-O have a half-life comparable to plutonium. Hence, the blue plastic bell with its flocking still intact these many years later.

My collection also includes a small wreath made of a pipe cleaner-like substance also showing signs of having been flocked.

These are the ornaments that go on the Christmas tree first.

My wife understands and humors me. Plus, she has a few nifty olden ornaments of her own.

None of them flocked, though.

So, bring on your frogs and your pickles. Bring on your new ornaments and your old. There's room for all on a Christmas tree.
FEATURED HOME
BY WRAPPORTS NEWS SERVICE

AGENT Janelle Gordon, Koenig & Strey Real Living, 312-925-0975

8465 Skokie Blvd.,
Skokie

House size: 3,000 square feet
Lot size: 14,300 square feet
Year built: 1958
Bedrooms: 3
Bathrooms: 3
Garage: Two-car attached
Property tax: $12,774.55 (2012)
Exterior: Brick, cedar and glass
School districts: Skokie School District 69
and Niles Township Community High School
District 219

$835,000

HOUSE FOR SALE? For details on how to get a home listed on the Featured Home page, email homes@wrapports.com or call 312-300-7974

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Buyers</th>
<th>Sellers</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>7071 W Touhy Ave, #204</td>
<td>Lisa A Launch</td>
<td>Angelica Loizzi</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>821 N Waukegan Road</td>
<td>Alice L Wilson</td>
<td>Aurelia Lusco</td>
<td>$146,500</td>
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<td>8320 N Olcott Ave</td>
<td>Frank J Serio and Tina Lacorte Serio</td>
<td>Megan M Portenlanger and Joseph Portenlanger</td>
<td>$322,500</td>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>7006 Carol Ave</td>
<td>Gene Bobrov, Yelena Margulis and Yelena Bobrov</td>
<td>han Baron and Natalie Baron</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>8134 N Chester Ave</td>
<td>Michael W Bartley and Sandra M Bartley</td>
<td>1h2 Property Illinois LP</td>
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<td>8300 Concord Drive, #606</td>
<td>Barbara J Gyondia</td>
<td>Margaret Toton</td>
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<tr>
<td>212 N Hamlin Ave</td>
<td>Michael Padilla and Patricia Divenere</td>
<td>Michael J Lochner and Lisa Chaudhry</td>
<td>$580,000</td>
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<td>7713 Lake St</td>
<td>Orientine Grow</td>
<td>Sarkar Auto</td>
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<td>833 Central Ave</td>
<td>Jinshen E Kim and Tausif G Patel</td>
<td>Frank J Serio and Tina Lacorte Serio</td>
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<td>Oct. 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>9315 Overhill Ave</td>
<td>Timothy John Bergel and Jessica Marie Madrigal, Tim Oreilly</td>
<td>John B Benjamin</td>
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<td>907 Harrison St</td>
<td>Gary M Klepinsch and Kimberly A Klepinsch</td>
<td>Michael A Kuhn and Kimberly Kyuace</td>
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<td>9016 Mango Ave</td>
<td>Right Residential</td>
<td>Robert E Schell and Patricia A Schell</td>
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<td>7508 Palma Lane</td>
<td>Howard C Lacina and Marlene M Lacina</td>
<td>Yasreen Majeed</td>
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<tr>
<td>6401 N Lincoln Ave, #408</td>
<td>Evelyn H Schell</td>
<td>Tredodora Turula</td>
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<td>120 S Cumberland Ave</td>
<td>Billy C Yarbrough</td>
<td>Stone Financing LLC</td>
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<td>900 S Home Ave</td>
<td>Walter L Malles and Sharon D Malles</td>
<td>Jonathan J Stpeter and Nina S Stpeter</td>
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<tr>
<td>2532 William Ave</td>
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<td>Daniel A. Jara</td>
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SUBMIT YOUR EVENT
To submit an event for consideration in print, visit www.pioneerlocal.com/submit-content and click the "Events" tab on the left side of the screen. Please submit the event no later than 10 days before the desired publication date.

NILES
THURSDAY, DEC. 12
Issues in the News
9:30 a.m.: The open discussion group covers a range of topics, from local to global. Niles Senior Center, 999 Civic Center Drive, Niles. For more information, call 229-683-9360.

Teen Speaker Series
5:30 p.m.: Teens can learn educational information geared towards their age group. Niles Teen Center, 373 Golf Mill Center, Niles. Call 847-588-8059.

SATURDAY, DEC. 14
Winter Wonderland Design
2 p.m.: Teens create fun and festive crafts for the holiday season. Refreshments are served. Niles Public Library District, 9680 W. Dakota St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

Candy Cane Hunt
2 p.m.: Romp through Dee Park where Santa has hidden wrapped candy canes and some will earn a special prize. Decorate a goody bag and share cookies and hot chocolate with Santa before heading home. For ages 3-8. Feldman Recreation Center, 8800 W. Kathy Lane, Niles. Call 847-297-3000. $5.

FRIDAY, DEC. 20
Pinochle Tournament
Noon: The event includes lunch and prizes. Niles Senior Center, 999 Civic Center Drive, Niles. Call 847-588-8420, $5-$7.50.

HAPPENING NEARBY
THURSDAY, DEC. 12
Little Tykes Playgroup
11:30 a.m.: Free play for children ages 2 to 4 with a parent or caregiver. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

The Witty and Wacky World of Tom Lehrer
1:30 p.m.: Join Bob Levit as he highlights the witty and wacky life of satirist Tom Lehrer. RSVP required. Summit of Uptown, 10 N. Summit Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-1161.

Thrilling Thursdays: Dry Ingredient Cooking
4 p.m.: Children in kindergarten through third grade can create a holiday treat to bake for the holidays. Registration is limited. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

F. Michael Smith Book Signing

FRIDAY, DEC. 27
Poker Tournament
Noon: The event also includes lunch and prizes. Niles Senior Center, 999 Civic Center Drive, Niles. Call 847-588-8420, $5-$7.50.

SATURDAY, DEC. 14
Breakfast with Santa
9 a.m.: Enjoy breakfast with Santa and face painting. Christmas crafts and a theatre production by Resurrection drama students. Children can have their photos taken with Santa. Resurrection College Prep High School, 7500 W. Talcott Ave., Chicago. For more information, call 773-775-6616. $9 per adult, $6 per child.

Acacia Park Lutheran Church Annual Christmas Cookie Walk
9 a.m.: The annual event features a wide variety of homemade cookies. Runs 9-11 a.m. Acacia Park Lutheran Church, 4307 N. Oriole Ave., Norridge. Call 708-453-3662.

Al-Anon
9:30 a.m.: St Paul Lutheran Church, 5650 N. Canfield Ave., Chicago. For more information, call 708-867-5044.

Second Saturday Family Story Time
10 a.m.: Stories and crafts for the whole family. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-588-8420.
Sunday Night Supper
5 p.m.: Registration required. Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce, 720 Garden St., Park Ridge.

Monday, Dec. 16

Harmonious Horizons
10:20 a.m.: A family music class that includes singing, dancing and playing instruments. For children ages 1 to 4 with siblings. Registration deadline is Dec. 6. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Candy Cane Hunt
2 p.m.: Children ages 3 to 8 can decorate a candy cane and join Santa for hot chocolate and cookies. Registration deadline is Dec. 6. Dee Park, 5209 Emerson St., Des Plaines. For more information, call 847-983-3525.

Creative Cake Pops
2 p.m.: This class teaches teens how to decorate cake pops. Registration required. Glenview Public Library, 1220 Glenview Road, Glenview. Call 847-720-7500, ext. 7600.

Book Sale
2 p.m.: Hardcover, DVDs and CDs are $1. Paperbacks are 50 cents. Eisenhower Public Library, 4610 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

Ridgewood High School Parents’ Club Monthly Bingo
5 p.m.: Participants are guaranteed 15 bingo games, two of which are $50 cover. Additional Bingo cards are available for purchase throughout the night. Proceeds benefit Ridgewood High School Parents’ Club. Ridgewood High School, 7800 W. Montrose Ave., Norridge.

Holiday Potluck Party
7:30 p.m.: The Chicago Rocks and Minerals Society meets to celebrate the holidays. St. Peter's United Church of Christ, 8013 Laramie Ave., Skokie.

Tuesday, Dec. 17

SCORE Counseling Appointments
9 a.m.: Counselors from SCORE will advise small business owners on building success. Appointments are required and can be made online or by phone. Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce, 720 Garden St., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3122.

Baby Bounce
9:15 a.m.: Special stories, songs, rhymes and play time just for babies one year old and under. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Story Time for 4s and 5s

‘We Like Ike: The Eisenhower Era’
11:30 a.m.: Bill Kirdle from the Raupp Museum presents “We Like Ike: The Eisenhower Era and the Impact on Morton Grove in the 1950s.” This highly interactive program looks at the Eisenhower era of the 1950s, a time of relative peace, growth, development and prosperity, which laid the foundation for modern suburbia. Call 847-829-5129 or visit www.mgpl.org for more information. Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.

The Facebook Phenomenon
7 p.m.: Learn how to use one of the biggest social networking sites. Knowledge of the computer keyboard and using the Internet is required. Registration is limited. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-720-3280.
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Niles-Herald-Spectator | Community | CONNECT

EDITOR'S NOTE: Content appears as it is provided in public records. To see all Niles building permits, visit niles.suntimes.com.

1. Flood control
   Address: 6944 W. Dobson St., Niles
   Issue date: Aug. 29
   Permit cost: $80
   Construction cost: $7,200

2. Roof (commercial and residential)
   Address: 7201 N. Harlem Ave., Niles
   Issue date: Aug. 26
   Permit cost: $868
   Construction cost: $91,517

3. Sign - electrical/non-electric
   Address: 7530 N. Calciwell Ave., Niles
   Issue date: Aug. 29
   Permit cost: $35
   Construction cost: $2,540

4. Furnace and air conditioning (HVAC)
   Address: 6701 W. Oakton St., Niles
   Issue date: Aug. 27
   Permit cost: $589
   Construction cost: $60,000

5. Parking lot
   Address: 7901 N. Milwaukee Ave., Niles
   Issue date: Aug. 28
   Permit cost: $952
   Construction cost: $68,050

Niles-Herald-Spectator | Community | CONNECT

my home - my local news - est. 1966

BUILDING PERMITS
BY WRAPPORTS NEWS SERVICE
Local business interests have been on the minds of Mayor Andrew Przybylo and his Niles New Party running mates since the team took office last spring.

"It's safe to say we were activists with a bent toward progressive government," Przybylo said. "This administration is obsessive about economic development."

He shared his vision for moving the town forward with over 100 commercial and civic leaders during the Niles Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Leadership and Recognition Luncheon on Nov. 21.

The chamber's event with village leaders this year took on a new name and format.

Officers and directors were sworn into office in a ceremony that was previously held during the chamber's holiday party in December.

Niles Deputy Police Chief Joe Penze accepted the presidential duties from his predecessor Barb Kruser of the Niles Public Library. New to the board for 2014 are Kyle Brown, a financial advisor with Edward Jones, and Chuck Hartough, co-founder of C&M Auto Service in Glenview.

Officials also formally recognized the milestone anniversaries of members for the first time. The Pioneer Press received a certificate acknowledging its 45th year participating in the business network.

In keeping with custom, the mayor delivered a keynote address on the state of village affairs. Speeches from top department heads, however, were scrapped to save time.

Village representatives instead lunched with chamber members.

Katie Schneider, the chamber's executive director, noted a more collaborative working relationship with Niles since the village hired Business and Economic Coordinator Ross Klicker last December.

The result has been improved communication and less duplication of programs.

"Just having a point person has been key," Schneider said.

Przybylo, in his speech, alluded to some of the initiatives he and the village board have undertaken in the past six months.

The appointment of an inspector general and online ethics training for staff formalizes the village's standards, he said.

New ad hoc task forces on video gambling and lobbying are exploring ways to generate new dollars. Both compliment Niles' Commission for Economic Development and Neighborhood Renewal, to be made up of residents and business owners.

Przybylo anticipates the implementation of a "completely new and modern" zoning ordinance will expedite development and make property improvements more cost-effective for developers and homeowners.

He pledged to keep Costco and its $1.8-million in annual sales tax revenue in Niles, and to bolster the Touhy Avenue Corridor with arts and culture.

Two recently adopted ordinances -- one that allows patrons to bring booze into licensed restaurants, and another that lets staff under 21 serve alcohol -- will help smaller establishments in town, Przybylo said.

He stated the village's decision not to levy additional tax dollars is also beneficial to business. Przybylo cast the tie-breaking vote against the 4.9 percent increase Nov. 19.

"I made it clear it wasn't so much about the residents as it was the businesses," he said. "The increase on the house would be not so great, but I worry about business."

Przybylo called the village's 2030 Comprehensive Plan the "very groundwork for which we're going to build a new Niles."

"I have to tell you I'm very optimistic about the future of Niles," he said. "As the economy turns around, we will be able to offer new and improved business locations to those willing to invest."

"The country needs to be rebuilt, so does Niles, and we're going to be ready for it."

The Niles Chamber of Commerce and Industry currently boasts 410 members.
Brickton sale/auction showcases local artwork

BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH
For Sun-Times Media | @helpsquadjp

Looking for a special holiday gift for someone? Or maybe you're just an art lover who appreciates hand-made work by local artists. If so, stop by the Brickton Art Center's 9th Annual Benefit Art Exhibition and Auction.

Starting Dec. 12, visitors can participate in a silent auction or pay a "buy it now" price for pieces of art that include paintings, jewelry, photographs, sculptures and ceramics. All the art is being donated by over 50 local artists. "All the artwork is handmade, and this is chance for people to buy beautiful one-of-a-kind art and support the center at the same time," said Kristin Haas, executive director of the Center.

Proceeds from the fundraiser will benefit art therapy and gallery programs at the center.

The Brickton Art Center is also partnering with Park Ridge High School, where 75 students will submit a painting that will add to the décor of the display, and then go up for auction. "Proceeds from the sales of the paintings will go toward a scholarship for one of the students," Haas said.

In its 17th year, the Brickton Art Center is a non-profit organization that provides creative outreach services in art therapy, art education and gallery exhibitions using a variety of artistic media.

9TH ANNUAL BENEFIT ART EXHIBITION AND AUCTION
Brickton Art Center, 306 Busse Highway, Park Ridge
10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays, through Jan. 9
Call for special holiday hours: (847) 823-6611; information at bricktonartcenter.org

Photo on canvas by artist Julie Collins
PHOTO BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Photo on canvas by artist Marie Rakoczky
PHOTO BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Liquid Lily by artist Marie Rakoczky
PHOTO BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Kristin Haas, executive director of the Brickton Art Center
PHOTO BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Starting Dec. 12, visitors can participate in Brickton's silent auction or pay a "buy it now" price for pieces of art that include paintings, jewelry, photographs, sculptures and ceramics.

PHOTO BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA
CAUSE AND EVENT

CONCERT BY PIANIST DOUG MONTGOMERY
BENEFITING: Oakton Community College Educational Foundation
WHEN: Nov. 2
WHERE: Footlik Theater, Oakton Community College
ATTENDED: 170
RAISED: $3,925

ABOVE: Julliard-trained pianist Doug Montgomery, originally of Niles, returned to Chicago for a benefit performance at Oakton Community College.

TOP LEFT: Bill and Joan Weiner (from left to right), and Iris and Jim Friedlieb, all of Morton Grove

BOTTOM LEFT: Oakton Educational Foundation Executive Director Carlee Drummer with classical pianist and Niles native Doug Montgomery

FAR LEFT: Cathy Zadel (top row, from left) and Brad Hall of Park Ridge, and Doris Van Wiltenburg of Des Plaines, with Oakton trustee emeritus Joan Hall (front row, from left) and Bea Cornelissen, both of Park Ridge

PHOTOS BY NATASHA WASHINSKI/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

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Couple share day with family, friends

Amy Callaghan and Josh Gelula

BY JILL PAILLA
Contributing writer

Amy Callaghan, a La Grange native, and Josh Gelula, from Park Ridge, are licensed attorneys in Chicago and met at law school at the University of Illinois in fall 2007.

The couple share mutual friends and got to know each other through group outings, sporting events and vacations.

In fall 2008, the couple went to a Michigan-Illinois game in Ann Arbor, where Amy attended the University of Michigan.

“That was the first time we talked more within our group of friends ... and I'm a Michigan fan, so it was pretty significant for me,” Amy said.

Four years later, in fall 2012, Josh proposed to Amy in Ann Arbor, the weekend of yet another Michigan-Illinois game. The bride said Josh “had roses and champagne out” in their hotel room, where he proposed after dinner.

The Rev. Edgar Rodriguez married the couple Sept. 21 at St. Cletus Church in La Grange.

“It meant a lot to my family to have it there,” Amy said. “My parents both grew up there, and I grew up there, as well.”

Amy and her parents had gone to grade school at St. Cletus, and her parents had also been married there.

Amy’s vision for her wedding was “understated but elegant.” She chose a gold and ivory color scheme, and the bridesmaids wore short black one-shoulder dresses.

Amy and Josh chose the Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's Campus in Oak Brook for the reception site.

“We fell in love with it when we walked in — the windows, the trees outside and the lodge feel,” Amy said.

The wedding party walked into the Hyatt Lodge wearing aviators while the song “Danger Zone” by Kenny Loggins played over the loudspeaker. It was an inside joke between Josh and his friends, who say he looks like Maverick from “Top Gun.”

Amy’s family contributed to the decor elements at the reception. Their cake topper was a salt-and-pepper shaker set made to resemble a bride and groom, given to Amy by her younger cousins. One of Amy’s aunts made a signature board for guests to sign, which now is hung in the couple’s home.

Guest favors were pralines from Southern Candy Makers in New Orleans.

“We've been to New Orleans several times. We went as a group before we started dating and after, subsequently, a few times together,” Amy said.

Amy said one of the most special things about the wedding day was “talking to all my friends and family, basically having everyone important in our life there at the same time.”

The couple live in Chicago's Ukrainian Village neighborhood.

Every wedding tells a story. Contact Renee Lee at rlee@bouquetcatcher.com or 312-651-6613 to share yours.

Facebook.com/BouquetCatcher  Twitter @BouquetCatcher  Pinterest.com/BouquetCatcher
Approaching the season finale of 'Homeland,' the actor expounds upon his South Side roots, love of the stage — and stately facial hair.
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Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa Pop-Up
Kick back at the spa's holiday pop-up inside Willis Tower, where you can get complimentary chair massages, mini manicures and fast-finish blowouts. Be sure to pick up the brand's skincare gift sets ($60), 233 S. Wacker, Reddoorspas.com.

M2F Denim
Exclusive Made2Fade technology gives this Chicago line's jeans an ultra-soft feel and naturally worn look. They've become a favorite of Splash's, especially our Special Events Planner Samantha Berngard (above). $130, SplashShop.suntimes.com.

