Digging out, warming up
Twin snowstorms and record freeze slam towns at year's start | PAGE 6

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COMMUNITY

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The largest outbreak in the U.S. of a very dangerous bacteria has been linked back to Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge. Page 12
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MORTON GROVE, NILES

Mayor declares state of emergency due to record cold

BY RICK KAMBIC
rkambic@pioneerlocal.com | @rick_kambic

Record-low temperatures led Morton Grove and Niles schools to close for two days, a dangerous blast on the heels of twin storms that dropped more than a foot of snow.

Fire Chief Tom Friel was seen visiting Morton Grove's warming shelters, and he later reported that no medical rescues have been needed so far.

"Our most important call so far was more public works-related, but we gave the caller some much-needed safety reminders," Friel said. "For people who have frozen pipes, do not use an open flame to warm them."

Friel said nearby supplies or spilled chemicals could cause fires, and providing additional oxygen could also cause a sudden fire.

"We advise people to open their cabinets and let the house's natural heat flow inside," Friel said. "Doing this periodically throughout the day will also help prevent freezing."

Morton Grove Mayor Dan DiMaria declared a weather state of emergency, enabling a routine automated phone message that calls Morton Grove phone numbers.

In his message, DiMaria advised residents not to leave their homes unless absolutely necessary, to constantly check in on elderly family or neighbors, and to drink non-caffeinated beverages to keep warm.

Though streets are plowed and readily accessible, DiMaria and Friel warn against driving due to potential engine breakdowns and potential frostbite from exposure to subfreezing temperatures.

A new parking restriction was also enacted until Saturday, Jan. 11. DiMaria said cars must be parked on the even-numbered side of a street on even-numbered days of the month, and parked on the odd-numbered side of a street on odd-numbered days. That allows plows to adequately remove snow and distribute salt, DiMaria said.

In addition to closing Monday, Park View School, Golf School District 67, Skokie-Morton Grove District 69, Park Ridge-Niles District 64 and East Maine District 63 were closed on Tuesday, Jan. 7 for safety reasons.

The Morton Grove Library closed Monday, but was open until 1 p.m. as a warming center. Prairie View Community Center was scheduled to close at 7 p.m., but was otherwise fully operational and designated as a warming center.

Niles Village Hall closed at noon Tuesday due to a broken boiler, but was scheduled to reopen Wednesday.

Meghan Henry, a Morton Grove resident and teacher in Northbrook, was one many people who trekked into Prairie View to exercise.

"No, the cold doesn't bother me," Henry said. "I don't usually get to spend as much time in the gym as I'd like, so I decided to take advantage of my day off since school was cancelled."

Joe Kuehn lives in Edison Park and is a member of the Park Ridge Park District. He trekked to Morton Grove because of a power failure in Park Ridge.

"I used to play basketball for a long time, so my legs aren't in the best shape, and I like to run on a smooth surface every day so they keep loose," Kuehn said.

For the few drivers on the roads, most corporate retail stores and car dealerships along Dempster Street and Waukegan Road remained open.

Before the cold hit, more than a foot of snow fell throughout the Chicago area during twin snowstorms that kicked off 2014 and then ushered in the cold. But during the first snowstorm, in Morton Grove, it was business as usual.

Aside from the library, most government offices and businesses were open at the tail end of the storm Jan. 2, while the Morton Grove police department said no emergencies have been reported throughout the constant snowfall.

"People seem to be doing whatever they want in a safe manner and public works has done a great job at keeping everything accessible in case someone does need us," Deputy
Chief Norm Stromberg said.

Morton Grove’s public works employees had been plowing the streets for nearly 48 hours straight, excluding a four-hour break to sleep and celebrate New Year’s Eve.

“It’s a steady snow. It takes us about three hours to do our routes and by the time we’re done we have to start over,” Director of Public Works Andy De Monte said. “It’s not unmanageable, just lengthy. We’re running low on salt and our distributor hasn’t been able to get to us.”

A trend of unusually warm winters led to Morton Grove ordering just 2,500 tons of salt this year, a nearly 50 percent reduction. De Monte said he had plenty left over and didn’t expect such a potent winter.

De Monte said bitter temperatures already forced public works to salt roads 28 times in November and December.

“That’s more than normal,” De Monte said.

On the east side of town, Interim Library Director Kevin Justice originally closed the library until 1 p.m., then decided to close it all day Thursday. He said the weather conditions were not safe for patrons or employees to travel through.

Resident Paul Saranecki manages a nearby business and drove home to have lunch with his wife and renew a book at the library. Instead, he was one a handful who dropped items into the library’s outside return bins.

“I called ahead because the library is government and government doesn’t typically get up with the rest of us,” Saranecki said.

But on the west side of town, resident Elaine Daniel had no problems getting into the Prairie View Community Center to exercise.

“I can’t say I made a resolution, because I decided to exercise more before yesterday, but I’ve made a commitment and I’ve only missed one day in a couple of weeks and that was because everything was closed on Christmas,” Daniel said.

Prairie View was open all day today, allowing Robin Lindquist to attend her WERQ cardio dance class.

“It wasn’t as bad as I thought,” Lindquist said. “I took my kids to Kappy’s for lunch and made them bring electronics in case I had to bring them here, but the roads were not that bad. I had time to take them home and make them spruce up the driveway.”

When the snow stopped Thursday afternoon, De Monte’s crews made one last swoop through town before going home.

After resting up, De Monte said his crews will work on relocating snow banks using end loaders. De Monte said Menards allows Morton Grove to dump snow in the retail store’s out lot.