Amazing Cosmetics blush
We're stocking up on the local line's blush, which comes in flirty holiday shades, like Hot Pink Matte and Cinnamon Spice Shimmer. It's the perfect way to give any skin tone a festive flush. $22, SplashShop.suntimes.com

Chivas Regal 12 “Made for Gentlemen” by Patrick Grant
Thanks to a new collab between the bespoke menswear designer and smooth Scotch brand, men can learn about fashion while downing limited-edition spirits. Each of the specially-designed boxes are printed with four different suit/tie combos. Available at Walgreens locations citywide. $35.99, Chivas.com

“Her pieces hit the sweet spot between office-friendly and fashion-forward.”
— Susanna Negovan

Shalini dresses
In 2010, Chicagoan Shalini Sharma quit her job as a business analyst and consultant to design chic workwear for women on the move. Our favorite? The Nunu dress. Affordable and feminine, it's the perfect piece to transition from the office to a cocktail party. $210, SplashShop.suntimes.com

Eataly gift baskets
Give your favorite food lover a gift that keeps on giving with creative packages from the buzzed-about Italian marketplace. The Eatalian table basket includes items like Cova Panettone Classico and Afeltra calamari. $79.80, 43 E. Ohio, Eataly.com

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Matt Krouac @Mattsland: @thepetitefile It's always sunny in Santa Monica! Loved it here. @Suntimes_Splash @SummerHouseSM
December 8
- Savor the Season
Celebrate the launch of The Grid Chicago’s brunch menu at this Sunday bash, where you can sip unlimited Bloody Marys and mimosas, sample the spot’s new dishes and dance to the sounds of DJ Megan Taylor while shopping some of Chicago’s hottest boutiques, including Haberdash Men’s Boutique, Henry & Belle and Veruca Salt.
Time: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Place: 351 W. Hubbard
Cost: Entree and brunch cocktail, $15; entree and unlimited brunch cocktails, $25. For reservations, visit OpenTable.com/the-grid.

December 13
- St. Lucia Festival of Lights
The Swedish American Museum brings the treasured Festival of Lights holiday traditions to Chicago, with a program at the Daley Center, a procession down Clark Street in Andersonville and a service at Ebenezer Lutheran Church.
Time: Daley Center program 11:30 a.m., procession at 4:45 p.m., service at 7 p.m.
Place: Daley Center, 50 W. Washington; procession kicks off at the Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark; Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 1650 W. Foster
Cost: Free. For more information, visit Swedishamericanmuseum.org.

December 14
- 34th JDRF Annual Chance of a Lifetime Gala
The legendary Smokey Robinson (left) is the star attraction at this premiere fundraiser, with proceeds helping the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation get closer to finding a cure for type 1 diabetes. The evening includes an auction of luxury items — including travel packages, toys and sport event tickets — and all funds directly support the organization’s research initiatives through the Fund A Cure program.
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Place: McCormick Place Lakeside Center & Arie Crown Theater, 2301 S. Lake Shore
Cost: $425. For tickets, visit illinois.jdrf.org/events/gala.
December 14

**62ND ANNUAL CHILDREN'S BALL**
The Children's Research Fund does its bit in a big way with this fundraiser for the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital. Hosted by Peter Bensinger Jr., Heidi Wagman, James Malackowski and Kristi Stathis, the black-tie event honors the physicians, scientists and staff at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago's Research Center.

*Time:* 6:30 p.m.
*Place:* Hilton Hotel Chicago, 720 S. Michigan

**Cost:** $1,000; $500 for under 35. For tickets, call (312) 227-7299 or visit Childrensresearchfund.org.

December 14-15

**HYDE PARK SCHOOL OF DANCE NUTCRACKER**
Aid: Leslie Hairston (5th) and Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Wallace Goode join the more than 150 performers — from preschoolers to grandparents — in this festive holiday offering staged by the group's founding Artistic Director August Tye, ballet mistress and choreographer at Lyric Opera of Chicago. On Sunday, enjoy a post-show Sugar Plum Tea.

*Time:* Saturday 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m.
*Place:* Mandel Hall, 1131 E. 57th

**Cost:** Adults $20; $10 for students, seniors and children 5-18, under 5 free. Sugar Plum Tea tickets $40 adults; $20 for seniors; $10 for students and children; under 5 free. For tickets, visit Hydeparkdance.org.

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**next week**

December 15

**HEARTLAND HEALTH OUTREACH ANNUAL HOLIDAY BRUNCH**
Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Vital Bridges Center on Chronic Care — a program of Heartland Health Outreach providing life-sustaining services to people living with HIV/AIDS — this fundraiser features first-class cuisine and such raffle items as a Moroccan adventure at The Four Seasons Marrakesh.

*Time:* 11:30 a.m.
*Place:* Four Seasons Hotel, 120 E. Delaware

**Cost:** $250 and up. For tickets, call (888) 583-6046 or visit Ticketmaster.com.

December 17

**CAFÉ DES ARCHITECTES’ HOLIDAY ROCK & ROLL BENEFIT**
Shake things up at the Sofitel Chicago at this third annual event, in which chef Greg Biggers and pastry chef Leigh Omilinsky of Café des Architectes welcome some of the city's best pastry chefs to whip up their best modern interpretation of the classic Bûche de Noël. Proceeds benefit Share Our Strength and the No Kid Hungry campaign.

*Time:* 7:30 p.m.
*Place:* 205 E. Randolph

**Cost:** $30-$50. For tickets, call (312) 334-7777 or visit Harristheater.org.

December 18

**CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER**
The renowned organization puts in a holiday appearance at the Harris Theater, performing the complete Bach Brandenburg Concertos. The concert features Juilliard String Quartet member Joseph Lin, winner of the First Prize at the inaugural Michael Hill International Violin Competition.

*Time:* 7:30 p.m.
*Place:* 205 E. Randolph

**Cost:** $30-$50. For tickets, call (312) 334-7777 or visit Harristheater.org.

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December 21-22, 28-29

**THE CHIMES**
Dickens had more than one good holiday story in him. This New Year's Eve tale, adapted by Remy Bumppo Theatre Artistic Director Nick Sandys, centers on an old man who wonders where the world is headed.

*Time:* 8 p.m.
*Place:* The Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln

**Cost:** $20. For tickets call (773) 404-7336 or visit Remybumppo.org.

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

"GOODMAN THEATRE'S 'CHRISTMAS CAROL' SHINES EVER SO BRIGHTLY"

**GOODMAN THEATRE'S 'CHRISTMAS CAROL'**

**Time:** Through December 28

**Place:** Goodman Theatre, 2055 N. Lincoln

**Cost:** Adults $20. For tickets, call (773) 404-7336 or visit GoodmanTheatre.org.
The dream of the Duffey Family Children's Village, a community of homes specially designed for children living with autism, inched closer to reality Nov. 16 at Little City Foundation's annual Dinner Gala. Chaired by Matt Schubert, the bash drew more than 400 supporters to the Fairmont Chicago Millennium Park (200 N. Columbus), where John and Becky Duffey were presented with the Sidney L. Port Legacy of Distinction Award for their $1 million donation toward the village. A live auction emceed by WGN-Channel 9's Tom Negovan and Splash's Susanna Negovan raised an additional $90,000, which will help furnish the homes when the first ones open in 2014.

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.

Four local nonprofits went head-to-head Nov. 7 at Project Impact's second annual competition, founded by A Better Chicago, in the hopes of creating opportunities for low-income Chicagoans. Inside the 1871 Auditorium (222 Merchandise Mart Plaza), representatives from EMBARC, Intrinsinc Schools, New Classrooms and Project SYNCERE all presented plans, gave speeches and held Q&As with a panel of influential judges, including BMO Financial Group Vice Chairman Timothy Knowles. EMBARC — a group founded by Harper High School teachers in 2010 that works to increase academic success for low-income high school students — was crowned the winner, walking away with a $100,000 grant and 12 months of management support from A Better Chicago. The three other nonprofits each received a $20,000 grant to support their respective missions.

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.
Add some sparkle to the holiday season by wrapping yourself in glittering sequins. A shimmering gown is a must-have for any fashion maven - it's an ideal way to stand out among standard cocktail and black-tie attire, especially when you add a pop of bling. It's tough to beat Badgley Mishka's fall/winter collection, which dazzles with sequins, metals and high-shine fabrics. While glittery pumps or bags might make great accessories, remember that nothing's better than a confident pose — you'll shine brighter than any holiday decorations.
Enter to win the Second Annual Year of Wellness Contest!

Would you or someone you know like to win a year of wellness? Enter by Dec. 15 to win a $13,000 Prize Package with all the tools to help you live healthier in 2014.

Visit ffc.com for contest details.

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AUSL'S ANNUAL BENEFIT DINNER

GO-GETTERS

Barbara Byrd-Bennett and Dr. Jarvis Sanford

STORIES BY KATERINA BIZIOS

The Academy for Urban School Leadership is dedicated to improving student achievement in failing schools. With the help of BMO Harris Bank, the Duchossois Family Foundation, the AUSL host committee and its board of directors, the event raised $80,000 to help better serve AUSL's 17,000 students and 20 schools.

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event. The Sun-Times Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust will match donations to the AUSL up to a total of $15,000. Up to $1,000 can be matched per individual donation.

PHOTOS BY RICHARD SHAY

BGCC'S BLACK & WHITE BALL

TRUE COLORS

This season's black-and-white trend jumped from the runway to the philanthropic scene Nov. 16 at the Associate Board of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago's 20th annual Black & White Ball. Nearly 300 young professionals came out to the House of Blues (329 N. Dearborn) for an evening of cocktails, a silent auction, hors d'oeuvres, desserts and dancing to the sounds of Maggie Speaks. The proceeds raised benefit the BGCC, which serves nearly 9,000 students with its tutoring, health education, computer classes, leadership training and development programs.

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.

From left: Phil and Carrie Navratil; The Maggie Speaks band performs; Ned Frank and Grace Hutchins

PHOTOS BY DAN REST
Get a deal on Blue Man Group tickets. Visit blueman.com/chicago/special-offers
When Ashley Hooks moved back to Chicago to help her father, Judge William H. Hooks, run his re-election campaign in the autumn of 2009, Kyle Williams showed up at her first campaign event. The pair made eye contact several times throughout the night before officially meeting—and when they did, says Hooks, it was love at first sight. On Oct. 12, Hooks, who was named Miss Illinois USA in 2012 and is now a special projects manager for the Department of Human Services, and Williams, a banker at JPMorgan Chase, tied the knot at Holy Name Cathedral (730 N. State) in a traditional Catholic ceremony. Post-ceremony, the couple stopped for photos at the Nichols Bridgeway, which connects Millennium Park and the Art Institute. “We were able to go out there right after the museum closed and the guards cleared [the bridge] for us,” recalls Hooks. “That was really cool.” Nearly 200 guests attended the reception at the Flossmoor Country Club (1441 Western, Flossmoor), where they danced to the sounds of DJ Rasul Mowatt, a college friend of the bride, and snacked on tomato soup shooters with bite-sized grilled cheeses before finishing the evening with a vanilla buttercream icing cake covered with pearl beads from Creative Cakes. The blissful couple outlasted their guests and were the final ones left on the dance floor. “We got to take in everything,” says Hooks. “It was really just a great way to end the night.” —Katina Beniaris

**Gown** Lazaro, Macy’s Bridal Salon, 111 N. State; Macys.com
**Jewelry** BHLDN, 8 E. Walton; Bhldn.com
**Shoes** Manolo Blahnik, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan; Manoloblahnik.com
**Groom’s attire** Canali; Syd Jerome, 2 N. LaSalle; Sydjerome.com
**Bridesmaids’ attire** Rachel Frank Design, custom made; rfdbyrachelfrank.com
**Groomsmen’s attire** Calvin Klein, Men’s Wearhouse, 112 S. State; Menswearhouse.com
**Photographer** Kenny Kim, Kennykim.com
**Florist** Homewood Florist, 18064 Martin, Homewood, Homeowodflorist.com

**CHEERS!**

Cheers to Lori’s Shoes owner Lori Andre, who toasted 30 years of satisfying shoe-a-holics along with 100 of her supporters Nov. 14 at her Lincoln Park store (824 W. Armitage). Guests helped kick off a shoe drive for Dress for Success Worldwide-Central, a nonprofit that promotes economic independence for disadvantaged women by providing them with professional attire.

**SEND US YOUR CHEERS!**

If you have good news to share—or if you’d like your wedding featured—send a note to Splash@suntimes.com.
In 1973, Salvador Dali did something strange, even for the notoriously quirky surrealist artist—he published a cookbook. Dubbed Les Diners de Gala, the 322-page tome mixes 136 recipes with Dali's artwork, and includes dishes such as ox snout in puff pastry shells, tomato pie, and prawn parfait. To find one of these out-of-print masterpieces in mint condition is a rarity and first-edition signed copies can go for up to $25,000.

This cookbook was the catalyst for the Salvador Dali-inspired tasting menu at West Loop restaurant Ing. But it was only the starting point—the rest of the inventive menu comes from the mind of executive chef Tim Havidic. "I based all of the menu items from paintings that are in the book," he says. "Some of the courses look like the painting, while some of them are the idea of the painting displayed in food." With a focus on molecular gastronomy (Ing stands for "Imagining New Gastronomy"), Havidic incorporates plenty of his own surreal techniques, from liquid nitrogen-formed onion noodles to frozen vinaigrettes.

The Dali menu can be devoured in a six-course ($85) or 10-course ($105) tasting menu with drink pairings—or, if you're looking to "whet" your appetite, Ing also offers a three-course menu ($50) Tuesdays through Thursdays. Whether you're a Dali devotee or a surrealist novice, here's why Ing's Dali menu is not to be missed:

Chef stats: After teaching at the Culinary Institute of America, and a stint at a whole animal butcher in Hollywood, Havidic spent two years at Moto, and was promoted to executive chef of Ing in mid-2013.

The vibe: Stark yet warm. Vibrant red chairs mesh with hardwood floors and exposed brick, and the splash of modern art on the walls—courtesy of local artist Scott Frigo—mirrors the artistic plating of the dishes.

Beet it: For the painting "Honey Is Sweeter Than Blood," Havidic takes his cue from the title. He combines a microgreen called bull's blood with orange vinegar-soaked beets, pickled beets, pine-nut puree, toasted pine nuts, roasted beet sorbet and a piece of brioche to form an intricate beet salad. "Every component has honey in it in some form," Havidic says.

Suspended animation: In "Still Life—Fast Moving," Dali depicts a discombobulated dinner table, with items suspended in the air. Havidic replicates this by serving the course—a brown butter-poached pear with pear butter puree—via an L-shaped metal structure, with intricately placed forks holding the plates in midair. The structure took weeks to perfect, with Havidic making trips up and down the stairs to test the durability of different versions.

The berry: Because Ing is the creation of famed chef Homaro Cantu, two dishes are served with the "miracle berry," a small red berry native to West Africa that manipulates the tastebuds so that sour and bitter flavors taste sweet. It accompanies the beet dish as well as a coffee dessert with anise chiffon cake, coffee gel, and tonka bean mousse (available with the 10-course tasting).

Cheers! Drink pairings run the gamut from a Spanish red wine to an absinthe, Frangelico and sherry cocktail to the Rat Pack rye ale, a brew made by Ing in collaboration with DryHop brewery in Lakewood.

Through Feb. 1. 951 W Fulton Market, (855) 834-6464; ingrestaurant.com
Mandy Patinkin’s four-decade career has been the kind that most performers could only imagine: several stints on Broadway, parts in seminal films like “The Princess Bride” and a starring role on the Emmy-winning series “Homeland.” But even with all of his success in show business, Patinkin is partial to another life — the one inside his head. “I’ve been ruled by my imagination from a very young age,” he says. “In general, I’d have to say I prefer my imagined world.”

To talk with Patinkin — who admits that he’s “pretty over the top in general,” and regularly bursts into effusive soliloquies on topics ranging from Middle Eastern politics to solar power — is to get a glimpse into that imagined world, one he describes as an “optimistic place, where the best things can happen, even when hopeful things get shut down.”
He traces its genesis to his childhood on the South Side of Chicago. "There were some things in life I wasn't fond of on an everyday basis, like school," recalls Patinkin, 61. "Then I discovered plays and my life changed. I found a world where you could express yourself, imagine yourself into another place." He carries on with increasing zeal: "I fell in love with performing because I love looking out into the house of a dark theater. It's like looking out into the night sky. You can see everything you ever wanted to see — things that didn't exist, that didn't exist, that were once here and aren't anymore. It's a very comforting feeling for me, because in that darkness, I see everything."

Patinkin has reached into that darkness to inhabit every one of his iconic roles, particularly that of Saul Berenson, the incisive yet tenderhearted CIA agent he plays on Showtime's "Homeland." In fact, after three seasons as Saul, Patinkin's consciousness is fused so deeply with the character's that it's difficult to detach the two. "I have to find an appropriate thing either in my life, my history or my imagination to connect to the material... so it's an impossible task to separate my imagination from Saul's," he says. "I can't do it, I won't do it — they're one.

On the series' third season, which concludes Dec. 15, Patinkin has had to dig particularly deep into his mental reserves, the first several episodes alone had enough plot twists to dizzy even the most unshakable actor. One particular surprise (in the fourth episode, for those familiar with the show) moved Patinkin so deeply that he burst into tears. "There's nothing that makes me more than seeing a creative act, and the cumulative nature of those four episodes was such a monumental wonder to me that I got emotional," he says. "When I see something creative or beautiful, a piece of music or a painting or a dance or a play or a piece of writing or acting, it gets me in the kishes. I love it.

Constantly craving the impact of such surprises, Patinkin begs the writers not to share future plans for Saul and "Homeland" until he needs to know them. "That's what I wake up for," he says.

And he won't ruin the season's remaining revelations for his fans — all he'll say about the finale is that it's "a very satisfying conclusion to the three-year journey."

Patinkin's own journey began on the South Shore, where he attended Kenwood Academy High School, and sang in countless local productions and "made out" with his girlfriend next to the plane. "That's what I wake up for," he says.

At 17, he left to pursue his passion for performing. His big break came in 1979, when he originated the role of Che in "Evita" on Broadway, earning him a Tony Award. But he most memorably captured America's attention in "The Princess Bride," playing the swashbuckling Inigo Montoya. "That was one of those jobs that you felt you should be paying them, it was so much fun," he recalls. Despite performing all of his own sword-fighting, "the only injury I sustained was laughing off-camera with Billy Crystal, who was doing 13th-century jokes 10 hours a day," Patinkin says.

On his relationship with Claire Danes:

"It's rather different than the relationship that Saul and Carrie have onboard. That [relationship] is very adversarial and very volatile, very much the mentor, teacher-student, very friction-oriented, with great affection and care. That friction doesn't exist off camera. We're great friends. If you walked in the room, it's not Saul and Carrie having a cup of coffee. It's Mandy [talking about] her baby and hearing stories about her family, my wife and I boring her and her husband with our past as parents, our journey as a married couple in show business."