While some towns in the past had problems with melting snow raising water levels in nearby rivers, De Monte said the storm shouldn’t impact Morton Grove residents and businesses along the North Branch of the Chicago River.
NILES PUBLIC LIBRARY

Renovated first floor of Niles library now open

BY IGOR STUDENKOV
For Sun-Times Media | @istudenkov

The Niles Public Library’s newly-revamped lower floor officially opened in December, offering study rooms, a new technology lab and a new expanded teen area.

The new facilities are already seeing decent use, and the library expects to get more out of the space with new programming at the beginning of 2014.

The biggest change during the renovation was the construction of the new teen area. The previous version of the teen area, which was known as the Teen Alley, was located on a small, narrow space to the right of the staircase to the lower floor. It contained a few tables and the portion of the Young Adult collection.

With the renovation, the teens get their own lounge-like space known as the Teen Underground. Taking up nearly a fourth of the lower floor, it contains sitting areas, five computers, as well as a shelf worth of movies, TV shows, Japanese anime and music aimed at young adults.

The library has also moved its entire YA collection to the lower floor, right next to Teen Underground. According to Sasha Vasilic, the library’s digital marketing coordinator, this marks the first time the entire teen collection was located in the same space. And the library is planning to build on that.

“With more space for the teen collection, our teen librarians will be adding more materials to the collection,” Vasilic said.

One constant between is the graphic novel collection. Although it has been moved away from the wall, it’s still located near the southeastern end of the building, offering the same selection of titles as before.

The patron computers and printers, which were previously located on the third floor, have been moved to the lower level. In its place, the library added a few chairs and tables to give patrons more places to read and use their laptops, eReaders and other devices.

For the most part, the computer area has the same features as before. It did add one new feature — a BookScan station. It can scan books and convert them to digital files, allowing patrons to save or e-mail them.

The renovation also saw an introduction new computer training room. In the past, it shared the space with the library board room. With the board room relocated to the new space on the third floor, the computer training room has been upgraded and expanded. Now known as the technology lab, it will be offering the same kind of programming as before.

“Most classes are taught by Ruth Schuster, adult services librarian,” said Vasilic. “Classes range from introduction to computers, Microsoft Word and Facebook all the way to learning about Windows 8 and how to mail merge.”

The renovation marks the expansion of the study areas. In the past, the library only had one study room. The lower level now features five. Containing a table and several power outlets, they can be reserved by adults and students in eighth grade and up. Each room can be reserved for up to two hours for study sessions and group meetings.

Patrons are already taking advantage of the new meeting room. When the Niles Herald-Spectator visited the library last month, at least one room had a group.

Vasilic said that the library has been happy with way the renovations turned out, especially the study rooms and the Teen Underground. And the patron response to the renovations has been positive so far.

“Every time I show our patrons one of the new spaces their eyes glow with excitement,” said Vasilic. “We urge all of the community to stop by and see the new Niles Public Library.”

MORTON GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Morton Grove librarians hit the streets

BY RICK KAMIC
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Morton Grove librarians are hitting the streets to show taxpayers what services are available and help those who simply haven’t had time to visit the library on Lincoln Avenue.

The first trip for the new outreach program, known as MGPL On The Go, will be from 4 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 15, in the park district’s Prairie View Community Center, 6334 W. Dempster St.

Librarians hope to register Morton Grove residents for free library cards, showcase popular items, answer questions and demonstrate new digital products.

MGPL On The Go is designed to build upon other small-scale outreach programs such as “Passport to Morton Grove,” a park district event that showcased all the cultures in town, and a Bookshelf in the Metra station that librarians keep filled with free books for commuters to read while on the train.

Books offered on the Metra shelf are either donated books or old books removed from the library’s main collection, and between 70 and 100 are placed on the shelf each month.

Without any outreach, the library registers about 100 new cardholders per month, according to librarian Joy North.

A rising service at the library has been the ability to download e-books onto patrons’ tablets or smart phones, which is why librarians will be answering questions from patrons who read or listen to music on devices while exercising.

North said 13,248 e-books were checked out in 2013. The most popular e-books of late include “Gone Girl” by Gillian Flynn, “Inferno” by Dan Brown, and the “50 Shades” trilogy by E.L. James.

For those unfamiliar with e-books or other electronic services, North said patrons going to or from the gym can get help downloading the Overdrive Media Console — the most commonly used e-book application.

Another new application for tablets and cell phones is called BookMyne, and North said patrons manager their library account as well as browse the library’s catalogue and place holds on items.

Visiting the park district is the first stop for MGPL On The Go. North said she and Assistant Library Director Natalya Fishman are working with local businesses to coordinate a few more stops.
Con artists get $5K from elderly woman

BY RICK KAMBI
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@nck_kambic

Police are on the lookout for two women who hung outside the Morton Grove Walgreens and conned an 84-year-old woman out of $5,000.

The victim, who lives in Morton Grove, was exiting the Walgreens on Dempster Street around 1:30 p.m. Dec. 19 when she was approached by a white woman around 50 years old.

The unknown woman reportedly asked the senior citizen if she dropped a manila envelope in the store. The police report said a black woman around 35 years old then joined and offered a manila envelope.

When the elderly woman said the envelope was not hers, police say the three women opened it together and found numerous antique coins inside. The black woman reportedly said she worked at a neighboring law office and took the coins to have the lawyer review them.

The police report said the black suspect returned a few moments later and claimed her boss valued the coins at $100,000. The lawyer also apparently knew someone who would buy the collectables if the three women wanted to pay for falsified ownership certificates.

After going to a nearby bank, the white suspect returned with $12,000 to pay for documents and allegedly walked down to the law office. The suspect returned with three times as much money and encouraged the elderly victim to go withdraw money.

Police say the victim did drive to a bank and get a $5,000 cash advance on her Visa card. When she returned, the report says, only the black suspect remained at Walgreens. The victim was told her money could turn into $25,000.

The black woman reportedly took the $5,000 and walked toward the law office but never came back. After waiting 45 minutes, the 84-year-old victim drove to the Morton Grove police station to file a report.

Officers contacted the nearby law office, which said its only lawyer was not in that day and no customers matching the suspects' descriptions had entered the office that day. Police also acquired surveillance footage from inside Walgreens, which showed no manila envelope on the floor and no one following the elderly victim out of the store. Walgreens, however, does not have cameras outside.

Anyone with similar experiences or who may have witnessed the woman getting conned are asked to call the Morton Grove police department at (847) 470-5200.

Police: Men enter elderly woman's home with scam

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON
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Four men reportedly entered the home of an elderly Niles woman after one of them told her he needed to check out her water pipes, Niles police said.

The incident occurred around 4:30 p.m., Dec. 27, on the 9900 block of Huber Lane. The 81-year-old woman told police that one of the men was wearing an orange jacket and she allowed him inside her kitchen, where he opened up cabinets under her kitchen sink and inspected the pipes. According to police, the woman reported that the man told her to remove items from under the sink and then, while she stood in the kitchen doorway, the three other men entered her home and headed downstairs. During this time, the first man reportedly communicated with the others over a two-way radio.

After the three men returned from the basement and exited through the front door, the first man told the woman not to use her water until after 5 p.m. and left the home, police said.

The woman told police that she became suspicious and called the Niles water department, but when there was no answer, she contacted police.

Two closet doors in the basement were discovered open, but nothing appeared to be missing, police said. An investigation was pending.
POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents were listed in the official bulletin of the Niles Police Department. Readers are reminded that an arrest does not constitute a finding of guilt. Only a court of law can make that determination.

NILES

BATTERY
Julie McCarthy, 47, of 8871 N. Cumberland Ave., Niles, was charged with battery on Dec. 29 after she allegedly walked up to a 25-year-old man and punched him in the face near her home. Police said the victim was outside getting groceries from his father's car on the 8800 block of North Cumberland when McCarthy approached, asked him if he had a problem and then allegedly told him to hit her. When he refused, she allegedly punched the victim in the face and was joined by her son who also reportedly struck the man. McCarthy told police that she and the victim do not get along and he would not let her pass by him on the afternoon of Dec. 29. She has a Jan. 20 court date.

THEFT
Lynn Bland, 28, of 3415 N. Kilpatrick Ave., Chicago, was charged with theft on Dec. 22 after he allegedly made a total of 18 fraudulent returns between Nov. 29 and Dec. 22 at a store on the 8500 block of Golf Road. Police said the returns totaled $10,832 and the money was placed on several store gift cards which were used to purchase phone cards. He has a Feb. 6 court date.

Muna Bebla, 41, of 8896 David Place, Glenview, was charged with felony theft on Dec. 26 after she allegedly stole $929 from cash registers between Nov. 27 and Dec. 26 while working at a store on the 8600 block of Dempster Street. She had a Jan. 8 court date.

RETAIL THEFT
Christine Johnson, 63, who gave police the address of a hotel at 5211 W. Old Orchard Road, Skokie, was charged with felony retail theft on Dec. 23 after police said she stole nearly $500 worth of merchandise, including 62 pieces of jewelry, from a store on the 5600 block of Touhy Avenue. She was assigned a Jan. 8 court date.

Josefina Vega, 16, of 4822 N. Lawndale Ave., Chicago, and a 16-year-old girl were each charged with retail theft on Dec. 23. Police said the two teens stole items totaling $5,287 from Sears at Golf Mill Shopping Center. The 16-year-old, who was released to the custody of her mother, was reportedly wearing 16 stolen belts when she was apprehended. Court information for Vega was not available.

DUI
Robert Perez, 43, of 9280 N. Courtland Ave., Niles, was charged with driving under the influence on Dec. 29 following a traffic stop. Police said Perez admitted his license was suspended. He has a Jan. 23 court date.

WARRANT
Charles Secor, 48, of 740 N. Delphia Ave., Park Ridge, was taken into custody on an arrest warrant out of Winfield following a traffic stop on Dec. 28. He posted bond and was released, police said.

CRIME BRIEFS

DISORDERLY CONDUCT
A man told police that he was sitting inside a bar on the 8500 block of Milwaukee Avenue on the night of Dec. 31 when an acquaintance presented him with a napkin that had an expletive-laden message written on it. Police said the man, who had left the bar, wrote that he hoped the victim would "die" next year and he would bring his dogs to decapitate him. The victim told police he believed the man was angry because he had refused to hire him some time ago. Employees said the man is a regular customer, and that the alleged victim was actually making problems for him.

DISPUTE
Police were called to the 8900 block of Heathwood Circle on the evening of Dec. 22 after a mother and her 16-year-old son reportedly had an argument over the son using a knife to make a smoothie in a blender. The son alleged that his mother threatened him with a knife, but she and a witness denied this, police said. No arrests were made.