Patinkin and Damien Lewis duke it out on "Homeland."

2. The actor shares a dance — and a concert series — with Patti Lupone.

3. Andre the Giant, Patinkin and Wallace Shawn in "The Princess Bride."

On his Infamous beard:

"I shaved my beard 10 minutes after I finished the last shot of season three [in November]. Right now, I have no beard and hair that's very short. I need to start growing it 12 weeks before filming the next season. The beard is so big in terms of the character's gotten so much attention because of the wonderful public receiving of "Homeland" that I feel like I'm wearing this mask. I wanted to take it off and see who I am without it. My wife couldn't wait for it to come off. What's wonderful is the recognition factor. People have stopped yelling, 'Hey Saul, hey Saul!'"

For more from Mandy, head to Chicasosplash.com
'Tis the season for holiday parties, so we turned to Michaela Parrillo for tips on turning your home into a winter wonderland.

BY MOLLY EACH
PHOTOS BY KIRSTEN MICCOLI

For the table escape, Parrillo taps into her collection of ribbons, candles, flowers, garlands and other accouterments, which she's accumulated over time and which she adds to consistently. "I buy little things all year long," says Parrillo, so when it's time to decorate, she has plenty to choose from. Her list of must-shop spots includes Michael's, Macy's Christmas store and Kennicott Brothers, a local wholesale florist.

Parrillo is known for her elaborate gift wrapping, and is currently working on a book on the subject — but the boxes are meant to be a gift that's passed along. "I always make them so you can pull the tops off, so you don't have to unwrap them," she says. "I give it to someone and they can use it again."
To receive an invite to a dinner party at the Parrillo home is to be beckoned to a winter wonderland — or a summery, green-and-white garden or a red-and-white peppermint paradise. Whatever the theme, each bash is its own masterpiece, orchestrated by Michaela Parrillo, the warm, welcoming proprietress of the home and one of the city's noted doyennes of the dinner party. Parrillo has helmed all manner of celebrations at her Lincoln Park home, from intimate gatherings for six to elegantly raucous sit-down dinners for 140 guests. Widely known for her hosting abilities, she blends an upscale approach with DIY touches, all infused by her creativity and attention to detail.

"I think of a theme, and build around that," says Parrillo of her process. For this particular party, she took a cue from her Christmas tree, adorning her home and dinner table in gold, silver and white, down to the rims on the wine glasses. But her planning prowess doesn't stop at décor — whether it's organizing party games or hiring a live musician, Parrillo works to ensure that each event meets her ultimate criteria: that it's lively from the moment guests walk through the door to the time the cabs depart.

"When I have a party, the main purpose is for people to have fun. Whatever makes them comfortable, whatever they enjoy, I want it to be fun," she says. "I want people to leave my home and say, 'I had the best time at your party.' That's all."

In this season of gathering, Parrillo welcomed Splash into her home to offer décor inspiration and tips fit for any holiday fête. Happy hosting!

"When I'm ordering an arrangement for my home, I like to give at least three flowers that I want in there," Parrillo says. "It's good to have an idea of what you want in the arrangement so you're not disappointed." For perfect party flowers, Parrillo turns to Brian Denault, a freelance florist who she has worked with for 15 years. He created this bouquet with Casablanca lilies, two types of roses - Eskimo and Tibetan — and hydrangeas.

"I love levels; they're very dramatic," says Parrillo. "These trees [below] are just sitting on a turned-over drinking glass, using those museum wax glue dots so they don't tip over. I love the height, but it's still see-through enough so you can talk to the people across the table."

"I didn't have napkin rings that fit the theme, so I made these," says Parrillo. Her recipe for a jaw-dropping DIY napkin ring: Take the cardboard part from a roll of wrapping paper, cut it into ring-sized shapes, cover in ribbon and then attach color-coordinated flowers and other items using a hot glue gun. Parrillo sourced these gold and silver flowers from Michael's and Macy's.
The 'Mom' star on playing an addict and her Midwest roots

BY LIZ CROKIN

Though Allison Janney grew up in Ohio, the actress says it was her frequent trips to Chicago that sparked her dreams of stardom. "I remember getting to stay up late while we waited for my mother's friend, [Broadway actress] Eileen Brennan, to come visit after her performances in 'Little Mary Sunshine,'" Janney says. "I think that's where I fell in love with the idea of acting."

Several decades later, Janney is living that dream, starring on two series at once: The CBS sitcom "Mom" and Showtime's drama "Masters of Sex." Though playing two parts can be difficult, Janney is up to the task. "I like to challenge myself with all kinds of acting," she says. Her multifaceted career reflects that desire — Janney has starred in everything from Oscar-nominated films ('American Beauty,' 'June') to critically acclaimed TV hits ("The West Wing") to Tony-winning Broadway shows ("A View from the Bridge") to doubly acclaimed films ("American Beauty," "June").

On "Mom," Janney plays Bonnie, an outrageous recovering addict who finds himself constantly butting heads with his daughter, played by Anna Faris. Janney landed the role on the comedy after a meeting with producer Chuck Lorre and Faris. "I jumped at the chance," Janney says. "Happily, Anna and I had good chemistry, which worked for the show."

Role call: "Like Bonnie, I like to have a good time, and oftentimes I can be outlandish in my behavior. These days, most people are affected by someone battling addiction. I've had my share of friends in recovery and spent time in Al-Anon and open AA meetings, so I could draw from those experiences. Other than that, I came ready to play and open for the challenge of a half-hour comedy.""

Behind the scenes: "We do very little ad-libbing. Occasionally we'll suggest an alternative line, but usually leave the writing to our fabulous writers. There's a great camaraderie on the set when we're not shooting, and sometimes after wrapping Friday night, we'll all go out to celebrate. Anna and I also like to hang out together on our off days as well."
With its biting winds and bone-chilling temps, winter can be oh-so-cruel. And while we’re just barely into the season, some of us are waxing poetic about sunny, warm summer days. But it’s time to corral those thoughts—we’ve got a long way to go. So if you find yourself already succumbing to winter blues, venture to Redmoon’s “Winter Pageant” to lift your spirits.

Opening Dec. 13 at the company’s Pilsen performance space (2120 S. Jefferson), this annual ever-changing spectacle won’t give you a tan, but in true Redmoon tradition, the rich variety it offers is definitely a vacation from the everyday. This year’s performance is inspired by “The Conference of the Birds,” a 12th-century chronicle of the search for enlightenment by Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar. “Dance, masks and shadow puppetry serve as key storytelling tools,” says director Will Bishop. “Whether as intricate masks worn by a team of percussive monkeys on our mobile drum cart, or as exquisite, hand-illustrated shadow puppets projected 20 feet tall on a massive painted drape.”

In addition to utilizing Redmoon’s full complement of puppets and inventive machines, the dynamic production is a highly collaborative endeavor, bringing together a wide range of artists, from the hip-hop dancers of The Happiness Club to Fernando Córdova Hernández, a member of Mexico City’s La Piara clown company. The goal, according to Redmoon Producing Artistic Director Frank Maugeni, is “a mammoth collision of voices, ideas, images and experiences.”

At the heart of the show is the tale of a brave pigeon who sets out to defeat an evil raven and save his family. Along the way, this avian hero encounters a range of animals, such as deer portrayed by members of the Indian dance company Kalapriya Dance. “We crafted a storyline that is inspired by the poem,” says co-director John Musial. “But for ‘source’ material, I also look to all the people we’re working with. Part of my job as a director is to assess the skills of my collaborators and make sure that they are able to shine doing the thing they do best. The music is by Rob Warmowski’s surf/punk band San Andreas Fault. We have dancers from Indonesian Dance of Illinois and Pineapple Dance Studio. The goal of the directorial team is to weave all of these sources into a unified story about the search for light and fellowship in the darkest time of the year.”
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sunday in the life

LONG LIVE THE Champ

Former Chicagoan David Koechner reprises his role as Champ Kind in 'Anchorman 2'

BY ZAK STEMER

Though his performances in movies like "Anchorman," "The Hangover," and "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" have made him a beloved character actor, Koechner's latest role as Champ Kind in "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues" is one that he's been waiting for. "I've been in the business for 30 years," he says. "This is the role I've been waiting for." And he delivers it with the same wit and charm that made him a favorite of filmgoers everywhere.

The film's release has been much anticipated, and Koechner has been promoting it tirelessly. "I've been on the road for three months," he says. "I'm really looking forward to being home." But he's not resting on his laurels. He's got a new project in the works, and he's already started prepping for it. "I'm going to start working on it next week," he says. "I'm really excited about it."
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Call me, maybe?

Jenny counsels a perpetually single reader on how to meet a mate

Dear Jenny,

I'm a 24-year-old, well-educated single guy with a fun, respectable job and I'm not totally unfortunate looking (especially with dim lighting and cocktails). Still, I've been single (not by choice) for my entire life — if you don't count three two-week-long relationships. I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. Help!

— Skylar from Santa Fe

Jenny says: Well, I can't say for certain what you're doing wrong, but hopefully I can give you a little insight. First and foremost, your self-confidence is crucial to having a successful dating life. Believing you are lovable and worthy of a relationship is one of the major ways you can attract someone special into your life.

Women want a man who is confident, a man who knows what he wants and a man who makes them feel desired. Expressing a bit of power can be conveyed in the way you dress, the way you carry yourself or the way you talk. But even the simplest expression — a smile — is a powerful way to get noticed. Smiling conveys cheerfulness and confidence, two traits that are highly desired. The clothes you wear and the way you wear them also show you are self-assured. Believe it or not, to a woman, the way a man dresses can convey if he's sloppy, well-groomed, successful or high-maintenance. That might seem a bit shallow, but it's true!

Now, since you've been single most of your life, the greatest shift you can make is in how you approach women. But it's more than just the initial conversation starter — it's about how you understand them, flirt with them and connect with them on a genuine level. Women want to feel physically and intellectually desired as well as respected and cared for. It may seem like a tall order, but it's not. If you really listen and engage in reciprocal conversation, compliment and encourage her, and make her feel sexy and loved, you won't have any problem finding a woman. It may not happen right away — but don't give up! Anything worth having is worth waiting for.

Butterfly is not yet available in all stores. To find out where you can buy Butterfly today, call 800-492-3924 or visit Butterfly.com

© 2013 Butterfly Health, Inc. All rights reserved. Butterfly wouldn't be possible without the many women who inspired it. Renee is an actual Butterfly user and has been compensated for her appearance here.

Send questions to AskJenny@suntimes.com

READ JENNY'S BLOG AT CHICAGOSPLASH.COM
During the holiday season, Sauganash's houses go on full holiday display.

Photo Courtesy of Zach Mastoon

real estate

Tree time

These distressed iron yule trees from Jayson Home add a dose of quaint holiday charm to any home — with no watering or cleanup required. $165 and $185, 1885 N. Clybourn, (800) 472-1885; Jaysonhome.com

ELECTRIC AVENUE

Holiday lights turn on Sauganash's charm

BY MADELINE NUSSE

Here's a time-honored tradition: Pack friends and family into the car and head to a neighborhood where infinite strands of lights in eye-popping colors are de rigueur. Every light display is a fun annual dalliance, but it also reveals a certain truth: Lively, charming destinations make desirable places to own a home. According to the American Planning Association, a "great neighborhood" must capitalize on building design, encourage social interaction, promote safety and aim to create a unique personality — all qualities of one of Chicago's best lit areas, the Northwest Side's Sauganash.

"People in the neighborhood take great pride in ownership, and they go hog wild with holiday lights," says Coldwell Banker broker Sheila Toomey (left, call 773-758-3318). A longtime Sauganash resident, she's witnessed firsthand the area's enthusiasm for holiday decorations, and the lines of cars that appear just after dark through the month of December. But the light displays — many of which compete in an annual Sauganash Park Community Association contest — aren't the only things that enchant. "It's a great architectural destination," Toomey says of the area's winding streets with sturdy Tudors, Georgians, colonials and bungalows. Toomey's current listing at 5833 N. Kilbourn (left) amps up the holiday charm with elaborate brickwork, arched windows, oak floors and a wood-burning fireplace. Listed for $579,000, the updated five-bedroom, four-bathroom home boasts good schools and a quaint block packed with stained glass windows, gabled roofs and stone garages. "These aren't cookie-cutter homes," Toomey says.

In a neighborhood where holiday décor and perfectly manicured lawns are practically required, it can be hard to find a low-priced option. Enter 5927 N. Kostner (above, call Coldwell Banker broker Renee Bennett, 312-981-5500). The adorable, 1,758-square-foot fixer-upper had one owner for decades before it recently hit the market at $299,000. Bonus for a young, active family: The classic cottage home overlooks Sauganash Park and a bike trail.
Where the art is

Christopher Jobson, founder of Colossal, an art and visual culture blog and shop, finds the pieces that make his world pop.

1. Phineas X. Jones: Chi-Nocerous print, signed and numbered by the artist, $45, Galerie F, 2381 N. Milwaukee; Galerief.com
2. LEGO: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum set, $39.99; Shop.lego.com
3. Selvedge: chambray small scarf in black, $78, Penelope's, 1913 W. Division; Shop.penelope.com
4. Squibbles Ink + Rotofugi: Marshall Series toys, $9.95, 2780 N. Lincoln; Rotofugi.com
5. Design Hype: Chicago El Metro cuff, $37; Colossalshop.com
6. Sprout Home: recycled glass hanging terrariums, starting at $90, Sprout Home, 745 N. Damen; Sprouthome.com
7. iamhome: Wabash Fence wall decor made from repurposed wood in a range of sizes, $35-$100, The Haymaker Shop, 5507 N. Clark; Haymakershop.com
9. AHeirloom: bamboo state-shaped cutting boards, $48; Aheirloom.com
10. Vintage Confections: Solar System lollipops, $22; Colossalshop.com

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"The elusive Chi-Nocerous, sporting John Hancock and Sears Tower (ahem) horns. Created by Chicago artist Phineas X. Jones."

"Worn in New Jersey with cotton fabric sourced from Japan. So comfy."

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Nissan spots a good entry in the econo-class

BY JEFF TAYLOR
For Sun-Times Media

Purchasing inexpensive transportation is relative: do you buy a car with a higher price and a record for reliability with a built-in maintenance program, a quality used car, or a new car with a super-low starting price?

At $15,990 the subcompact 2014 Versa Note SV is one of the lowest-priced new cars you can buy. This hatchback is aimed at providing space, utility, gas mileage and seating for four or a really tight five.

Looking at the Versa it's a "1 for 3" proposition as the front view is appealing enough. Nissan made an attempt with a signature front grille and large multi-reflector headlights, a swept back roofline, grooved side panels and "boomerang" rear taillights that elevate it above some competitive models.

"Mileage" is the key word to describe the engine, which is a 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine with 107 lb-ft. of torque. My test vehicle came with the continuously variable automatic transmission (CVT). Drivetrain improvements have helped to significantly boost mileage in both the city and highway ranges.

Inside was above basic with the addition of several option packages. The controls are functional knobs and switches, which were easy to use. Everything is surrounded by hard but durable-looking plastic panels and pieces. There is plenty of head room and second-row foot room is decent. The Note SV is not a "stripping" model, as power windows/locks and remote keyless entry, cruise, Fine Vision instrumentation, Bluetooth, and a leather steering wheel are standard.

A unique feature is the optional (SL package) Divide-N-Hide Adjustable Floor using the standard 60/40-split rear seat folded down, a large flat cargo area is created. Additional SL package items include rear view monitor, AM/FM/CD/Aux-in audio system with 4 speakers, heated seats, Satellite radio, 12-volt power outlet, and many more amenities. Another Technology Package added 5.8-inch color monitor (replacing the 4.3-inch in SL package), navi, hands free text messaging system, heated mirrors and the great Around View Monitor 360-degree camera system.

Cargo and flexibility are big with Versa Note and the hatch permits easy loading and almost 113 cubic feet of interior volume.

On the test drive, the CVT transmission was a bit slow to respond, and the electric steering required some correction. Handling and cornering is functional. The Versa Note features anti-lock front disc and rear drum brakes.

Versa Note includes a number of modern safety features, including roof-mounted side airbags covering all outboard occupants, front side-impact torso airbags, flash airbags and standard electronic stability control.

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<tr>
<th>Model Year</th>
<th>Make/Model</th>
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<th>Payment Options</th>
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| 2006 | Mercury Mariner | #X9475B | $7,990
| 2003 | TOYOTA SEQUOIA 4X4 | #X9027A | $8,990
| 2007 | GMC Canyon | #M30506A | $8,990
| 2007 | BUICK ENCLAVE 4X4 | #M3051A | $8,990
| 2007 | CHRYSLER 300C | #M3050A | $9,990
| 2007 | LEXUS RX350 | #M30251A | $9,990
| 2007 | BUICK LUCERNE CXL | #X9148 | $10,990
| 2010 | BUICK LACROSSE CXL | #B40136A | $10,990
| 2010 | CHEVY TRAVERSE AWD | #X9170 | $10,990
| 2010 | TOYOTA CAMRY LE | #X9125A | $12,990
| 2006 | VOLKSWAGEN JETTA | #X9253A | $13,990
| 2007 | BUICK LUCERNE CXL | #X9148 | $13,990
| 2007 | CHEVY TRAVERSE AWD | #X9170 | $14,990
| 2006 | TOYOTA COROLLA | #X9125A | $15,990
| 2006 | CADILLAC ESCALADE ESV | #X9125A | $16,990
| 2007 | BUICK LUCERNE CXL | #X9148 | $17,990
| 2007 | BUICK LUCERNE CXL | #X9148 | $18,990
| 2010 | BUICK LUCERNE CXL | #X9148 | $19,990

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<th>Model</th>
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<td>New 2014 Jeep PATRIOT SPORT</td>
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<td>New 2013 Dodge CHARGER SE</td>
<td>$8/DAY</td>
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<td>New 2013 Ram 1500 QUAD CAB</td>
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<td>New 2014 Jeep CHEROKEE</td>
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<td>New 2013 Dodge DURANGO SXT 4X4</td>
<td>$10/DAY</td>
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Summer begins...now?
Lake Chapin Shores offers ‘early’ vacation home planning

Weekend retreats and summer homes are popular options for families who do not want to waste precious vacation time and expense traveling long distances. Planning now also carries the benefits of low interest rates, attractive pricing and construction lead-time of 6 to 8 months. The National Association of Realtor’s Investment and Vacation Home Buyers Survey found that 40 percent of the second-home market can be attributed to buyers under the age of 45, many with young families.

Few places can offer families as much opportunity for fun and togetherness as Lake Chapin Shores in Southwest Michigan. Just 90 minutes from Chicago and situated on 600-acre all-sports Lake Chapin, this thriving second-home community has become a family haven, a home away from home with something for everyone. With spectacular views of woods and water, 21 homesites offer the opportunity to relax or enjoy every variety of water sport and other outdoor activity, just steps from the front door. Kids find plenty to do, like waterskiing, boating and fishing on the quiet lake, enjoying the pool and play areas with new and old friends, discovering nature and wildlife, creating the memories of a lifetime.