THEFT
A woman told police she was using a restroom inside a store at Golf Mill Shopping Center on the evening of Dec. 22 when someone removed her purse from the door's coat hanger. The victim confronted the suspect outside the restroom and the suspect stated, "Your purse fell and I was giving it back. Don't worry, all your stuff is in it," police said. The woman then dropped the victim's purse to the ground and allegedly kicked it under a store rack before walking away. The victim told police that $500 was missing from the purse.

A woman told police that her backpack was stolen on the afternoon of Dec. 24 from the lobby inside King Spa, 809 Civic Center Drive. The bag contained an iPad, a passport and an undisclosed amount of cash.

A resident of the 8000 block of Lyons Street told police that a video game system, cell phone, $25 in cash and a traffic ticket were missing from his home on Dec. 25 after he allowed a homeless friend to spend the night.

Six laptop computers were stolen between Dec. 23 and Dec. 26 from a business on the 6300 block of Grosspoint Road.

A woman reported that her purse was stolen from her shopping cart on the afternoon of Dec. 27 inside Super H Mart, 801 Civic Center Drive.

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Two suburban administrators have been identified as the finalists in Park Ridge-Niles School District 64's search for a new superintendent.

The candidates are Laurie Heinz, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction with Skokie School District 68, and Robert Machak, superintendent of Evergreen Park Elementary School District 124.

Both candidates are scheduled to visit several schools in the district this week and meet throughout the day with various groups, including principals, union representatives, various school support staff, parents and the public, said School Board President Anthony Borrelli.

Machak will meet with the public on Thursday, Jan. 9. Heinz's meeting with members of the community was rescheduled from Jan. 7 to Friday, Jan. 10 due to this week's weather.

The community meetings will take place from 10:30 to 11 a.m. at Emerson Middle School, 8101 N. Cumberland Ave. in Niles, and from 5:30 to 6 p.m. at Lincoln Middle School, 200 S. Lincoln Ave. in Park Ridge.

District 64 is inviting parents and the public to meet the candidates in person and there will be an opportunity to ask questions, Borrelli said.

After the meetings, attendees will be invited to leave written comments about the candidates for members of the school board, Borrelli added.

Heinz has been assistant superintendent with District 68 since July 2011. She was involved in the implementation of a new math curriculum, Focus in Math, which is based on a program from Singapore that focuses on the concepts used to arrive at answers.

Before she joined District 68, Heinz served as principal with Northbrook School District 27. There, she led Shabonee School for three years, and Grove School, which has since closed, for six years. Heinz has also been an assistant principal in Palatine, and a teacher in Vernon Hills and Glenview.

Heinz holds two master's degrees and a doctorate from National Louis University. She said she has set her sights becoming superintendent for more than a decade.

"My end game has always been to be a superintendent," Heinz told the Park Ridge Herald-Advocate. "The time is right. I've had three great years here [with District 68] and I'm looking to make the move. I feel ready."

Heinz described District 64 has having "a reputation for high achievement," much like the districts in which she has worked. She added that she is "impressed" by the school support she has seen from members of the Park Ridge-Niles community.

"I feel it's a good fit," Heinz said. "I want to work where education matters."

If she is not selected as District 64's new superintendent, Heinz said she plans to remain with Skokie District 68.

Machak became superintendent of Evergreen Park District 124 in July 2012. During his tenure, district teachers went on strike for two weeks in the fall of 2012 after failing to agree on a contract with the board of education.

Before joining District 124, Machak was superintendent of Emmons Elementary School District 33 in Antioch for four years. He was also principal at Field Middle School in Northbrook for a decade and an assistant principal in Vernon Hills for a year. He has also been an English teacher at Mundelein High School and Forest Academy in Des Plaines.

Machak has a doctorate degree from National Louis University. He was not available for comment.

The District 64 School Board interviewed six candidates for superintendent before narrowing the list down to the two finalists.

"The two finalists, we felt, have most of the qualities we're looking for," Borrelli said.

"They have the proper expertise, the proper leadership. Either of these finalists are excellent candidates." The board plans to meet in closed session with each candidate following their day-long visits within the district in order to have "a serious heart-to-heart with these candidates and find out what makes them tick, so to speak, so we can make the best possible decision on behalf of District 64," Borrelli said.

The board will then vote to hire the next superintendent, though whether this will occur on Friday night or next week is not yet known.

The candidates for superintendent were presented to the board by the search firm BWP & Associates, which was hired by the district in September, shortly after District 64 Superintendent Philip Bender publicly announced his plans to step down at the end of the 2013-14 school year. Bender was hired by District 64 in 2010.
Bacteria outbreak tied to Park Ridge hospital

BY TINA SFONDELES

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The largest outbreak of a very specific and very dangerous bacteria in the U.S. has been linked to procedures performed at a north suburban hospital last year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has discovered 44 cases of a strain of bacteria called carbapenem-resistant enterobacteriaceae, or CRE, in northeast Illinois, including 38 confirmed cases involving patients at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge who underwent an endoscopic procedure of the pancreas or bile ducts between January and September 2013.

There have only been 96 cases reported in the U.S. since the bacteria was first reported in 2009. The outbreak is a form of CRE bacteria was first reported in 2009.

The largest outbreak the CDC had seen was 10 cases found in Denver.

"A large number of patients have been identified, a large number of transmissions — total of 44 — and 39 of those were found in the Chicago area. It's the largest outbreak that we've seen in the U.S. of this bacteria ever," said Alex Kallen, an infectious diseases doctor who served as the supervisor of the CDC investigation.

The bacteria is highly resistant and is mainly found in people in health care settings, like nursing homes. The most common infection the bacteria causes is a urinary tract infection, but if that infection goes to the bloodstream, the patient has a 40 percent to 50 percent chance of dying.

The bacteria is in a family of more than 70 bacteria including E. coli that normally live in the digestive system, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health. But some of those bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics, including a group of antibiotics known as carbapenems, often referred to as "last-resort" antibiotics.

Kallen said most of the 243 patients screened at Advocate Lutheran General found to have had exposure to the bacteria were "colonized," not infected, meaning the bacteria lived in their digestive tract but did not cause a disease.

According to the hospital, 28 patients screened positive for the organism but didn't have an infection. Ten others showed signs and symptoms. They declined to provide further information on the condition of the patients, but said a small percentage of patients were treated for the infection with antibiotics.

A study, however, finds there were no flaws in protocol. "The design of the ERCP endoscopes might pose a particular challenge for cleaning and disinfection," the CDC report said.

The procedure is used to view the stomach and intestines and is used to diagnose conditions related to the bile duct, pancreatic cancer and gallstones.

The hospital reached out to all who underwent the procedure. Each received a registered letter explaining the situation and asked that they return to the hospital for a screening test to confirm whether they were exposed to the bacteria, according to Leo Kelly, vice president of medical management at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital.

Of that number, 109 have been tested, while additional screenings are scheduled.

"We encourage those who may not have yet come in for the screening to do so," Kelly said in an email.

The hospital first discovered the problem six months ago when seven patients returned to the hospital with a CRE infection. An investigation was conducted that showed the link between the procedure and the CRE infections, the hospital said.

Although the investigation is ongoing, the hospital has changed the way it sterilizes the scopes — even though the CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health did not find any problem with the way they were disinfected.

"To ensure no other patients are at risk, we have moved to gas sterilization for these particular scopes, which exceeds the manufacturer's recommended cleaning and disinfectant guidelines," Kelly said. Gas sterilization is the cleaning method used in operating rooms.
Schools’ maintenance staffs put in work over winter break

BY RICK KAMBIC
rkambic@pioneerlocal.com

Maintenance workers at local school districts don’t usually get two weeks off for winter break. Instead, they complete needed repairs that are easier done in an empty building.

The foot of snow and subzero temperatures over the last week have taken those maintenance workers away from their projects, but area school administrators report all is OK for now.

Both Golf School District 67 and Park View School District 70 report no infrastructure damages as a result of weather conditions. Maintenance workers, however, were required to make routine checks of every room and test various sinks or toilets.

Six employees successfully plowed right-of-ways, made their rounds, undertook HVAC training and completed deep cleaning projects at Golf Middle School and Hynes Elementary School. District 67 Superintendent Beth Sagett-Flores said the floors at both schools need waxed and carpets were cleaned — which required moving furniture and allowing time to dry.

Park View’s two maintenance workers, however, were unable to finish their to-do list. Superintendent Phil Collins said the floor in the big gym was refinished and all 3,500 fluorescent light bulbs and accommodating ballasts were replaced.

Snow and ice removal and room checks prevented Park View’s crew from installing a new classroom projector and mounting a flat screen monitor that will display students’ digital work in the intermediate hallway.

Collins said the school’s storage also needed to be reorganized so items could be put up for auction, thrown away or more efficiently organized. He said all the unaccomplished tasks can slowly be etched into upcoming schedules.

Both Flores and Collins said the most important repairs were accomplished despite the weather conditions outside.

As for making up school, Flores said District 67 already started late due to construction and the two makeup days will be added to the end of the year.

Collins, however, plans to apply for two “Act of God Day” exemptions from the Illinois State Board of Education. That would allow Park View to keep it would otherwise lose by not making up the days.

The Act of God exemptions are usual granted when the district’s five regularly scheduled emergency days are used up or close to being exhausted, a spokesman from the ISBE said.

Collins believes that Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn’s Jan. 6 disaster declaration will make for a good case. If the application is denied, Collins said Park View will also make up its two days at the end of the school year.
Think about how often you shop at Target. Why? Because depending on how much you visit the store, you could easily have been one of the 40 million victims of the credit card security breach that took place there last month.

What happened at Target is uncontrollable to any credit card holder. In other words, there was nothing any customer could have done to prevent it. That said, there are many things you can control when it comes to minimizing your chances of credit card or identity theft.

Help Squad reached out to Chase spokesperson Nicole Kennedy, who offered six tips for consumers to keep credit information safe:

1. Do not carry your Social Security card with you. Keep it in a safe place in your home.
2. Never give out personal information over the phone unless you initiate the call or are very familiar with the organization.
3. Be aware of suspicious emails that may ask for confirmation of a credit card number, PIN or other sensitive information.
4. Monitor your accounts regularly, online and/or through your statements, and contact your bank or credit card company immediately if you see any suspicious transactions.
5. Shred all documents that contain sensitive information.
6. Check your credit bureau report at least once a year.

But what if it's too late? What if you become a victim? In other words, what can you do if your credit card gets hacked?