With young children, and the prospect of getting away from the city, homeowners Cathy and Brian said they treasure the idea of watching their children “grow up on the lake.”

Quiet country roads and quaint surrounding towns, first-rate restaurants nearby, unique local shops and boutiques, artist and antique galleries and easy access to Michigan’s renowned wineries make the Lake Chapin Shores community a home-away-from-home family destination with endless options for all ages, any time of the year.

Families create their home-away-from-home with the features that accommodate their lifestyle and interests. Each of the 12 home models includes options for outside color, customized open floor plans, cozy gas or wood-burning fireplace, fine hardwood cabinetry, natural granite countertops and energy efficient appliances. The heated swimming pool, docks, roadways, and common areas are landscaped and well maintained, and there is a children’s playground as well as a concierge option to help prepare the home and/or boat for each visit.

Homeowners choose a combination of screened three-season porches and expansive decks to maximize access to the outdoors. The developers and builder work with each buyer to create the high-quality construction details necessary for living space that meets family lifestyle requirements for easy getaway comfort and home-like convenience through the seasons.

Interested homebuyers can take advantage now of the strong second-home market, and can plan a day trip to Lake Chapin Shores. Call 888-TO-MICHIGAN (888-866-4244) for an appointment to tour the community and the model home. Visit the Website at www.LakeChapinShores.com for a look at each of 12 model home options, photos, a new aerial “fly over” video of Lake Chapin Shores, and a complete list of materials and specifications.

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Reducing transfer tension

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Selecting a college
Applying to graduate school
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Reducing transfer tension
Illinois initiative helps students get the credits they deserve

BY KAREN HUELSMAN
For Sun-Times Media

SOME PARENTS OF TODAY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS TELL TERRIBLE STORIES OF TIME AND MONEY THAT "WENT MISSING." WHEN THEY TRANSFERRED FROM ONE COLLEGE TO ANOTHER. JUST 15 YEARS AGO, PREDICTING WHAT COMPLETED COURSE CREDITS WOULD TRANSFER WOULD OFTEN BE A GUESSWORK.

However, today's collegians interested in transferring from a community college to a four-year school or between two universities have a more secure path. Thanks in large part to a group of forward-thinking leaders in college counseling, Illinois has a roadmap for which courses will automatically be accepted by any public institution and by many private schools in the state, said Krista Jackson, coordinator of the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI).

Despite the mouthful of a name, the concept is simple. Under Illinois law passed in 1998, public schools must accept a long list of general education credits and another list of courses from popular eventual majors, including business, regardless of where they were earned.

"This system provides a guarantee," the IAI's Jackson said. "If a student meets the IAI-approved requirements for core courses, those courses transfer as a package. As far as general education courses go, that student is done."

But times have changed and nobody can afford to retake a course.

"It isn't to anybody's advantage for students to take courses that won't eventually transfer if the student is even considering continuing on to a four-year college," said Earl Dowling, vice president of enrollment and student affairs at College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn.

"Twenty or 30 years ago, when the cost of a college education was not what it is today, I think more students elected to do their own thing," Dowling said. "But times have changed and nobody can afford to retake a course."

"We really don't expect an 18-year-old to understand the nuances of academic planning," Dowling said. "But we sure don't want them to load up on classes that won't bring them closer to a bachelor's degree if that is what they'd like to achieve."

He observed that the culture of college, which includes the influx of older students, has presented new challenges. Moreover, the transfer initiative has helped serve those students who may have had their educations disrupted.

"But we are finding the initiative really works," he said.

The initiative continually seeks out new partnerships. Just this year, Columbia College of Chicago signed on to the agreement.

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Illinois' articulation program has been so successful that Jackson said the plan has become a model for other states. "It is wonderful to be able to do the right thing by students, and we are happy to see other states look to us for help," she said.
College entrance test dates set

College admissions tests - the ACT and SAT - are a huge part of the college application process for high school students. School counselors typically provide students with the lowdown on when to take these all-important tests. In addition, most public high schools offer the ACT on a school day. Following is a brief guide about how to register for the Saturday tests and the dates for the winter and spring.

**ACT**

Sign up online (actstudent.org/regist/) or use the packet provided by your high school counselor or found in your school's college guidance office. The cost is $36.50 for the test without a writing portion and $52.50 for the exam with the writing test. Fees include the option of sending scores to four colleges of your choice for free; the fee for additional schools is $11 per school.

Saturday test dates will be Dec. 14 (registration closed), Feb. 8, 2014 (Jan. 10 registration deadline), April 12, 2014 (March 7 registration deadline), June 14, 2014 (May 9 registration deadline).

For more information about ACT registration, call (319) 337-1270.

**SAT**

Students can register online (sat.collegeboard.org/home) or through packets provided by high schools. The cost is $61 for the basic SAT. Additional optional fees include a $24.50 registration fee for basic subject tests, $24 for language with listening tests and $13 for all other subject tests. Registering by phone costs another $15. Fees include sending scores to four colleges of your choice for free; the fee for additional schools is $11.25 per school.

Saturday test dates will be Jan. 25, 2014 (Dec. 27 registration deadline); March 8, 2014 (Feb. 7 registration deadline); May 3, 2014 (April 4 registration deadline); June 7, 2014 (May 9 registration deadline).

For more information about SAT registration, call (866) 630-9305.

Each testing service does provide late and standby registration for a fee; visit their websites for more information.

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Graduate school has long been a place that professionals turn to when looking to give their careers a boost. However, the recent recession left many professionals wondering if graduate school would help or hurt their chances of finding a more challenging or fulfilling job.

As is typically the case during an economic downturn, graduate school applications increased during the recent recession, when job opportunities for new graduates were scarce, which forces many to seek shelter in graduate programs. Such shelter isn't always available, nor is a graduate degree, for everyone. According to the Council of Graduate Schools, graduate schools received 4.3 percent more applications for entry into master's and Ph.D. programs in 2012 than in 2011. Despite the apparent growing interest in graduate programs, the number of students who began graduate studies decreased between 2011 and 2012, suggesting that perhaps graduate school is not for everyone, even those who go through the arduous application process.

Much of the reason for that decline in enrollment can likely be traced to the cost of graduate school; costs have grown larger during the recession, when even colleges and universities felt the sting of a sagging economy. During the recession, many schools were unable to devote as much funds to incentives such as assistantships and merit-based scholarships as they were during those periods when the economy was thriving. As a result, even those applicants who were accepted to graduate school may have found their respite from the recession was likely to be anything but, forcing them to accept large amounts of debt in order to earn their advanced degrees.

Determining if taking on such debt was ultimately worth pursuing an advanced degree was a decision each individual had to make on his or her own. More than just finances come into consideration when professionals are deciding if graduate school is the right way to further their careers.

- **Career ambition:** Many people pursue an advanced degree out of intellectual curiosity, while many others do so in an effort to resuscitate their careers or facilitate a transition to a new career. Ask yourself if your career has reached a plateau and the next logical step is an advanced degree. If a graduate degree aligns with your career goals, then you likely won't regret pursuing such a degree regardless of the cost. On a similar note, if a graduate degree is required in another field you want to transition into, then the cost of that degree likely won't be too much of a hindrance. However, if a graduate degree isn't necessary for your career but more of a shortcut to furthering that career, then the cost of pursuing the degree might not be worth it, and it could be something you grow to regret when loan payments come due.

- **Family:** Family also comes into play for many professionals who are weighing if an advanced degree is right for them. Graduate degrees are not easy to come by, and the work required to earn such a degree is considerable. Professionals with families must consider the impact their pursuits of advanced degrees may have on their families. Many professionals pursue advanced degrees part-time, which means they may not earn their degree in two years like those full-time students will. Professionals with families must decide if the graduate degree is worth a three- or four-year investment and the sacrifices that will need to be made during those three or four years.

- **Location:** The right graduate program for you will not necessarily be close to home. Unlike younger students or recent college graduates, professionals often have established ties within a community. This includes a network of friends and fellow professionals. Leaving that behind to pursue an advanced degree likely won't be easy, so professionals considering such a pursuit should weigh the impact such a move may have on their quality of life and if that sacrifice is worth pursuing the degree.

An advanced degree can be a great way for professionals to advance their careers while satisfying their intellectual curiosity. However, such pursuits come at a cost, and those costs should be considered before the application process even begins.

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Steps first-time job seekers can take to prepare for their professional lives

Though things have improved in the last few years, recent college graduates still face an uphill battle when beginning their professional careers. Standing out in a crowded pool of applicants isn’t easy, but first-time job seekers must find a way to do just that.

However, preparing for a professional career begins long before men and women send out their first resumes. The following are a few steps first-time job seekers can take to ensure their transition from student to professional goes as smoothly as possible.

- Clean up your online presence. College is a carefree time for many students, but those fun times should not come to define your online presence. When preparing to enter the workforce, scrub your social media presence clean of anything that does not present you in a mature and positive light. Fair or unfair, photos from nights out on the town in college can damage your reputation and prevent hiring managers from considering your resume. Clean social media profiles of any information, be it photos, blog postings or musings on Twitter, that may leave companies questioning your judgment and maturity level, and think twice before posting any such information in the future.

- Clean up your physical presence. Shoulder-length hair and a scruffy beard might have projected your desired image on campus, but such an image will rarely score you points in the business world. First impressions go a long way, and appearance can make or break a first impression. Even if a more conservative look is not your personal style, many companies prefer it. Men should project a polished look, including a nice suit, while women should wear appropriate office attire and avoid going overboard with makeup and jewelry.

- Do your homework. Just because college has ended doesn’t mean first-time job seekers no longer have homework. Research the industry you want to work in, staying abreast of the latest developments and predictions as to where the industry is going and which companies figure to be leading the industry in the coming years. Research also should involve learning about companies you want to work for, and that research should be kicked into overdrive if and when you are granted a job interview. Hiring managers will be more impressed by candidates who demonstrate knowledge of the industry and their companies than they would be a candidate with a high GPA but little industry knowledge.

- Work free. Lounging around Mom and Dad’s house waiting for the phone to ring won’t stand out on a resume. If job offers are scarce, consider working free, offering your services to companies in your industry free of charge in an attempt to get your foot in the door. This may mean applying for an unpaid internship or simply writing hiring managers at certain companies and offering to come in a few days each week to get a feel for the industry and help in any way you can. Many professionals began their careers working for no money. This can ingratiate first-time job seekers with companies while providing them valuable experience that can help them stand out in a crowded pool of applicants.

Courtesy of Metro Creative
How to pick the right college

Selecting the right college means not only choosing where you'll live for the next four years but also finding the best fit for your personality, interests and your family's financial situation.

If you're considering several colleges, the best way to compare them is to make a list of the things that are most important to you and see how each school stacks up. You might include proximity to home, athletics or arts programs, campus size, etc. When listing pros and cons, consider cost, academics, social life and the impact it will have on your future career.

CONSIDER COSTS

According to the most recent Annual Survey of Colleges by the College Board, students attending a four-year college in their own state will spend an average of $17,860 on tuition, fees and room and board during the 2012-2013 academic year. The average price tag jumps to $39,518 per year for a private four-year college.

To cover the costs, parents and students may need to consider student loans, financial aid and scholarships. You can get a list of available scholarships from your high school guidance counselor as well as the colleges and universities you want to attend. Start your scholarship search early and look at all possible sources.

Foresters, an international life insurance provider committed to family well-being, offers the Foresters Competitive Scholarship Program, which awards up to $250 tuition scholarships for higher learning worth up to $8,000 each in the US and Canada for eligible members and their spouses, children and grandchildren.

RANK YOUR PRIORITIES

Cost may be one of the biggest factors when choosing the right college, but there are many things to consider while researching each prospective school. Though some people judge a school solely on published college rankings, it may be more important to find the rank of specific departments within those schools. A top medical school or culinary program could be part of a school that doesn't have a high overall ranking. Assessing what you value most in an educational program will help put you on the path to success.

NARROW DOWN TOP CHOICES

Plan a few campus visits to get a feel for campus size, dorm life, the school's resources and how helpful school staff will be. Finally, make sure any scholarship you might be awarded can be used at the schools you have on your short list. For example, Foresters Competitive Scholarship can be used for tuition at any vocational or trade school, college or university offering a full-time academic program of two years or more.

If you find yourself overwhelmed by all of the choices, just make the best decision you can with the information you have.

Many students change majors during their college years. What may be the best fit academically now can change as quickly as what you want to be when you graduate.
Schools offer community enrichment, new programs and research news

Area schools participating in this guide share news of their programs and achievements.

Elmhurst College: America’s current generation of college students has earned a reputation for selfless service and volunteerism. So, observers have asked, why are those same students so reluctant to engage in political causes or democratic action? Why, for example, did only 45 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds vote in 2012, according to a Tufts University study?

Elmhurst College is playing a leadership role in a new national effort to address such questions by promoting civic learning and democratic engagement on college campuses. Elmhurst was chosen as one of eight colleges and universities nationwide that will provide guidance to other institutions to help them create more civic-minded campuses.

“This says that we’re doing significant work here and that we can help others,” said Eileen Sullivan, Elmhurst’s dean of students. “[Developing students as citizens] is what we do as an institution. It’s central to our mission.”

Sullivan and Laura Wilmarth Tyner, Elmhurst’s director of leadership, service and engagement, recently co-authored an article for the journal Diversity & Democracy that outlines the need for civics education and Elmhurst’s response to that need.

Indeed, many have noted a growing gap in understanding of civics principles. The problem begins, some say, with a reduced emphasis on civics in primary- and secondary-school curricula. Sullivan and Wilmarth Tyner noted that during a speaking engagement at Elmhurst, former associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Sandra Day O’Connor expressed concern about the lack of civic knowledge among American students. Most young people can name at least one American Idol judge, O’Connor said, but no Supreme Court justices.

GSU offers many MBA specializations that provide career advancement opportunities in rapidly growing fields: corporate entrepreneurship, finance, human resource management, international business, management information systems, marketing and supply chain management.

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Whether you're looking for a new career or promotion in your current organization, GSU will help expand your skills to get you on the fast track to a successful career. Classes are offered online, weekends and evenings to fit your busy schedule.

Online Accelerated MBA with Specialization in Supply Chain Management - This 17-month accelerated, online program will increase your value to nearly every industry. Learn how to plan and manage sourcing and procurement, conversion, and logistics and coordination and collaboration with suppliers, intermediaries, third party service providers and customers.

MBA with Specialization in Corporate Entrepreneurship - Companies are searching for individuals who can locate and exploit new opportunities and who can foster an entrepreneurial environment within the company. Learn how to become an entrepreneur within a business setting.

Your MBA will allow you to advance your career to new heights. Governors State University's College of Business and Public Administration offers bachelor's and master's degrees in a variety of fields, at affordable tuition rates and convenient class times. Learn more by visiting www.govst.edu/cbpa or call (708) 534-4391.

Indiana University Northwest: The Gary school's Center for Urban and Regional Excellence offers enrichment activities for children through senior citizens. Kids College is a summer program that provides two-week classes for children 10 through 13. Previous sessions have focused on citizenship and law.

Thank you to everyone who made the Education Guides in 2013 a success. We are looking forward to having a bigger and better 2014.

Here is the 2014 schedule of Education Guides:

- 2/20/14 - Top Degrees for the Future
- 5/22/14 - Choosing Your Next School
- 7/24/14 - MBA Guide
- 9/25/14 - NACAC Guide
- 12/18/14 - Transferring Credits

If you would like to advertise in any of the 2014 Education Guides please contact Matt Zawaski at mzawaski@stmedianetwork.com

Happy Holidays!!
enforcement. The Senior University Program is a week long event that includes seminars, workshops, computer instruction, graphic arts with computers, traditional art instruction, and conferences. For more information on programs sponsored by the center, call (219) 980-6978.

National Louis University: National Louis University (NLU) has designed programs for busy adults who want to complete their bachelor's degrees while they manage life's other responsibilities. With a generous transfer credit policy and credit for work and life experience many cases, NLU makes earning your degree even more attainable. In fact, more than 80 percent of NLU's undergraduate students have transferred credits from a community college or other institution.

NLU partners with top community colleges in Chicagoland, so making the transfer to NLU is easy. Plus, students can take advantage of multiple scholarship opportunities available exclusively for transfer students. Also, as a proud member of the Servicemembers Opportunity College Consortium (SOC), NLU offers discounted tuition rates to all active-duty, veteran students and their dependents.

Be a Part of NLU's Vibrant Community of Working Professionals
Many NLU students are juggling personal and professional commitments while pursuing their education. NLU offers the quality education and convenience they need as well as:

- Flexible class schedules and the option to study online.
- Small class sizes, intensive interaction with faculty, and shared experiences with classmates that often result in lifelong personal and professional networks.
- Rich cultural and economic diversity with students from varied backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities.
- Faculty members who bring years of practical experience, accomplishments, and a dedication to teaching that benefits students inside and outside the classroom.

Start the new year by finishing your degree. Winter classes start Jan. 6. For more information or to connect with an Enrollment Advisor, visit nl.edu/info or call 888.NLU.INFO.

Southern Illinois University: Southern Illinois University Carbondale has everything you need to build a better future. You'll have the resources of a top-ranked research university powering your drive—and the faculty experts to help guide it. Here are just a few ways you should consider transferring to SIU:

For the complete college experience. We have more than 400 student-run organizations, centered on just as many different passions and interests. Our internships and research opportunities allow you to gain invaluable experience outside the classroom.

For the mentorship. More than 90 percent of our faculty members are full-time teaching and research professionals, dedicated to sharing what they know with a new generation of thinkers. It's the perfect balance of teaching and research—without compromising on either.

For the degree that employers notice. SIU is a Tier One University and one of the top 100 public universities according to US News & World Report. We were also named "Best in the Midwest" by Princeton Review.

Our eight colleges and three schools offer more than 200 majors, minors and specializations and a variety of top-ranked programs, including aviation and zoology.

As a student, you've made smart decisions, waiting for just the right time to make your next move. We know how important it is to have your hard work recognized. Every credit hour matters to you and we'll work with you to make the transfer process as smooth as possible. Learn more at siu.edu/transfer.

Success Schools LLC: The school offers hair-cutting services by supervised students for men, women and children at its locations in the South Loop Chicago and Merrillville, Ind. In Chicago, the shop is open to the public Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 214 S. Wabash. The Merrillville location also offers massage services. That location at 8101 Polo Club Drive, is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Call 312-386-9100 for the Chicago location and 219-736-9999 for the Merrillville location.

Triton College: Programs that will be added to the coming semester include mechatronics, a growing and fascinating sector of advanced manufacturing that incorporates robotics, and sustainable agriculture technology, a first for Illinois community colleges that will prepare students to manage an environmentally sound and sustainable urban food production system.

For self-enrichment, Triton's School of Continuing Education will offer the Illinois Concealed Carry Education Training course that will provide individuals with the education and training needed to fulfill the 16-hour state requirement to apply for the Concealed Carry License in Illinois. With the increasing popularity of social media sites, individuals can pursue a certificate at Triton designed to provide instruction to utilize the growing opportunities available through social media marketing. These programs complement Triton's stellar curriculum. Triton also offers adult education programs in English as a Second Language, GED preparation and adult literacy. Visit www.triton.edu or call (708) 456-0300, ext. 3130.
Purdue Calumet prof in on Nobel Prize-winning effort

The announcement this month of the 2013 Nobel Prize in Physics initiated a day of historical and unprecedented celebration at Purdue University Calumet for one of its own: Professor of Physics Neeti Parashar.

Theoretical physicists Peter Higgs and François Englert received the Nobel for their work developing the theory of the Higgs field, which prompted discovery of the Higgs boson subatomic particle by a team of worldwide researchers, including Professor Parashar.

The eight-year Purdue Calumet faculty member also received Purdue Calumet’s 2012-13 Outstanding Scholar and Teacher awards.

The discovery of Higgs boson, also referred to as the “God particle,” has been touted as a crowning achievement of the century.

The discovery of what was believed to be the Higgs boson was announced in July 2012 and confirmed last March.

Since 2004, Parashar has conducted research with colleagues on the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) detector at the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, developed software programs to run subsystems and analyze data from proton-proton collisions, she said. “Our students have done a phenomenal job in leading efforts single-handedly, such as being responsible for Tracker Validation...”

Parashar refers to the Higgs boson discovery as “a fundamental ingredient in the theory of particle physics, called the Standard Model.”

Continuing, she said, “The theory predicts that the Higgs boson is responsible for the origin of mass... The discovery of the Higgs boson has not only confirmed the accuracy of the Standard Model, but remarkably enhanced our scientific understanding about the nature of our universe.

“I never imagined that I would be a part of something at this elite level of scientific endeavor. In my opinion, this discovery is a crowning achievement of the century.”

Provided by Purdue University Calumet

Fresh ideas at GSU include a freshman class

There is so much innovation at Governors State University and it is all waiting for the school’s first freshman class. In August of 2014, the university will open its doors to first year college students. Traditionally, students had to have junior standing or enrolled in a graduate program to attend GSU. With the admission of 270 freshmen, all that changes.

What also changes is how some of these new freshmen will pay for their college educations. They won’t.

The university has established 29 competitive scholarships — to either pay in full or help defray the cost of education.

Two Presidential Scholarships provide full tuition for outstanding students to be awarded for the first time in 2014. Application for this scholarship is included in the early admissions application, which is due Nov. 15. Students who apply by this deadline are automatically in the running for these outstanding scholarship opportunities. The recipients will be chosen from that pool of applicants and based on qualifying high school records, ACT scores and a personal essay.

More big ideas live here

GSU has a long history of making college education affordable. It’s one of the innovative concepts that led to the development of “Big Ideas Live Here” as the university’s tagline. So, in addition to the most economical tuition and fees of any Illinois state university, GSU will also offer incoming freshmen with high school records 12 merit-based and 15 need-based scholarships of $500 per semester. These scholarships are renewable, so qualifying students have access to additional financial assistance for a full four years.

Another innovation that all new freshman benefit from at GSU is the way they will learn during their first two years of study. Before they begin their major, the new freshman will take some of their general courses along themed areas of study. That means, instead of general freshman rhetoric, their basic writing and research course will focus on one of three themes: sustainability, global citizenship and civic engagement. The class will be comprised of students who share the same interest so learning will be stronger and friendships will develop. Studies show that this model produces the most successful learners at the freshman and sophomore levels and success is GSU’s goal for all students.

There are innovative developments in every corner of the campus. The new freshman and all GSU students through the graduate level will also have the opportunity to live in Prairie Place, the university’s brand new, on-campus student residence. The suites and apartments of Prairie Place offer all the amenities of on-campus living at a reasonable price.

The university is also proud to announce that research and education in the fields of science and health care in the south suburbs are experiencing innovation at a whole new level. The university is completing a $28 million renovation of its labs and classrooms — modernizing and improving how science and health-care education is delivered in the south suburbs. Opportunities in the STEM fields at GSU have never been better.

Provided by Governors State University
Joining student organizations benefits your present, future

Once students have adapted to college, many seek opportunities to become more actively involved in life on campus. College clubs and organizations provide benefits that further enhance college life.

**MEET PEOPLE**

Joining a student club or organization is a great way for college students to meet fellow students, professors and other people of note on campus. This is especially beneficial for first-year college students, whose social circle may otherwise be limited to roommates or fellow residents of their dormitories. Joining a club or student organization can quickly expand that social circle to include people who share your interests and not just your dorm assignment.

**FIND A MAJOR**

Many first-year college students are unsure about a course of study, enrolling as an undeclared. Such students can benefit from joining clubs or student organizations that pique their interests. For example, joining an on-campus debate club might help you discover a passion for debate, which can lead down a path to becoming a lawyer. Students who enroll in college without declaring a major may have the most to gain by joining a club or organization.

**BOOST YOUR GPA**

Joining a club or student organization also may make you a better student. That's especially likely for students who join a club or organization that's aligned with their field of study. A club or organization can help you apply lessons from the classroom in real-world situations, improving your grasp of certain concepts. In addition, your fellow club members may make great teachers, especially those who are ahead of you and have taken many of the same classes you're now taking or can expect to take down the road. Such students can be invaluable resources, helping explain concepts and offering advice as to which courses to take and which professors they prefer.

**NETWORK WITH PROFESSIONALS**

Clubs and campus organizations also are a great way to begin networking with professionals in your future line of work. Many clubs or organizations bring in professionals within the field to speak to members. Such speeches and discussions are typically members-only, which means you will have an advantage over fellow students in your field of study who have not gone the extra mile and joined a club or organization. Professionals may also give you advice on finding an internship in your field or a job once you have graduated.

**FINISH YOUR DEGREE AT NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY**

Your bachelor's degree in BUSINESS, EDUCATION or HUMAN SERVICES may be closer than you think. NLU is Chicago's original, non-profit university for adults transferring from community college or returning to complete their degrees—more than 70% of NLU undergraduate students have some previous college experience.

Consult with an Enrollment Advisor who can help guide you to the degree path that fits you best. Call or visit www.nl.edu/info today.

www.nl.edu/info
855.NLU.INFO
(855.658.4636)
YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES.

NOW TAKE IT TO
A NATIONALLY RANKED RESEARCH UNIVERSITY.

You’ve worked hard. And Southern Illinois University Carbondale has all the resources, faculty, and support you need to take your initiative further. Our admissions counselors will help make the transfer process as easy as possible. You can even visit our transfer page to see exactly which of your classes transfer, so there’s no confusion about where you stand—or our support. Start here: siu.edu/transfer.
Employers Beware: Holiday Parties Can Be a Source of Liability

By: Seyfarth Shaw LLP

At this time of year, many employers sponsor and host holiday parties to both cultivate employee engagement and spread holiday good cheer. Such parties can be helpful in motivating employees and serving as a thank you for a job well done all year. But if an employer is not careful, holiday parties can also create legal liability. Awareness of the issues and careful planning are the best precautionary measures a smart employer can take to prevent such ill after-effects.

Holiday Office Party Planning

First, if an employer provides alcohol at its gathering, there is the possibility that it could end up liable for injuries or damages caused by an inebriated employee. Every state has different laws regarding the liability of a “social host” that provides alcohol to a guest who later is involved in an accident with a third party. In most cases, the specific facts of the situation will determine the outcome, but the important thing to understand is that even if an employer is not legally liable for the actions of a drunk employee, it still may have to spend thousands of dollars proving that.

Instead, a better policy would be to either refrain from serving alcohol at the party at all or, if that’s not feasible, to take other steps to limit alcohol consumption, such as by providing a limited number of drink “tickets” to each employee, closing the bar well before the party ends, asking bartenders to keep eyes open for obviously drunk employees, or offering incentives to employees who volunteer to be “designated drivers.” In any case, employers are urged to consult with an attorney to determine the law in their particular jurisdiction.

Keeping Employee Behavior In Check

Holiday parties, particularly ones where alcohol is served, can also provide a setting for lewd behavior, sexual advances, and other conduct that is potentially actionable as sexual harassment under Title VII. To help protect against such claims, employers should re-distribute the company’s sexual harassment policy before the holiday party takes place, and emphasize that all guidelines will apply at the party, even if it occurs off-site and after work hours. Remind supervisors to set a professional example; utilize their management skills to keep an eye on employee behavior and not invite co-workers to any informal gathering after the employer’s party. And, as should be obvious, do not hang any mistletoe!

A little bit of common sense before the holiday party can help employers avoid big headaches afterwards. So be smart when planning the holiday party and everyone can have a good time.

--Paul Freehling, Esq., Labor and Employment attorney, Seyfarth Shaw LLP, with assistance from Melanie H. Berkowitz, Esq., Seyfarth Shaw LLP.
NU-WAY

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CDL A - REGIONAL DEDICATED
- Romeoville, IL
- Full-Time & Part-Time Available
- $60-$70K Per Year

CDL A - LOCAL DEDICATED
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DRIVER REQUIREMENTS:
- One Year Recent Experience
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Call Recruiting 309-834-2017 or Apply Online at nuway.com

GARAGE SALES

198-1147 W. Highland Ave
Sat Dec 14th, 9am-3pm

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COOK COUNTY - CHICAGO


customer service and to complete your purchase. Please call 312-462-1102.

Haagen-Das, Hal's, and more. Call 708-736-3130 or visit DirectAuction.com.

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1100 S. State St
Fri Dec 13th, 9am-3pm

FAIR-HAVEN

13440 S. 67th Ave
Sat Dec 14th, 8am-noon

COOK COUNTY - SUBURBAN

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Photography.

Auction

HOLIDAY ANTIQUE AUCTION!
Tuesday, Dec. 17
7:00 PM

Sevierville, TN

GUITAR, AMPLIFIER, FENDER, IBANEZ, GUITARS, PIANOS, ORCHESTRA, BASS, PEDAL STEPS, TAPE DECKS, ELECTRICAL ITEMS, FURNITURE, ETC.

1814 SANDALWOOD

Tues. Dec. 17th, 9am - 3pm

WANTED HOMES

NEW TRIER SELLING AT AUCTION WEDNESDAY

2015 W. Chicago Ave.

CHICAGO

1980 S. Lake Shore Dr., Chicago, IL

THURSDAY, DEC. 19TH, 9AM-5PM

198-1147 W. Highland Ave
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Photography.
To place a classified ad, call 847-998-3400 or visit PIONEERLOCAL.COM/CLASSIFIEDS
Prospective bidders are advised to refer to the number 14-12-03993.

705 ILCS 605/18.5(q-1). IF YOU

The mortgaged real estate is for sale other than a mortgagee, shall pay the amount bid, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee, shall pay in full of the amount bid, the preparation and due within twenty-four hours after the conclusion of the sale.

IF YOU

The real estate whose rights in and to the underlying real estate arose prior to January 1, 1989, and the real estate at the rate of $1 for each real estate assessment levied against said real estate.

IF YOU

No third party checks or money orders will be accepted. The purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the judicial sales fee for abandoned residential properties. The sales of these properties will also be advertised in the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun Times, and other dailies as determined by The Judicial Sales Corporation. The parties: 10% of successful bid immediately at conclusion of auction, and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium property, the Subject property is subject to the Condominium Act and the legal fees are paid by the mortgagee acquiring the real estate.

For information call Sales Department, 6737 W. LINCOLN AVENUE, LINCOLNWOOD, IL 60712 Properly Municipality Relief Fund.

The purchase of the unit st the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the amount bid, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee, shall pay in full of the amount bid, the preparation and due within twenty-four hours after the conclusion of the sale.

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MORTON GROVE
THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COUNTY CHANCERY DIVISION
NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE
Defendants: DANIEL W. PETERSON and others.


The mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest real estate project
commonly known as 4732 North Calumet Avenue, Chicago, Illinois; 60637.

The purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments
required by the ordinance of the city in which the property is located, the legal fees
and the legal costs of preparing and recording the deed to the real estate whose
rights in and to the property is subject to the proceedings, and any other liens,
charges, taxes, special assessments, or special real estate taxes levied
against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagor's successors or assigns.

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NOTICE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) and the Illinois Consumer Credit Act (ICCA), any communication with you regarding a debt or a mortgage-related transaction is deemed to be a debt collector activity, and any information obtained will be used in connection with that activity.

TUSC-3-252302: NO TRADE; Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA), the creditor is deemed to be a debt collector and any information obtained will be used in connection with that activity.

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The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser shall receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to the property. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser shall receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to the property.

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Lucy Krol & Chad Vargo

Lucy, who grew up in Hoffman Estates, and Chad, originally from Pennsylvania, are using a nontraditional wedding planner — their Intel tablet. The couple work at Intel, and are using the tablet to plan a Chicago wedding from Portland, Ore., where they live. Lucy, a human resources analyst for Intel, and Chad, a safety engineer there, use Android wedding apps for planning with the tablet and also use social media to keep guests in the loop. They are looking to tie the knot in the spring of 2015.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY KATY MEAVER PHOTOGRAPHY

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A HOLIDAY GETAWAY

Enjoy charming seasonal events, shopping in Port Washington, Wis.

By Anne Thompson

With the holidays fast approaching, you might be looking for a more charming shopping experience than the typical mall rush. In Port Washington, Wis., you can find a great assortment of local shops and events to get you in the shopping spirit without the stress of shopping in the city.

Winter Farmers' Market
Opening for its fourth season, the Port Washington Winter Farmers' Market offers an array of local foods, syrup and honey that will allow you to source your holiday meals locally — even in the wintertime. You might find delicious gifts from local artisans or gather the freshest ingredients to incorporate in your favorite holiday recipes.

Local retailers
From fashion to artisan gifts to fishing gear, you can find presents to please anyone on your list at the shops located throughout Port Washington. Top gift destinations are Blue Heron Artisan's Gallery, Duluth Trading Company, Hidden Treasures Resale Shop, Pear & Simple, and Sharbuno Jewelers. Many shops are located downtown alongside great dining destinations to satiate a hungry shopper's appetite.

Edible gifts and treats
Baltica Tea Room & Gift Shop showcases a variety of teas and handmade gifts from around the world and offers a charming tea room atmosphere for a great shopping break. The Shoppes of Port Washington also can provide you with some edible treats, such as small batch olive oils. For wine, cigars and other indulgences, visit Harbor Temptations and their walk-in humidor.

To explore more of what Port Washington has to offer for your holiday festivities, check out visitportwashington.com or call 262-284-0900. Port Washington is just a two-hour drive from Chicago and only one hour from Milwaukee.

Treats like these salted caramel bars from Port Washington's Chocolate Chisel make a heartfelt holiday gift. Photos courtesy of Port Washington Tourism.
Take a trip to northwest Indiana for your holiday shopping needs

By Anne Thompson

Once Thanksgiving is over, you might have only one thing on your mind: holiday shopping. If you live in the Chicago area or along the South Shore, you will not want to miss out on the great opportunities for shopping fun and savings in Michigan City, Ind.

Where to shop
Lighthouse Place Premium Outlets offers the ultimate destination for serious holiday shoppers. With an impressive lineup of 120 stores — including Ann Taylor, Brooks Brothers, Polo Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Gap, DKNY and Banana Republic — you can find the latest fashions for every member of your family at a fraction of the price.

When to save
This holiday season, Midnight Madness at Lighthouse Place was only the beginning of incredible savings. Some stores opened as early as 9 p.m. on Thanksgiving. If you are in need of last-minute presents this holiday, stores will be open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Christmas Eve.

How to get updates
If you want to stay up to date on the biggest sales and hottest buys of the holiday season, you can follow Lighthouse Place Premium Outlets on Twitter for exclusive updates.

For more information about holiday shopping and family-friendly events throughout the South Shore area, visit SouthShoreCVA.com. You also can call 219-989-7770 for travel and tourist information to guide your trip to northwest Indiana.

WANT MORE? Subscribe to the WeekAway E-newsletter to get features on Midwest travel, seasonal festivals and weekend getaway inspiration.

Go to weekaway.com/newsletter or scan the QR code on the right to subscribe.

Weekends by WeekAway

Looking for a little weekend road trip? Check out one of these events within driving distance from Chicago.

Elkhart Lake, Wis.
Old World Christmas Market
Through Dec. 15
www.christmasmarketatosthoff.com

Galena, Ill.
Night of the Luminaria
Dec. 14
www.visitgalena.org

Belleville, Ill.
Way of Lights
Through Jan. 3
www.wayoflights.org

Sponsored content by WeekAway. For more information on these or other destinations, visit WeekAway.com and follow @WeekAway on Twitter.
The gift of grub: A batch of the year's best cookbooks

BY TOM WITOM
for Sun-Times Media

An avalanche of cookbooks covering a broad range of ethnicities and styles hit the shelves in 2013.

For subject matter, these new arrivals took a cue from domestic cuisines as well as from those of distant shores; France and Italy figured prominently. Menus were drawn from the Deep South, slow cooking, grill masters, the vegetarian pantry and the farm-to-table movement.

While selecting a cookbook remains a matter of personal taste, home cooks have many noteworthy volumes to consider. Here are some favorites:

Cooking Slow (Chronicle Books)
Andrew Schloss, a Pennsylvania-based cooking teacher and writer, explores how preparing food at low temperatures over a length of time can yield maximum flavor with minimum effort. He explains how to use one's slow cooker or sous vide machine to best advantage when slow simmering (aka braising), slow roasting, slow baking, slow grilling, slow frying and slow steaming. Cooks of varying skill levels will find something to challenge them from Brisket with Prunes and Onions to Overnight Lemon Cheesecake.

Bountiful: Recipes Inspired by Our Garden (Stewart, Tabori & Chang)
Todd Porter and Diane Cu, professional food photographers, stylists and bloggers, drew inspiration from their fruit and vegetable garden in Southern California. The attractive pages of this book reflect the couple's dedication to fresh produce and enthusiasm for cooking. Home cooks will enjoy recipes for Hearty Celery Root and Red Lentil Soup, Roasted Spaghetti Squash with Sausage, Blood Orange Bars and Gin Cocktail with Pomegranate and Grapefruit.

Notes from the Larder: A Kitchen Diary with Recipes (Ten Speed Press)
Veteran British food writer Nigel Slater does more than share 250 favorite recipes. His latest book annotates the author's offhand musings — from kitchen tools to a quiet contemplation over a bowl of cauliflower soup with toasted hazelnuts. Readers get a sense of the daily inspiration behind Slater's cooking and the pleasures of handmade dishes.

The Heart of the Plate: Vegetarian Recipes for a New Generation (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
In this update, Mollie Katzen, whose groundbreaking 1970s Moosewood Cookbook went a long way toward ushering vegetarian cuisine into the mainstream, tells how she cooks today. Her recipes, straightforward and packed with flavor, are livelier, spicier and lighter than ever and present contrasts in color, flavors and textures. Winter Lasagna, Zucchini-Ricotta Cloud Cakes and Cranapple Walnut Cake stand out.