We sought the help of Linda Sherry, the director of national priorities for the Washington, D.C.-based consumer advocacy group, Consumer Action. Sherry offered some facts about fraud and suggestions that will surely come in handy:

- Your liability for fraudulent charges on your credit card is limited under federal law to $50, and in a lot of cases you aren't responsible for any dollar amount.
- Debit cards are a little different when it comes to fraud. You are responsible in most cases for $50 if you notify your bank within two days. After that, it can be as high as $500. Worst case scenario, you can be responsible for unlimited charges if you fail to notify your bank within 60 days of receiving your statement.
- When you contact your credit card company for a replacement card, you shouldn't have to pay a fee for the new card. Ask the representative to waive the fee.
- If you think there's a possibility you were part of a security breach, review your checking account and credit card statements regularly.
- Don't pay for expensive credit monitoring or fraud detection services. You can check your credit report annually for free using www.annualcreditreport.com.

NEED HELP?
Did a utilities company overcharge you? Did a boutique deny your request for a return? Are you the victim of fraudulent business practices? Is someone just exhibiting bad business behavior?
Let Help Squad make the call for you.
Send your letters, your complaints, your injustices and your story ideas to HelpSquad@pioneerlocal.com and we will be happy to help you.
LETTER
Common Core standards made by teachers, for teachers

I was quite shocked to read Nancy Thorn-er's letter to the editor in the Jan. 2 issue of Oak Leaves; she has her information all wrong.

The Common Core Standards did not start with Big Government. In the 1990s, Jim Hunt, then governor of North Carolina, and the National Governors Association, a bipartisan group, asked for an overhaul of standards. American students were not performing as high as their international peers in mathematics; American college students who were dropping out of college were required to take too many remedial courses; and there was a lack of curriculum alignment across different states.

Nonprofit organizations like the Alliance for Excellent Education led the movement for the standards. Once the standards were developed, they were up for review. More than 10,000 teachers commented on the standards before they were published; they are the first to be designed by teachers, for teachers.

Others are convinced, as the corestandards.org website states, that the standards merely represent an effort to "...focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades, thus enabling teachers to take the time needed to teach core concepts and procedures well and to give students the opportunity to master them." Sounds benign, if not wonderful.

As a member of the District 64 Board of Education and father of three students in the district, I have a host of concerns about Common Core. When I speak (off the record) to teachers about Common Core, every last one raves against it. When I speak to students, including my own children, about the changes already in place, they seem befuddled. When I speak to child development experts, they echo some of my concerns. What I have not heard is a healthy, robust dialogue between district administration, parents, teachers, and children about the Common Core.

I am not convinced that Common Core will usher in the apocalypse. However, I am not convinced that it is utterly benign or even in the best interest of our children, parents, and teachers. I have several considerable concerns about the Common Core standards and their implementation in D64.

Perhaps some or all of these concerns will be assuaged. I welcome the possibility that any potential negative consequences Common Core might have wreaked on District 64 will be mitigated by the discernment, planning, and creativity of our administration. I welcome D64 administrators, teachers, parents, and anyone else with specific knowledge regarding the Common Core to respond to my concerns publicly, so that we can all benefit from the dialogue.

My first concern relates to the supposed rigorous nature of the standards. One of the selling points of the Common Core — repeated by its creators, our own administrators, and some parents who mimic the talking points — is that the Common Core standards shift education from a broad range of topics and goals at a relatively shallow level to a deeper level of understanding/knowledge on a narrower range of topics and goals.

One also hears about the emphasis on “critical thinking.” While it sounds great on the surface, the term appears to be somewhat nebulous, if not deceptive. Education scholar Jane Robbins explained how critical thinking “...is not to be confused with ‘analytical thinking,’ which is logical and linear. Instead, it [critical thinking] means examining a question from all conceivable angles, such as point of view, power structures, and fairness.” If this is the case, we should return to traditional analytical thinking, thank you very much.

Finally, the authors of the standards — many of whom are not education experts but bureaucrats — were forced to admit that students educated under the new “College and Career Ready” math standards will be far from prepared for the truly rigorous STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) majors in universities. If this is what passes for academic rigor in District 64, we don’t want it.

I have long awaited an honest and open dialogue about this profound change to our children’s education. Since none has been forthcoming, I have started the dialogue here, out in the open.

Dr. Dathan Paterno is a licensed clinical psychologist, author of ‘Desperately Seeking Parents,’ and a member of the District 64 Board of Education.

Let's talk about Common Core

District 64 board member:

LET US HEAR FROM YOU
Send your letters to the editor to News Editor Ben Meyerson at bmeyerson@pioneerlocal.com or mail to Niles Herald-Spectator, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago, IL 60654.

Keep letters to 250 words or fewer. Niles Herald-Spectator reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity and content. All letters must be signed to be published.
We've all seen them: lithe and limber folk who place a handicapped sticker in the front window of their car and then walk briskly into a store to shop. It's illegal and denies parking to genuinely handicapped drivers.

Illinois has a solution. A bill sponsored by State Rep. Karen May (D-Highland Park) and passed into law creates two kinds of handicapped parking placards instead of one.

Previously, 600,000 Illinois residents with handicapped placards not only could park in spaces designated for the handicapped, they could park for free at any parking meter. Under the new law that goes into effect in 2014, there will be one placard for the handicapped and another for the severely handicapped.

Severely handicapped motorists are those in wheelchairs, those who have trouble walking more than 20 feet, and parents of disabled children. Their parking privileges will not change.

Less severely disabled motorists — not in wheelchairs and who can walk more than 20 feet — will be able to park in handicapped spaces, but no longer will be able to park for free at parking meters. OK, I get it.