A look at 10 of the year's best cookbooks. (Photo by Tom Witom)

The French Kitchen Cookbook: Recipes and Lessons from Paris and Provence (William Morrow)
Seasoned food journalist Patricia Wells is a font of practical advice when it comes to cooking. Her latest book includes insights from her popular culinary classes, which she has conducted for more than 30 years. Traditional dishes like Winter Pistou and more sophisticated fare such as Tomato Tartines are intermingled with dazzling photos by Jeff Kaucz.

Southern Fried (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
James Villas, a North Carolina-born food writer with 17 cookbooks to his credit, makes the case for the fried fare Southerners are so passionate about: fried chicken, crab cakes and hush puppies. Villas argues frying can be as sophisticated, refined and healthy as any other cooking technique when it's handled with a bit of know-how. Keeping moderation, nutritional values and calorie counts in mind also are important.

Lidia's Commonsense Italian Cooking (Alfred A. Knopf)
Home cooks at all skill levels will find plenty to tempt them in Lidia Matticchio Bastianich's latest cookbook, which is based on her syndicated public television series and was co-written by her daughter, Tanya Bastianich Manuali. (Lidia's son Joe Bastianich is a judge on TV's "Master Chef.") Bastianich's 150 recipes represent a mix of commonsense cooking wisdom and reflect her grandmother's influence. Readers will find useful cooking tips and come to regard ingredients as geographic and cultural indicators.

My Vietnamese Kitchen (Ryland Peters & Small)
First-timers delving into Vietnamese cooking will find Uyen Luu's book hard to put down. Saigon-born Luu, who now calls London home, shares family recipes and stories of the culture and heritage of Vietnam and its cuisine. The author says preparing and cooking the food of her native land involves fine-tuning one's tasting skills to balance and master sweet, sour, salty, umami, bitter and hot flavors.

The Art of French Pastry (Alfred A. Knopf)
Novice bakers intimidated by croissants, pate brisee and puff pastry will appreciate pastry chef Jacquy Pfeiffer's step-by-step guidance. Pfeiffer, who co-founded Chicago's French Pastry School, covers the fundamentals and finer points of pastry, including technique, equipment and how ingredients react. Check out his recipe for Chocolate and Hazelnut Buche de Noel.

A Century of Restaurants: Stories and Recipes from 100 of America's Most Historic and Successful Restaurants (Andrews McMeel)
Rick Browne, author of Barbecue America, switches gears in his latest cookbook. Readers with a taste for history will encounter a wealth of recipes and vintage photos of restaurants they might want to add to their travel itinerary. The Berghoff, established in Chicago in 1898, is among those featured, along with its sauerbraten recipe.

**GO YOUR WEEKEND PLANNER**

TOP 5
Managing Editor Jennifer Thomas' picks for this week.

1. Friends of the Library Book Sale takes place 2-4 p.m. Dec. 14 at Eisenhower Public Library, 4650 Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Eisenhowerlibrary.org
2. Do It Yourself Messiah takes place at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 14 at Glenview Community Church, 1000 E. 80th St., Glenview. Call (847) 724-2210 or visit Gcucce.org
3. Songs of the Season Set in the Lounge takes place at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 17 at Quince, 1625 Hinman Ave., Evanston. Guests will enjoy a cracking fire and seasonal cocktails while listening to holiday songs in the lounge by CO, a new Evanston restaurant. More info at Quinchicago.net. Call 708-8419 or see QuinceRestaurant.net
4. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," produced by School District 69, is on stage at 7 p.m. Dec. 18 and 20 at Gorilla Tango's Skokie Theater, 7924 Lincoln Ave. Gorillamongo.com
5. "The Christmas Schooner The Musical" (pictured) is on stage through Dec. 29 at Mercury Theater, 3745 N. Southport, Chicago. The musical tells the story of the first Christmas tree ship. MercuryTheaterChicago.com

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2013 | A PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATION NIL**
Salt Creek Ballet’s ‘Nutcracker’ a tradition for many

By Melissa Wasserman
For Sun-Times Media

With the holiday season come annual traditions such as Salt Creek Ballet’s performance of Tchaikovsky’s “The Nutcracker.”

“It’s a great show, it’s a family show,” said Salt Creek Ballet Artistic Director Sergey Kozadayev. “[Guests] will feel the warmth of the upcoming Christmas and New Year.”

Established in 1985, the nonprofit Salt Creek Ballet is supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council.

“Part of Patty Sigurdson’s mission when she started Salt Creek Ballet, was that she really wanted everyone to only be exposed to the best — the best teachers, the best choreography, the best sets and costumes,” said Elizabeth Laurence of Clarendon Hills, co-president of the Salt Creek Ballet Guild, which supports the ballet and dancers.

“She’s passed away now, but her dream was to have it continue on beyond her and the fact that it’s been going on for so long, I think her dream came true.

Salt Creek Ballet is a tradition among three generations of Laurence’s family. In high school, she danced in the company, her mother is a Guild member, her sisters were dancers — one was also in the company at Salt Creek Ballet — and now her daughter, Gretchen, takes classes at Salt Creek Ballet.

Gretchen has been with Salt Creek Ballet for four years, but this year is her first performance of “The Nutcracker.”

Elizabeth Laurence has performed “Nutcracker” roles such as Clara, Chinese, Snow, Waltz, Columbine Doll and Soldier Doll while Gretchen’s upcoming role as the Pirate Toy is special for her as her aunt once danced the same role.

“I think it’s just really fun and she can tell me about how it was for her in ‘The Nutcracker’ and her first time and what it was like being on stage,” Gretchen said.

This year’s show additionally provides a family element for Kozadayev because he’ll share the stage with his wife Zhanna Dubrovskaya, who also serves as Salt Creek Ballet’s artistic director, and their twin sons.

Kozadayev said the production stays fresh each year with an ever-changing cast and his alterations to the choreography, making it more complicated and sophisticated. However, it stays true to Tchaikovsky’s score.

The pre-professional cast of approximately 100 dancers includes local children and young adults ages 8-18 from the Salt Creek Ballet School. Guest artists Maria Mosina, Alexei Tuikov, Misa Kuranaga and Ilya Kozadayev join this year’s cast on stage.

“It’s always a great experience for the kids to see the best dancers in the world and dance next to them,” Kozadayev said.

This will be the final year the original costumes and sets used when Elizabeth Laurence danced will appear on stage. The vision for next year is to come up with all new aesthetics.

“I just hope it’s a wonderful production as usual and that people come out and see it and get in the spirit for the holiday season,” Laurence said.
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TABLEHOPPING

Burgers with a helping of service at Meatheads

BY LEE A. LITAS
Dining Columnist

Thirteen is lucky for some and for the fast-casual burger restaurant, Meatheads, opening its 13th store in Lincolnwood turned out to be a charm.

Its 2,200-square-foot interior boasts a seating mezzanine and patio areas filled with tables, booths and even a 12-seat community table to encourage large family dinners and community get-togethers.

Founded in 2007 by former Potbelly employee Tom Jednorowicz and realtor Doug Reichl, the chain strives to distinguish itself from its patty-wielding rivals by providing not only never-frozen ingredients but actually a full-service dining experience.

“You can go to other places and get burgers and fries,” said Joe Sanders, director of marketing. “But when you come here you get a much higher caliber of service.”

That service is an amenity you never knew you were missing.

“At most places, the service is going to stop at the counter,” said Sanders. Meatheads’ emphasis on family and community means high chairs and toys for the kids, tableside drink refills and table clearing.

Sanders is also very proud that the restaurant has no freezers. “The only things frozen here are the ice cream and milk shakes,” he said.

That means the 100 percent Angus beef hamburgers come made-to-order and the chicken patties don’t waste time thawing out.

“We’re fast-casual so everything here is fresh and natural,” said Sanders.

Take their Texas Ranch burger, with which the founders clearly took the motto “everything is bigger in Texas” to heart. The 1/3-pound certified Angus beef burger is cooked to order then topped with cheddar, bacon, ranch sauce and raw onions for a robust flavor ($6.75). Those needing gluten-free options can ask Meatheads to wrap their patties and accoutrements in lettuce leaves.

Lighter options include the Californian, an inspired sandwich from chef Greg Smith. It can be made with grilled or crispy chicken breast, covered with zesty cucumber wasabi sauce, pepper jack cheese and avocado ($6.75).

Meatheads also serves traditional Chicago dogs using only Vienna Beef in both their New England-style and chili cheese hot dogs ($3.50/$4.50). Pair with French fries cut fresh daily from Real Idaho potatoes in original or Cajun flavors ($2 reg./$3 large).

Meatheads’ many locations include Northbrook and Schaumburg. “We’re going to open as many Meatheads stores as we can, as long as we can continue to execute at a high level,” said Sanders.
A boy who doubts the wonder of Christmas is taken on a magical journey in "The Polar Express." Families can join him on his adventure during an interactive "Polar Express," 7-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20 at Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St.

“We're going to be showing the movie based on the popular children's book by Chris Van Allsburg,” said Linda Zeilstra-Sawyer, Youth Services programming coordinator. "It's interactive in that kids and their parents will have opportunities to act out certain parts of the movie."

That will include chugging like the train and ringing jingle bells when Santa appears.

“We also have a couple of special guest visitors coming for the program,” Zeilstra-Sawyer said. She isn't saying who they are — but we can guess.

“We'll provide everything that they need for their interactive experience,” Zeilstra-Sawyer reported. “They just need to provide their voices.”

Registration is required.

For details, call (847) 324-3149 or go to www.skokiepubliclibrary.info.

IT'S A TOSS UP

Objects will be flying when Jason Kollum presents his amazing juggling show, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 15 at Temple Beth Israel, 3601 W. Dempster St., Skokie.

Registration is required.

Cost is $10 per adult, $5 per child, which includes lunch. Cost for show only is $5 per person.

For details, call (847) 675-0951 or go to www.tbiskokie.org.

ESCARGOT, GO, GO!

A garden snail has an unlikely dream — to win the Indy 500. A freak accident might help him achieve that lofty goal in "Turbo." The 96-minute PG film will be screened at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 16 at Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave.

For details, call (847) 677-5277 or go to www.lincolnwoodlibrary.org.

Kids can ring jingle bells and chug like a train during an interactive "Polar Express" at the Skokie Public Library.

FIGHT RIGHT

Kids ages 3-6 will have an introduction to martial arts when Championship Martial Arts presents Little Dragons Martial Arts, 2-3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14 at Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave.

Registration is required.

For details, call (847) 965-4220 or go to www.mgpl.org.

SEE SANTA IN SKOKIE

Mr. Claus will bring some of his elves and live reindeer to Downtown Skokie's Holiday Fest, 2-6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14. There will also be carolers, live music and lots of shopping deals at the stores. Bring food items for the Niles Township Food Pantry to Krier Plaza, Oakton and Lincoln, and you will receive a raffle ticket.

For details, call (224) 534-9510 or go to downtownskokie.org.
The humble cheese ball is an American standard that can be seen as out of date. But a few twists can give the cheese ball a new attitude.

PHOTO BY MELISSA ELSMO

Have yourself a hokey holiday cheese ball

BY MELISSA ELSMO OUT OF MEL'S KITCHEN

“It's a tuna ball,” giggled my food aficionado friend, Penny, as she proudly revealed a pecan covered orb with a side of Ritz crackers. Knowing her prowess in the kitchen, Penny’s favorite contribution to our annual retro-inspired appetizer feast seemed more than a little out of character to me; her dish contained nothing more than canned tuna, onions, cream cheese and nuts.

While our friends noshed happily on the old school sphere, I learned that Penny was raised among tuna balls and the simple appetizer made frequent appearances at her childhood parties. It’s no wonder she didn’t want to tamper with her mother’s simple and economical ingredient list — food memories have a way of taking hold of even the most gourmet among us.

Cheese balls of every variety rose in popularity during the 1920s and are still considered to be among the classic American holiday appetizer offerings. Unfortunately, they've acquired a less than ideal reputation over the years. When compared to the popular finger-tip sized portions of pine-scented venison tartar commonly served at cocktail parties these days, a globe of clunky cheese seems hopelessly basic and woefully out of date. Here’s the thing though; cheese balls may be unrefined, but they are undeniably reliable in the good eats department.

I began riffing on ways to update Penny’s basic tuna ball recipe the moment I tasted it and became instantly passionate about breathing new life into the lackluster American cheese ball and transforming it into an updated holiday menu mainstay.

My Hokey Holiday Cheese Ball recipe ditches the fish in favor of an expanded ingredient list, but preserves the make-ahead convenience the best party foods offer. Nothing should tamper with the timeless look of a properly made cheese ball, but lively lemon zest, salty feta and crunchy cucumber give this appetizer an unexpectedly Mediterranean flair.

The season where everything old is new again has arrived and an improved version of a retro cheese ball offers busy cooks a welcomed chance to embrace a little holiday nostalgia without sacrificing a morsel of flavor or style.

Happy Holidays!

HOKEY HOLIDAY CHEESE BALL
This festive appetizer spread featuring traditional holiday hues can be kept in the refrigerator for several days. If you RSVP’d yes to more than one holiday soirée in a given weekend, simply divide the mixture accordingly and wrap as directed before transporting. (Makes 2-3 cheese balls.)

8 ounces cream cheese
1 large garlic clove, minced
1/2 cup quartered artichoke hearts, drained, patted dry and chopped
1/2 cup cucumber, seeded and finely diced
1/4 cup red onion, minced
1/4 cup pitted Greek olives, chopped
1/4 cup roasted red pepper, drained, patted dry and chopped
1 tablespoon chopped oregano
1/2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
Sliced cucumber, sliced tomato and oregano sprigs for garnish
Pita chips and crackers for serving

Place the cream cheese in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat on medium speed until softened. Add the garlic, artichoke, cucumber, red onion, olives, red pepper and oregano. Mix until just combined. Add the feta and beat until well blended and thick. Add the pepper, lemon zest and juice and beat until just combined. Divide the mixture into halves or thirds. Place each portion on a large sheet of plastic wrap. Pull up the sides and twist the ends to shape the mixture into balls. Refrigerate overnight or up to three days before unwrapping and serving garnished with cucumber, tomato and oregano sprigs. Serve the cheese ball with the pita chips or crackers.

If you prefer to serve your cheese ball with sliced French or multigrain bread, try coating the ball in toasted pine nuts or almonds after unwrapping to add a little crunch.

Sliced cucumber, sliced tomato and oregano sprigs for garnish
Pita chips and crackers for serving
**SUBMIT YOUR EVENT**

To submit an event for consideration in print, visit www.pioneerlocal.com/submission and click the "Events" tab on the left side of the screen. Please submit the event no later than 10 days before the desired publication date.

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**GO CALENDAR**

**BY WRAPREPORTS NEWS SERVICE**

**THURSDAY, DEC. 12**

**Classic Film Series:**

*Blazing Saddles*

1 p.m.: This 1974 film tells the story of a corrupt political boss who attempts to ruin a western town by appointing a black sheriff, only to have his plan backfire. Starring Cleavon Little, Gene Wilder and Slim Pickens. 93 minutes. Film scholar Ralph Amelio leads a discussion following the movie. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-8282.

**Classic Movie Thursday:**

*White Christmas*

2 p.m.: A screening of the 1954 Christmas movie, starring Bing Crosby, about a successful song-and-dance duo that partners up with a sister act to save an inn. 120 minutes. Niles Senior Center, 999 Civic Center Drive, Niles. Call 847-588-8420.

**Thrilling Thursdays:**

*Dry Ingredient Cooking*

4 p.m.: Children in kindergarten through third grade can create a holiday treat to bake for the holidays. Registration is limited. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-674-1910.

**Alumni Cocktail Party**

7 p.m.: Notre Dame College Prep’s Alumni Association hosts a cocktail party for former students. Must be 21 or older to attend. Contact Skip Lawson for more information. Jet’s Public House, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-674-1910.

**SATURDAY, DEC. 14**

**Breakfast with Santa**

8:30 a.m.: Eat breakfast, visit and take pictures with Santa. Additional events at 10 and 11:30 a.m. Registration required. Howard Leisure Center, 6676 W. Howard St., Niles. Call 847-867-6633. $10-$12.

**Breakfast with Santa**

9 a.m.: Enjoy breakfast with Santa and face painting, Christmas crafts and a theatre production by Resurrection drama students. Children can have their photos taken with Santa. Resurrection College Prep High School, 7500 W. Talcott Ave., Chicago. Call 773-775-6616. $9 per adult; $6 per child.

**Santa in the Cabin and Craft & Vendor Fair**

11 a.m.: The fair offers a wide variety of vendors with unique and hand crafted gift ideas. A visit with Santa, homemade lunch, a bake sale and more. Runs 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Central United Methodist Church, 8237 N. Kenton Ave., Skokie. Call 847-673-1311. $2 for adults.

**Films:**

*Sensory & Sensibility*

1 p.m.: The Dashwood family’s sudden loss of fortune dooms the chances for marriage of two sisters, sensible Elinor and passionate Marianne. Stars Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant, Kate Winslet and Alan Rickman. 136 minutes. The film showing will be followed by a tea party and discussion. Call 847-923-5101 or visit www.mgpl.org for more information. Morton Grove Public Library, 6400 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.

**The Nutcracker**

1 p.m.: Fully-staged with spectacular costumes and sets, the Salt Creek Ballet’s production of this holiday classic dazzles with a cast of more than 65 dancers, including world-class guest artists. Additional performance Saturday at 5 p.m. North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie. Call 847-673-6300. $20-$40.

**20 Bands of Christmas Day I**

9 a.m.: Home-baked European and American cookies, breads and other specialty items will be featured at the 17th Annual Holiday Cookie Walk. The sale will begin at 9 a.m. and will continue until 11 a.m. or earlier sellout. For more information or directions, call Mary at 708-422-7033. Sts. Peter & Paul Greek Orthodox Church, 1401 Wagner Road, Glenview. Call 630-323-3652.

**Second Saturday Family Story Time**

10 a.m.: Stories and crafts for the whole family. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-674-8213.

**Jingle Bell Express**


**Santa’s at the Cabin & Craft & Vendor Fair**

2 p.m.: There will be a collection of favorite scenes, music or discussion. Call 847-923-5101 or visit www.mgpl.org for more information. Morton Grove Public Library, 6400 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.

**The Young Artists**

Year-End Revue


**Holiday Potluck Party**

7:30 p.m.: The Chicago Rocks and Minerals Society meets to celebrate the holidays. St. Peter’s United Church of Christ, 6013 Laramie Ave., Skokie. Call 847-677-7761.

**Second Annual Do-It-Yourself ‘Messiah’**

7:30 p.m.: Enjoy and/or join in the singing of Handel’s “Messiah” and holiday carols. This free event, featuring the Glenview Community Church Choir, soloists and the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra, is part of The Simple Gift Concert Series by the Glenview Community Church. Musical scores will be available. Glenview Community Church, 1000 Elm St., Glenview. Call 847-724-2210.