One question: What has any of this to do with preventing healthy people from misusing a family member's placard of either kind? Oh, yes, there are fines. But there always were fines for misusing handicapped parking placards. So why the need for this complicated new law in which state bureaucrats define who is handicapped and who is less handicapped — I can walk 22 feet, so I am less handicapped than someone who can only walk 20 feet?

Then I figured it out. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel initially opposed May's legislation. Then he about-faced. Why?

The new handicapped parking law will decrease the number of Illinoisans eligible to park free at meters throughout the state. As proud owner of one of the worst contracts in the history of contracts, Emanuel must reimburse the company that has a 75-year parking meter agreement with the city for each handicapped motorist who parks free at Chicago meters. This new law saves the city of Chicago money.

And in the suburbs, more and more there no longer are meters at each parking space. Instead, there is one giant parking meter for an entire area. This means more walking for drivers. And the unlucky drivers will be those who can walk 22 feet and don't qualify for the severely handicapped parking placard.
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Fri, Apr 04 at 8pm
Los Lobos celebrates their 40th Anniversary with the Disconnected concert tour. Experience your favorite tunes with intimate and compelling acoustically-unplugged re-arrangements.

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House size: 1,103 square feet
Lot size: 6,250 square feet
Year built: 1955
Bedrooms: 2
Bathrooms: 1
Garage: Two-car detached
Property tax: $6,407.32 (2012)
Exterior: Aluminum siding and brick
School districts: East Maine School District 63 and Maine Township High School District 207

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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

Get up and go

Your guide to the weekend and beyond

Every Thursday

Use the Stage section to learn about local theater productions.
PROPERTY TRANSFERS
BY WRAPREPORTS NEWS SERVICE

EDITORS NOTE: Content appears as it is provided in public records.

Niles
7706 N Oketo Ave: Kenneth J Kuh to John P Capesius Jr and Kelly Ann Capesius for $240,000 on Nov. 21.
8146 N Oranam Ave: Duke Express Inc to Laura Beth Wolfe for $315,000 on Nov. 20.
731 W Conrad Ave: Mark Woloch to Cynthia Koutsovitis for $312,500 on Nov. 19.
8702 N Oketo Ave: Joyce M Garrett to James M Woloch for $436,500 on Nov. 18.
1021 N Talcoti Road: Michael G Cernak to Christopher S. Waring for $375,500 on Nov. 21.
9229 Nagle Ave, #68: Max Vandergraff Trust, Renate K Vandergraff Trust, Vandergraff Max Trust and Max Vandergraff Trust to Renate Vandergraff Trust and Vandergraff Renate Trust for $360,000 on Nov. 18.
9345 Sayre Ave: Charles Mesce to Alina Papas for $955,000 on Nov. 20.
9001 Luna Ave: Francisco Santa and Julissa Reyes to Syed M Ali and Shabina S Quadri for $275,000 on Nov. 19.

Morton Grove
8601 Waukegan Road: Right Residential LLC - Series 2 to Liping Li for $262,500 on Nov. 20.
8821 Oswego Ave: Andrzej Smolenski and Anna Smolenski to Sneh Hira for $292,500 on Nov. 19.
9229 Nagle Ave, #68: Max Vandergraff Trust, Renate K Vandergraff Trust, Vandergraff Max Trust and Max Vandergraff Trust to Renate Vandergraff Trust and Vandergraff Renate Trust for $360,000 on Nov. 18.
9345 Sayre Ave: Charles Mesce to Alina Papas for $955,000 on Nov. 20.
9001 Luna Ave: Francisco Santa and Julissa Reyes to Syed M Ali and Shabina S Quadri for $275,000 on Nov. 19.

Park Ridge
612 N Seminary Ave: Christopher D Kerfoot and Cara M Kerfoot to Adam M Cernak for $450,000 on Nov. 18.

Rosemont
9504 Glenlake Ave, #116: Jose Matuszczak to Ramonda Naddo for $45,000 on Nov. 19.
2 N Seminary Ave: Donna L Sapp and Robert H Puetz and Patricia H Puetz for $375,500 on Nov. 21.

Skokie
5055 Madison St, #1: Suan J Bates to Xiaohong Wang for $110,000 on Nov. 22.
4952 Estes Ave: Angel Azizi to Cristian Calin and Ileana Calin for $262,500 on Nov. 21.
4747 Howard St, #500: Wayne S Kaplan to Heman Alyce Trust and Alyce Heman Trust for $180,000 on Nov. 21.
8500 Skokie Blvd, #4: George Ipe and Leena George to Suresh Singla and Sonika Singla for $140,000 on Nov. 21.
8726 Skokie Blvd, #1: Sharon Munroe to Shaked Mezu and Faiza Mezu for $50,000 on Nov. 21.
4847 Enfield Ave: Bharbhabai Patel and Ranjan Patel to Iram F Makda and Biema F Makda for $41,000 on Nov. 22.
4830 W Jarlath St: Kun Sik Yoon and Chu Wo Yoon to Mary Joy Maravilla for $230,000 on Nov. 18.
NILES COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THURSDAY, JAN. 9

**Toddler Time**
10 a.m.: Stories, songs and rhymes for children ages 1 to 3 with a caregiver. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-6623.

**Elder Abuse: A Seniors Guide to Awareness**
10:30 a.m.: The Abbington of Glenview presents this program, which covers a broad range of topics designed to inform seniors how to protect themselves from various forms of manipulation. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

**ESL Club**
3 p.m.: New English speakers can join this conversation club to practice speaking English. Meet at Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

FRIDAY, JAN. 10

**Bibliobop Dance Party**
10 a.m.: Family and friends are invited to boogie down at the library. DJ Miss Cate will be spinning all the best tunes from the library's music collection. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-6623.