**The Bittersweet Christmas Band**

8 p.m.: The Second Saturday Coffeehouse features veteran folk musicians Cooper, Nelson and Early joined by songwriter Susan Urban on guitar, drum, dulcimer and penny whistle. Many perspectives on the holiday season from the reverent to the ridiculous. Ethical Humanist Society, 7574 Lincoln Ave., Skokie. For more information, call 847-671-3334. $8.
GO CALENDAR

SUNDAY, DEC. 15

Boy Scout Troop 922’s 17th Annual Pancake Breakfast With Santa
9 a.m.: Breakfast includes pancakes, sausage, a sweets table and more. Runs 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Our Lady Mother of the Church, 8747 W. Lawrence Ave., Chicago. $5, free for ages 3 and under.

Santa’s Holiday Express
10:45 a.m.: Join Santa and his jolly holiday crew at the Park Ridge Park District to sing songs, talk with Santa, play games and enjoy face painting and holiday tattoos. Bring a nut-free sack lunch to enjoy as Santa reads a story. Attendees will stay on Santa’s Holiday Express train to Santa’s barn (Harvard), where it turns around and heads back to the Dee Road station. Depart from Dee Road station. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. Call 847-967-4800.

Holiday Open House
2 p.m.: The “Queens of Harmony” perform holiday favorites. Refreshments served following the show. Niles Public Library District, 9680 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

“Skokie: Invaded, But Not Conquered”

Ron Hawking
3 p.m.: The local comedian performs stand-up. Additional performances Friday at 10:30 p.m. and Saturday at 9:30 p.m. $35 and a minimum of two food or drink purchases. Zanies Comedy Night Club Rosemont, 5437 Park Place, Rosemont. Call 847-813-0484.

Sunday Night Supper
5 p.m.: Registration required. Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce, 720 Garden St., Park Ridge.

Monday, Dec. 16

Harmonious Horizons
10:20 a.m.: A family music class that includes singing, dancing and playing instruments. For children ages 6 months to 5 years old with a caregiver. A second class is available at 11 a.m. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Story Time for All Ages
10:30 a.m.: Stories, songs and finger plays for the whole family. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

YA Extreme Gingerbread Houses
7 p.m.: Students grades six to 12 can build a gingerbread house. Supplies are provided. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Tuesday, Dec. 17

Christmas Music in Movies
2 p.m.: Steven Franzel presents a 90-minute program highlighting memorable Christmas songs in film. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Wednesday, Dec. 18

Timely Talk: Decorating Treats and Secrets for the Holidays
2 p.m.: Learn new holiday cookie recipes and swap old favorites with other bakers. Registration required. Norwood Crossing, 6016 N. Nina Ave., Chicago. Call 773-588-8420.

Friday, Dec. 19

Natural Gas
8 p.m.: The improvisational group takes a suggestion from the audience and turns it into a show. The Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. Call 773-283-7071.$5.

Funky Old Broadway Vp Vp Holidays
9:30 p.m.: The show will feature some of the Funky Old Broadway most popular pieces as well as new holiday-themed material. Stars stand-up comic Caryn Bark, sit-down comic Robin Riebman and musical comics The Boomer Babes (Pam Peterson and Jan Slavin). Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 19, 8 p.m. Dec. 21, 24 and 31, and 2 p.m. Dec. 22. Gorilla Tango Skokie, 7924 Lincoln Ave., Skokie. Call 847-677-7761. $22, $36 for New Year’s Eve performance (includes champagne).
Second ‘Hobbit’ still thrills despite padding

BY BRUCE INGRAM
Film Critic

The good news is that the second installment of Peter Jackson's "Hobbit" trilogy is often every bit as spectacular and thrilling as the high points of part one — and even the peak moments of his incredible "Lord of the Rings.

The moderately bad news is the narrative padding is beginning to show in a more obvious way. You can't stretch a 300-page look into a nine-hour ultra-epic without popping in a significant amount of stuffing and/or slowing down the pace occasionally. As a result, even while your eyes are goggling at the climactic craziness, you might be surprised to hear a discontented little voice inside wondering "Shouldn't this be over by now?"

Of course, that won't be a major problem for the true devotee. Even if you find yourself stifling a yawn and staring at your fingertips once in a while, there's enough Middle Earth magic on display to send you home feeling at least middling spellbound.

After finally getting well under way last year in the slow-starting "An Unexpected Journey," "The Desolation of Smaug" continues the journey of Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman), Gandalf the Wizard (Ian McKellen), and 13 disgruntled dwarfs to recover their stolen homeland from the fire-breathing dragon of the title.

Most of part two concerns the continuing adventures of the dwarfs and Bilbo on the road to their Lonely Mountain, with Gandalf off investigating the origin of the ominous dark magic that's infecting the land — incorporating material from J.R.R. Tolkien's "Unfinished Tales." And Jackson and company have provided plenty of mind-boggling action to keep the adrenaline elevated, including an arachnophobia-inducing conflict with giant killer spiders and a particularly impressive running battle with pursuing Orcs. The latter being an embellishment on the book involving the recruitment of never-miss archer Legolas (Orlando Bloom) from "LOTR" as prince of the less-than-hospitable Forest Elves.

The return of Legolas is an inspired bit of filler, but the same can't be said for the decision to involve him and the newly invented elf lady-warrior Tauriel (Evangeline Lilly) in a love triangle with a dwarf heartthrob named Kili (Aidan Turner). Seriously now, we've got wizards, giant spiders, a dragon and the fate of the world at stake; do we really need tortured romance?

Apparently Tolkien didn't think so, but never mind. It's relatively painless and over fairly quickly and soon we're on to the main event: the climactic confrontation with the evil dragon Smaug (Benedict Cumberbatch), who is as impressively terrible as you could hope. Smaug talks too much, it's true, and he almost wears out his welcome in a protracted battle with Bilbo and the dwarfs, but he's truly something to see. And he effectively provides another cliff-hanging finale for the third and final chapter next December.

Which, tortured romance or no tortured romance, I'm already dying to see.
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SHOWTIMES
Movie times are effective Friday, Dec. 13, through Thursday, Dec. 19. Please note that theater schedules are subject to change.

CENTURY 12 EVANSTON/
CINEARTS 6 AND XD
1765 Maple Ave.
Evanston
(847) 491-9751
www.cinemark.com
Contact theater for showtimes.

AMC SHOWPLACE NILES 12
301 Golf Mill Center
Niles
(888) AMC-4FUN
www.amctheatres.com
Contact theater for showtimes,
American Hustle (R)
Saving Mr. Banks (PG-13)
Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues (PG-13)
The Metropolitan Opera Falstaff ENCORE (NR)
The Metropolitan Opera Falstaff (NR)
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3-D (PG-13)
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (PG-13)
Tyler Perry's A Madea Christmas (PG-13)

The Book Thief (PG-13)
Fri-Sun 1:30-4-6:30-9; Mon-Thu 4-6:30-9
Frozen (PG)
Fri-Sun 1:30-4-6:30-9; Mon-Thu 4-6:30-9

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9701 Bryn Mawr Ave.
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www.regmovies.com
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4999 Old Orchard Center
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(847) 674-0184
www.regmovies.com
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The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug in 3-D (PG-13)
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (PG-13)
Tyler Perry's A Madea Christmas (PG-13)
Cameron Mackintosh's Spectacular New Production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Phantom of the Opera

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Holiday Dining and Celebration Guide

Jillys Cafe
2614 Green Bay Road
(East North of Central St.)
Evanston, IL 60201
(847) 869-7636
jillyscafe.com

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Join us for a memorable dining experience.
Reservations recommended.
Now booking Holiday Lunch and Dinner Parties!

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Thanks you on our 25th Anniversary this Holiday Season

Pay Cash and receive
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Where will You Be Celebrating this Holiday Season?
Look for Sun-Times Media’s Holiday Dining and Celebration Guides on Dec. 19th and 26th!
YOUR Local Worship Guide

SKOKIE

Central United Methodist Church
8237 Kenton Ave., Skokie
(847) 673-1311
www.skokiecentralumc.org
Worship: Sundays at 10:30 AM

St. Timothy Campus
9000 Kildare Ave. Skokie
Sunday Worship
9 am: Agape Life Outreach Center
Noon: St. Timothy's Lutheran
www.sttimothySkokie.org

Carter-Westminster United Presbyterian Church
4950 W. Pratt Ave., Skokie
WE'RE GROWING & MAKING CHANGES!!
9:30 a.m. Praise and Celebration Service with Praise Band
Adult Sunday School
10:30 am Sunday School (All ages)
10:45 am Traditional Service with Choir
(Adult Classes in English & Assyrian)
Fridays 7:00-9:30 pm
Assyrian Fellowship
Tuesday Evenings 7:15-8:45 pm
New Life Youth Group
(for Jr & Sr High Youth)
2nd Saturday
Monthly 7:30-9:30 pm-CW Café with Open Microphone:
Guitar, Singing, Poetry, Comedy
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SKOKIE

Devar Emet Messianic Synagogue
7800 Niles Ave., Skokie
847-674-9146
www.devaremets.org
Join us for Shabbat Services at 10am: 
"A Community of Jews who believe and teach that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Promised Jewish Messiah"

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Services led by:
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Sunday 8:30 AM Followed by breakfast
Sanctuary handicapped accessible!

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An Egalitarian Conservative Congregation
Lay Led Shabbat Service, 9:45AM
8610 Mees Center Rd, Skokie
847-679-6513
www.kehillatshalom.org

To showcase your House of Worship here call
630-978-8277
or
worship@Pioneerlocal.com

WILMETTE

Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah
3220 Big Tree Lane, 847-256-1213
www.bhbcbe.org
Kabbalat Shabbat Fridays 6:00 PM
Shabbat Service - Saturdays 9:15 AM
Jr. Congregation, Tot Shabbat,
Torah Time 10:30 AM
Followed by Kiddush
Daily Minyan AM and PM
Rabbi Annie Tucker
Cantor Pavel Royzman
Rabbi Michael Cohen, Ed. Dir.

KEHILLAT SHALOM
An Egalitarian Conservative Congregation
Lay Led Shabbat Service, 9:45AM
8610 Niles Center Rd, Skokie
847-679-5513
www.kehillatshalom.org

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<td>Edison Park Lutheran Church</td>
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<td>773.631.9131, <a href="http://www.edisonparkchurch.com">www.edisonparkchurch.com</a></td>
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<td>Rev. Dr. Michael D. Sparby, Sr. Pastor</td>
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<td>Carole Edwards, Associate in Ministry</td>
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<td>Matt Haider, Worship / Music</td>
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To showcase your House of Worship here call 630-978-8277 or Worship@Pioneerlocal.com
Death Notices

Canson, James R.
1945-2013, of Norridge, IL. A memorial service will be held at the Ridgemoor Country Club, 6601 West Gunnison Street, Chicago, IL 60706, on December 15, 2013 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Hacker, James T.
Beloved husband of the late Joan (nee Pakula); loving father of Susan and Paul Hacker; dearest grandfather of Jacob Hacker; also many nieces and nephews.

Memorial service 10:30 am., Friday, December 13th at South Park Church, 1330 5. Courtland, Park Ridge, IL 60068. Private inurnment at St. Adalbert Cemetery.

Info 847-8235122 or www.neMonfunerals.com.

In Memoriam

Wozniak Ph.D., John M.
Age 97, of Skokie and Crystal Lake. Retired professor and Dean of the Loyola University School of Education; former member of the Board of Trustees of the Skokie Public Library; Veteran, U.S. Army, WWII. Born in Astoria, Long Island, to the late Michael and Mary Ann (nee Stadnik).

Preceded in death by Mary Agnes (nee Flood), his wife of 47 years; his brother, Joseph; and sisters, Solie and Helen.

He is survived by his sons, Robert (Jana) and John (Delia); five grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren, to all of whom he was deeply devoted.

Visitation Thursday, December 19th, from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., at HABEN Funeral Home & Crematory, 8057 Nues Center Road, Skokie. Funeral Friday, December 20th, at 10:15 am., from the funeral home, for Mass, 10:30 a.m., at St Peter Catholic Church, Skokie. Interment St. Peter Catholic Cemetery, Skokie.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in John's name may be made to the Skokie Public Library, Attn: Carolyn Anthony, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie, IL 60077.


Sign Guest Book at www.chicagolandobits.com

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Remembrance

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

HOROSCOPES: DECEMBER 18 — DECEMBER 24

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) The arts are a strong part of the Arian aspect, with music becoming more dominant. An important decision looms as a long-term relationship takes an unexpected turn.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Surrounding yourself with beautiful things helps restore the Turanian soul. Enjoy an art exhibit, for example, or redecorate your personal space.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Some colleagues might try to talk you out of what they insist is a risk, but which you consider an opportunity. Follow your own good sense when making your decision.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) A workplace change you might have worried about seems now to be highly favorable for the clever Crab who is ready to take advantage of new opportunities.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Your Leo-nine pride is polished to a dazzling new brilliance, thanks to your new success in winning support for your new project from even the most doubtful of detractors.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) An unsettling rumour about a colleague's apparently regrettable behavior is soon proved groundless, allowing you to enjoy the end-of-year festivities.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Your success in helping to create a harmonious environment earns you the admiration of some who could become an important new presence in your life.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Your sense of loyalty could find you defending a loved one you feel is being unfairly treated. Week's end brings long-awaited family news.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Your keen instincts are once more on high alert as you find yourself being pressured to make a quick decision about a certain matter.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) An unexpected workplace development could disrupt some family plans. A full explanation, however, averts domestic discord.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Spend time away from distractions to reassess some recent moves that might not have worked out as you had hoped. What you learn could be invaluable.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) A recent act of kindness is a reminder of how important friends are to you. You might want to show your appreciation by hosting a special pre-New Year's party.
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CAR STORY
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Jack Taddeo’s 1971 Camaro SS
By Jack Taddeo

I have owned my 1971 Camaro SS for about 4 years. I was drawn to it because my first car was a used ’71 Camaro (back in the late 1970s), and I grew to love the simplicity and ease of repair offered by Chevrolet. I have owned a few other performance cars since then, including a 1997 Camaro SS and even a 1971 Corvette, but this car is my absolute favorite.

The previous owner had worked it over a bit with some enhancements and other add-ons that I did not agree with, so I slowly have been returning it to stock over the past few years. Some moderate engine and interior work has been done. The body and paint were in great shape when I got it. The original color, Mulsanne blue, is correct.

I am only the fourth owner of this California-built car, and I don’t take it to many shows or competitions. I prefer instead to drive and enjoy it.

Eiler’s 1971 Volkswagen Squareback
By Kevin Griffin

Eiler’s 1971 Volkswagen Squareback doesn’t belong in the Midwest. Instead of a luggage rack on the roof, it has a surfboard rack. That rack was one of Eiler’s add-ons since recently purchasing the car.

He has done little details to give the car more personality, including installation of blinds on the windows and a new 1600 cc engine. Before Eiler purchased it, nothing much had been done to the car other than someone had made sure to keep it in good condition. It still runs perfectly, Eiler said, despite being comprised of mostly stock parts.

The Squareback was never seen as a collector’s item back in the 1970s, which has only added to its value post-2010. Because of its perceived lack of charm, very few people kept Squarebacks in good shape. Therefore, a good one with stock parts is hard to find. Eiler, who never intended to keep the car, is looking to sell it.

“It’s a California car,” Eiler said. “And I’m sure there are some people out there who would love it for that.”
I’LL BET YOU DIDN’T KNOW...
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Most college football fans missed it - in October of 2013 the record for most yards rushing in a game was not just set, but shattered. In a Division III match up, Western Connecticut defeated Worcester State 55-35 thanks to ... wait for it ... 455 yards rushing from Octavias McKoy, who was averaging almost 200 yards per game. Then there was Division I running back Jayson Carter of Rice. He didn’t set any records, but he did get his first career carry in a win over UTEP. Why the big deal? Because Carter is definitely no big deal - he’s just 4’9” tall and weighs a mere 135 pounds.

When you think of the best wide receivers in the NFL over the last few years, Buffalo’s Stevie Johnson doesn’t exactly leap to mind. But he should. Get this - he was one of only seven receivers in league history to post three seasons of 75 catches, 1,000 yards and five touchdowns before his 27th birthday. And note that Johnson wasn’t catching balls from Tom Brady or Peyton Manning. His quarterbacks were J.P Losman, Trent Edwards, Ryan Fitzpatrick, EJ Manuel and Thaddeus Lewis.

Who holds the NCAA record for most career receptions? Here’s a hint: he now plays for the Detroit Lions. If you guessed wide receiver Calvin Johnson, known as Megatron for his superhuman ability, you would of course be ... wrong. The answer is Ryan Broyles, who caught a record 349 balls as an Oklahoma Sooner from 2008 to 2011, but whose NFL career has been stymied by injuries.

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Toyota ranks first in sales

Niles residents chose Toyota more often than any other auto brand when purchasing cars in September. Toyota topped the sales charts with 39 of the 251 total sales (all car brands) to Niles residents. A total of 18 new Toyota vehicles and 21 used Toyota vehicles made up the 39 overall Toyota sales in the month.

Ford, which accounted for a total of 38 sales, was the second most popular car brand sold to Niles residents in September. A total of 22 pre-owned vehicles and 16 new vehicles comprised the overall total of 38 Ford purchases in September. Nissan ranked third on the September list of most popular car brands sold to Niles residents, totaling 22 sales - nine new and 13 used.

All told, Niles residents bought 251 cars and trucks in the month of September (all brands) - 108 new vehicles and 142 used vehicles. Toyota was the most popular brand bought new (18 purchases) by residents. Ford and Nissan came in second and third, respectively, in the new car sales category, with 16 and nine sales.

Ford led the way in the used sales category with 22 total sales in the month. Toyota and Nissan also made a good showing in pre-owned sales, with 21 and 13 sales, respectively.

In September, 68 percent of purchases by Niles residents came through a local dealer, while 32 percent were private party transactions. Golf Mill Ford was the top dealer to Niles residents in September with 15 total sales. Other popular dealerships for Niles residents in the month included Brede- mann Toyota, Star Nissan and O’Hare Hyundai.

SOURCE: Illinois Secretary of State

Top makes bought in September

SOURCE: TODDRIVE.COM

PROVIDED BY TODDRIVE.COM

PHOTO PROVIDED
Volkswagen 2008 Jetta Sedan
Sunroof, Leather & More Great On Gas! #5317B
$11,600 866-960-7980

Nissan 2007 Titan LE 4WD
Powerful Crew Cab, V8 Ready For Anything! #6438
$19,300 866-960-7980

Infiniti 2010 EX35 Journey AWD
Navigation, Sunroof, Back Up Camera & More! Loaded Luxury! #3215
$25,995 888-638-5096

Volkswagen 2010 Passat Sedan
Low Miles, Sunroof, Heated Seats. What A Value! #34201
$18,995 888-638-5096

Mercedes-Benz 2009 C-Class Luxury
Good Miles, Sunroof, Bluetooth & More! Nicely Equipped! #3X01
$16,990 855-662-3099

Honda 2005 Accord EX-L
Low Miles, Heated Mirrors & Leather! #C30216A
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Land Rover 2008 Range Rover Sport
Low Miles. Navigation, Options & More! All The Options! #34632
$29,995 888-638-5096

Jeep 2012 Compass Sport 4WD
Heated Mirrors, Full Power. Ready For Winter! #X8145
$12,990 855-662-3099

Buick 2009 Enclave CXL
Bluetooth, 3rd Row & More! Wonderful! #M30612A
$21,690 855-662-3099

Lincoln 2009 MKZ
Unbelievably Low Miles! Heated Leather, Bluetooth. Very Sharp! #33647
$17,995 888-638-5096

Ford 2009 Mustang Premium
Panoramic Sunroof, Satellite Ready, Heated Mirrors & More! #33924
$29,995 888-638-5096

Land Rover 2012 Range Rover Sport
Low Miles, Navigation, DVD & More! All The Toys! #34632
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Infiniti 2010 EX35 Journey AWD
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Heated Mirrors & Leather, Power Options. Great Value! #C30216A
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Low Low Miles! Premium Sound, Great On Gas! #34360
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Chevrolet 2012 Sonic LS
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NOTRE DAME

Orlandi thrives at lighter weight class

Dons junior is off to 15-1 start after dropping down to 160 pounds

BY ERIC VAN DRIL
For Sun-Times Media, @VanDrilSports

ADDISON — Notre Dame junior Marco Orlandi has made the transition from wrestling at 170 pounds as a sophomore to 160 pounds this year.

Orlandi said he's started most weeks about 9-10 pounds over weight this season and he's dropped below 160 by partaking in the Dons' wrestling practices and primarily consuming a lot of celery and peanut butter.

Notre Dame coach Augie Genovesi said Orlandi weighed about 163-164 pounds for most of last season, which meant he didn't have to worry about cutting weight until March, when he took fourth place at 160 pounds in the AAU/IWCOA Freshman/Sophomore State Championships.

Orlandi was at a natural disadvantage at 170 pounds. He lacked the strength of many of his opponents. That hasn't been a problem this season.

"I usually wrestled in space, but now that I'm at a lighter weight class, my strength is more evened out with the lighter kids," Orlandi said on the differences between wrestling at 160 and 170. "I can actually compete, and hand fight and stuff with them. ... I feel like I can compete a lot better at 160 than I can at 170."

Orlandi wrestled at 170 last season so the Dons could get their best wrestlers in the lineup. Joe Cortese was a two-time state qualifier, and the 2013 Notre Dame graduate had his spot at 160 secured.

Orlandi has started this season 15-1, and he went 3-0 at the Addison Trail quad on Saturday.

Orlandi's second match of the quad was against Addison Trail senior Ernesto Ramirez, a shorter, more muscular wrestler whose thighs were about double the size of Orlandi's. The tall, lanky Orlandi looked to be at a disadvantage against Ramirez, but Orlandi scored a takedown in the first period and wrestled smartly en route to a 6-4 decision.

"Oh yeah, absolutely," Genovesi said when asked if being tall and lean helps on the mat. "I'd rather wrestle a guy who's short and muscular than wrestle a tall, thin guy. Leverage kills you. Leverage really helps."

Dons post 1-2 record at Addison Trail quad

ADDISON — The final dual of Saturday's Addison Trail quad came down to its last match.

Conant held a 30-28 advantage over Addison Trail entering the 182-pound match between Conant junior Daniel Andress and Addison Trail senior Stephen Hayden. Andress held on to win 6-4 and Conant emerged with a 33-28 victory over Addison Trail. The Cougars finished the day with a perfect 3-0 record, beating Glenbrook North 84-0 and Notre Dame 36-27 earlier in the meet.

"That was the most I ever celebrated after a win," an out-of-breath Andress said after his match. "That was hard. I just wanted to win."

The Dons' match against Glenbrook North wrapped up about 25 minutes before Andress' victory. Notre Dame cruised to a 61-6 victory over the Spartans, with Glenbrook North's sole points coming via a forfeit to start the match. Notre Dame lost 43-19 to Addison Trail in the Dons' second match of the day.

Glenbrook North began the Addison Trail quad with an 80-0 loss to the Blazers.
MAINE EAST

Ontogtokh gives Blue Demons leadership on, off mat

BY MIKE CHAMORNIK
For Sun-Times Media, @MikeChamornik

NORRIDGE — With the Maine East wrestling team leading Ridgewood by four points, the Blue Demons' Batmantal Ontogtokh was locked in a tight 152-pound match with Kevin Moore. Ontogtokh was ahead 6-1 in the second period — thanks to two take downs and an escape — before pinning Moore to pick up six points.

Maine East went on to win the dual 46-36 on Dec. 5, and Ontogtokh's match was a difference maker. The pin gave Maine East breathing room by expanding what had been a 28-24 lead. It was an important victory, but then Ontogtokh has been, one of the team's most important wrestlers.

He's also a wrestler with a unique style.

"He's an awkward-type movement wrestler and it's hard to get control of him," Maine East coach Emiliano Hernandez said. "It looked like it was going to be a tough match and all of a sudden he takes control of the whole thing and sticks. That's kind of what he's been doing all year."

Teammate Cyra Teves says that it's "amazing" to watch Ontogtokh wrestle.

"He gets into the weirdest positions ever," Teves said. "He could get out to all these crazy positions, and I love it. I just love watching him wrestle."

Ontogtokh, who goes by the nickname "Batman," is the only senior on Maine East's varsity. With that comes the responsibility of leadership, something he has taken to naturally. He shows up every morning to lift weights, he'll chide teammates when they slack off during drills, and after the Ridgewood meet he stayed late to give technique tips to a freshman wrestler.

"The only thing is lead by example," Ontogtokh said. "If I see guys in the room that look like they can improve on something, I take the time out of my practice and go over and help them."

Teves a vocal leader

Also taking on some of the leadership responsibility is Teves, a senior on the junior varsity. Teves did not wrestle on Dec. 5, but sat next to her coaches and cheered on and instructed teammates during the matches.

"Cyra is one of the biggest motivators on the team," Ontogtokh said. "Seeing her, she's very spirited, loud. She provides a lot of the voice on the team, and when you're in that third period, with 30 seconds left, to hear that voice on the mat gives you that last push you need to maybe shoot in the last 10 seconds, that last burst of energy."

Teves is the first female to wrestle all four years at Maine East, according to Hernandez, and it's an accomplishment that Teves says means a lot to her. She mentors two female wrestlers on the JV team and she has encouraged incoming freshman girls to try out for the team. She and Ontogtokh are the veteran voices on a Maine East team that is 1-1 in varsity matches this season.

"I like the fact that they're actually listening to the older people and looking up to us," Teves said.

MAINE EAST

Abram goes from a novice to the Blue Demons' best

Hard work helps junior overcome her lack of prior gymnastics experience

BY KATE HEDLIN
For Sun-Times Media, @SportsLoisLane

Maine East girls gymnastics coach Angie Hughes knows that her program doesn't get a lot of athletes with previous experience in the sport.

"Most of the girls come in knowing how to do a cartwheel and that's about it," she said.

That makes junior Aurinia Abram an exemplar for Hughes and the Blue Demons program.

Abram had never participated in a gymnastics class before her freshman year at Maine East, but she possessed an interest in the sport and decided to join the team. Two years later, she's the Blue Demons' top all-around competitor and she opened the season against Niles West on Dec. 3 with the best scores of her career, posting a 7.59 on vault and a 7.25 on floor.

Hughes said Abram's scores were typically around the 5.0-6.0 mark last season.

"She's kind of a model for what we do here," Hughes said. "The difference between East and other schools is we don't get a lot of girls who do club (gymnastics) or who are really elite. It's huge what she's done because she's what this team is about — working on individual improvement and the relationships."

"She may not always be able to compete versus the CSL North, but she gives everything she's got. She's a model for our girls."

A big reason for Abram's success is her willingness to challenge herself, Hughes said.

Before this season began, the Maine East coach worked with Abram on a bail release from the uneven bars. It's a maneuver Abram was able to implement in the first meet.

"I didn't think I'd be able to do it," Abram said. "But I wanted to challenge myself."

When I came back this season, I was surprised to see I didn't lose any skills. I started improving right away instead of re-learning skills. That helped. It was exciting."

Hughes said Abram's ability to pick up the bail release so quickly wasn't unusual.

"She's constantly working to improve herself," Hughes said. "She recognizes the connection between hard work and results and I think she's going to see a lot more of that this season."

Abram doesn't participate in any gymnastics events during her offseason, focusing on soccer and volleyball. She admits that she has even surprised herself with her accomplishments.

"I didn't know anything coming in," Abram said. "All I knew is that I had always wanted to do gymnastics when I was little and thought I could try it. Gymnastics is just as much mental as physical. I may be down sometimes, but I try to put that away and I can accomplish my goals."

Aurinia Abram an exemplar for Maine East's girls gymnastics program. HERALD file photo
had a 9-0 mark after Saturday's
other kids listen, and his work
out and does it. He's dynamic and
300-pounder,” Albandia said. “He
the smallest kid in the room, but
towering presence on the team.

BY DAN SHALIN
Team Illinois camp
at USAW Junior Greco
Vikings junior competed
offseason to gain experience

In this Jan. 19 photo, Nues North’s Hermez Abraham has control of Nues West’s Scott Pechter in their 106-pound match at the CSL wrestling tournament in Skokie. FILE

NILES NORTH
New coach is ‘strict’
with her gymnasts

BY DAN SHALIN
For Sun-Times Media, @danshalin

SKOKIE — First-year Niles North girls gymnastics coach Jacqueline Parat was reminded what it’s like to be in charge of a program during the Vikings’ first
duel of the season. A meticulous planner, Parat intentionally left her team’s floor exercise music in the gymnastics
gym the day before the meet only to have it misplaced by one of the gym classes that uses the space
during the school day. Additionally, the Dec. 3 meet against Evanston was delayed 45 minutes while everyone waited for one of the judges to arrive. “I was a little frazzled,” Parat said. “I think I’m good at organizing and have everything in a binder and tabbed. So, when the music was not there ... Everything was ready yesterday. I had it all planned.”

Though the Vikings went on to lose 122.950-119.800, Parat called it a successful evening. “As a new coach, my goal for them was to hit a 110, and we hit a 119,” Parat said. “I think beam is our strongest event as far as the girls really fighting for their skills. Beam came after (a shaky performance on floor). I was really proud how they were able to come back together and hit a solid beam routine.”

Parat takes over for Charlie Friedman, who held the head coaching position for six years. Friedman is now devoting herself full time to coaching the Viking Gymnastics Club, the local feeder program. Friedman was part of a search committee to pick her successor, and said she was not going to leave until a suitable replacement was found. Friedman was at the meet against Evanston and called the experience bittersweet. “It’s strange. It’s hard walking into the gym. This was my
gym since 1999,” she said. “I miss everyone, but I know it’s for the better. I get to work with most of the girls during the offseason. I’ll keep coming to meets, keep supporting the kids and hopefully stay a part of it.”

Friedman said she has known Parat since the latter was a little girl. Friedman trained at Elk Grove Gymnastics School when she was in high school at Lane and Parat’s mother Paula was a coach there.

These days, Paula Parat is the boys and girls gymnastics coach at Fenton in Bensenville. Jacqueline Parat competed for her mother before graduating in 2004. Jacqueline Parat went on to Louisville, where she was a competitive cheerleader. The younger Parat has been the girls gymnastics coach at Hersey and she spent the last two years as an assistant girls coach at Leyden. She also assists her mother with the Fenton boys team.

While Jacqueline Parat acknowledges she learned a lot about coaching from her mother, she said their styles are a little different. “I think I’m a little more strict and stern,” Jacqueline Parat said. “I’m way stricter on the boys and make them run if they are late to practice. They tend to be goofy, and sometimes they get [Paula Parat] to laugh. But I let them know there is a time and place for that.”

One advantage the 27-year-old Jacqueline Parat has is that she can demonstrate many of the skills she teaches. “I can do things correctly and incorrectly, so they can see the difference,” Jacqueline Parat said.

Vikings freshman Kaylie VanDoren said she’s getting used to Jacqueline Parat’s style of coaching. “She’s strict, but it’s a good thing to be strict as a coach,” VanDoren said. “I think she’s right for the team because she’s going to push us.”

ABRAHAM WRESTLES THROUGHOUT
OFFSEASON TO GAIN EXPERIENCE

Vikings junior competed at USAW Junior Greco Nationals, attended Team Illinois camp

Though Hermez Abraham competes in the lightest weight class, Niles North wrestling coach Chris Albandia said the junior is a towering presence on the team. “From the beginning, he’s been the smallest kid in the room, but people listen to him like he’s a 300-pounder,” Albandia said. “He commands that respect. He’s not a yeller and screamer. He goes out and does it. He’s dynamic and other kids listen, and his work ethic speaks for itself.”

So does his record. Abraham had a 9-0 mark after Saturday’s Niles North Super Duals.

Abraham was a soccer player with no wrestling experience when he entered high school two and a half years ago. But after showing some potential on the mat, Abraham has gone out of his way to acquire the experience he felt he was lacking.

This past offseason, Abraham estimates he wrestled nearly 80 matches after entering as many club competitions as possible. He also competed at the 2013 USAW Junior Greco Nationals in Nevada as part of Team Illinois. Prior to that event, he trained at a Team Illinois camp in Champaign.

“The [Team Illinois] coaching staff was incredible. They really taught me to be mentally and physically strong,” Abraham said. “The tournament was overwhelming because it’s the first time I’ve ever been in that big a meet. I ended up going 0-2, but in my book, it was an amazing experience. If I make [high school] state, I’ll have that experience under my belt because I’ve been exposed to a tournament like that.”

While Abraham may lack wrestling experience when compared to other high school juniors, he often is more experienced than his opponent. The 106-pound division is filled with freshmen and sophomores, and Abraham said he feels confident against many of them. “I see how [many younger wrestlers] are tense while in their stance,” Abraham said. “I’m more comfortable because I’ve been in more match situations.”

Though he only lost nine matches last season, Abraham narrowly missed out on qualifying for the sectional. Abraham said, “I’m more comfortable because I’ve been in more match situations.”

Though he only lost nine matches last season, Abraham narrowly missed out on qualifying for the sectional. Abraham said he is easily able to identify the areas in which he’s progressed since last winter.

“In the past, I’d go into my matches angry and not thinking,” he said. “Now, I go in thinking about the moves I should hit. With [added] experience, I’m just more comfortable. I’ve been in the situations before and know what to do, which eases my mind.”
Stranz's big pin turns tide for Niles West

Four of senior's first five wins have come via fall

BY JONAH ROSENBLUM
For Sun-Times Media. @ROSNewsNorth

SKOKIE — The energy had been sucked out of Niles West's wrestling gymnasium. A 14-0 lead for the home team had turned into a 22-23 advantage for Glenbrook South. At 170 pounds, the Titans' Sanchir Avirmed repeatedly forced the Wolves' Cameron Greenstein onto the mat en route to a 12-4 victory. Then, at 192 pounds, Shouki Shunarah put Zaia Mando in a near strangle hold for a first-round pin.

The Skokie faithful had fallen silent in their first home varsity meet of the season Friday.

Fortunately, the Wolves had their "big play" machine on the mat at 196 pounds in senior Brian Stranz.

"I started off and got a take-down," Stranz said. "First take-downs are really big. I tried cradling him, didn't run it correctly. I got reversed. I was unhappy with that. I wanted to come back and get big points for our team because we were down."

He picked up a perfect six points for the Wolves as one quick flip of Ali Shegarfi led to a first-round pin that electrified the gym.

"I just hit a move that was there. I took advantage of his bad position and got some points for us," Stranz said. "He was coming into me too hard. I had him locked up already. It was just a matter of hopping through."

Coach Anthony Genovesi has seen it before from Stranz. "We expect that from Brian," Genovesi said. "He's a kid that can get some pins when you need them... His style of wrestling leads to pins."

The red-clad Wolves fans weren't the only ones inspired by Stranz's big plays.

"As soon as I saw that, I kind of got pumped up," senior Denis Gargovic said. "I was screaming."

It showed as Gargovic polished off Denatra Moshi 5-1 at 285 pounds minutes later for a 35-32 Wolves victory. Niles West won the last three bouts of the evening by a combined margin of 12-0.

Glenbrook South managed only an escape in those three bouts.

It all started with Stranz. "It was huge," Gargovic said. "As soon as he got that, I was going crazy and everyone's mentality went up."

Stranz, who said that he placed second on the team in pins last year, said that he is shooting for the team lead this season.

"I like pinning," Stranz said. "Nothing worse than wrestling a 6-minute match. Got to get in there and get it done as fast as possible."

Four of his first five wins have come via pins. His fifth came courtesy of a technical fall.

Pins like Friday night's are especially sweet.

"It's just the best feeling," Stranz said. "Wrestling is so tough. Doing it, you just feel tired. Then, as soon as that match is over, you've won. And especially with big points like that, it's the best feeling in the world."

NIU's Radtke named MAC volleyball player of the week

BY NICK BULLOCK
For Sun-Times Media. @HSCNewsNorth

Jenna Radtke, a Stevenson alumna and freshman on the Northern Illinois women's volleyball team, was recently named the Northern Illinois women's volleyball player of the week. It was the best player in women's college volleyball.

The honor came after Radtke, a Buffalo Grove native, led the Huskies to wins against Central Michigan and Eastern Michigan. The middle blocker recorded 11 kills and a team-high .329 attack percentage in the 3-0 victory over Central Michigan Nov. 8 in Mt. Pleasant, Mich. She followed that up with a 14-kill, five-block, two-ace performance in a 3-1 win against Eastern Michigan Nov. 9 in Ypsilanti, Mich.

Glenbrook South alumna Janelle Flaws, a redshirt junior forward on the Illinois women's soccer team, was recently named the Big Ten Forward of the Year, leading the team in goals against Central Michigan and Eastern Michigan. The middle blocker recorded 11 kills and a team-high .329 attack percentage in the 3-0 victory over Central Michigan Nov. 8 in Mt. Pleasant, Mich. She followed that up with a 14-kill, five-block, two-ace performance in a 3-1 win against Eastern Michigan Nov. 9 in Ypsilanti, Mich.

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Back to the mat

Pioneer Press looks at all four area wrestling teams

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LATE BASKET: The Niles North girls basketball team edged Niles West. | hscnews.com/Skokie

TEAM EFFORT: Niles North beat Niles West in boys basketball. | hscnews.com/Skokie

Niles North's Isaiah Tate (top) competes against Clemente's Luis Susana in the 195-pound weight class during the wrestling meet at Niles North on Saturday. | MICHAEL JARECKI/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA
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