SATURDAY, JAN. 11

**Alice in Wonderland Breakfast Bingo**
9:30 a.m.: Bring the family to play bingo and enjoy a breakfast treat at the library. Seating is limited. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-6623.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15

**Book Discussion**
1 p.m.: The group discusses "Where'd You Go, Bernadette?" by Maria Semple. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-6623.

SUNDAY, JAN. 12

**Second Sunday Special Big Run Wolf Ranch**
2 p.m.: Kids can see a number of wild animals up close, including a wolf, and learn from the director of the ranch about the rescue and care of the animals. Pick up free tickets at the Youth Services Desk 30 minutes ahead of time. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

MONDAY, JAN. 13

**Baby Time**
11 a.m.: A short program of stories, songs, rhymes and playtime for children 2 and under with a caregiver. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

FRIDAY, JAN. 17

**Rise and Shine Story Time**
10 a.m.: A 30-minute story time for children ages 2 to 6 with a caregiver. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

**HAPPENING NEARBY**

THURSDAY, JAN. 9

**Survivor Book Signing**
10 a.m.: Meet with Holocaust survivors who have written stories about their experiences. The event is held in the Feis Family Lobby on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons in January, subject to author availability. Illinois Holocaust Museum, 9603 Wind Chase Drive, Skokie. Call 847-967-4800.

**Affordable Health Care Act**
7 p.m.: A representative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will give an overview of the Affordable Health Care Act and answer questions. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3223.

**Conquering Your Clutter**
7 p.m.: Interactive workshop is for those stymied by clutter or just looking for some new and efficient ways to become more organized. Come learn techniques to simplify your life, organize records, keep important documents safe and more. For more information and to register, call 847-673-3733. Skokie Public Library, 5215 Skokie St., Skokie.

**Declutter Your Home**
7 p.m.: Learn techniques to simplify belongings, reduce clutter, organize records, keep important documents safe and more. Skokie Public Library, 5215 Skokie St., Skokie. Call 847-673-3733.

**Circle of Friends**
7 p.m.: Meet with Holocaust survivors who have written stories about their experiences. The event is held in the Feis Family Lobby on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons in January, subject to author availability. Illinois Holocaust Museum, 9603 Wind Chase Drive, Skokie.

**Let's Get Started**
7 p.m.: Hoffman students can watch a movie at school. Hoffman Elementary School, 2000 Harrison St., Glenview. Call 847-999-5040.

**'Earth Tales From Around the World'**

**'Brush with Nature' Exhibition**
7 p.m.: An opening reception for the "Brush with Nature" exhibition, featuring work by local artists who participated in the initial art demonstration last fall. Emily Oaks Nature Center, 4650 Brummel St., Skokie.

SATURDAY, JAN. 11

**Let's Get It Started**
9 a.m.: Health advisers from Advocate Lutheran General Hospital can help participants learn more about their fitness abilities and goals. For ages 18 and older. Park Ridge Community Center, 1915 W. Touhy Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-3123.

**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 847-825-3223.

**Crafty Saturday**
10 a.m.: All ages are invited to drop by and make a craft. Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove. Call 847-966-4220.

**Let's Get Physical with My Gym!**
10:30 a.m.: Enjoy dance, gymnastics skills and movement with My Gym Children's Fitness Center of Skokie. Work on agility, balancing, gross motor skills and more. Registration required. For ages 2-6. Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove. Call 847-966-4220.

**Breakfast With Books**
10:30 a.m.: Share favorite books while enjoying a light breakfast snack. For children ages 2 to 7. Skokie Public Library, 5215 Skokie St., Skokie. Call 847-364-3149.

See Calendar, Next Page »
Fashion Outlets of Chicago
11 a.m.: Spend the afternoon shopping at the Fashion Outlets of Chicago. Fee includes transportation to and from MPLC. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127. $6.

Frosty Workshop
11:30 a.m.: Children can create Frosty the Snowman using ceramic clay. For ages 6 to 10. Brickton Art Center, 306 Busse Highway, Park Ridge. Call 847-823-6611. $35.

Job Hunting on the Internet
2 p.m.: Learn how to use the tools available on the Internet to benefit your job search. To register, call 847-720-3245. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge.

Snowman Art
2 p.m.: Guest artist Bernadette Foch teaches techniques to create a one-of-a-kind snowman using ceramic clay. For ages 6 to 10. Brickton Art Center, 306 Busse Highway, Park Ridge. Call 847-823-6611. $35.

Fairy Tales and Fun: An Introduction to Danish and Hans Christian Andersen

MONDAY, JAN. 13
Retail Committee Meeting
8 a.m.: Linda Russo of Cosa Linda Salon meets with members of the Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce. All retail businesses are welcome to attend. Registration required. Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce, 720 Garden St., Park Ridge. Call 847-925-3123.

National Popcorn Day
9 a.m.: Celebrate National Popcorn Day by dropping by for a treat. Prairie View Community Center, 6834 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Call 847-966-5522. $30-$70.

Battle of the Books
4 p.m.: Teams of fourth and fifth graders compete to test their knowledge of books. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Read to the Rainbow Dogs
7 p.m.: Kids ages 5 and up are invited to read to a therapy dog from Morton Grove's Rainbow Animal Assisted Therapy Foundation. Kids should bring a book they would like to read. Registration is required. Sessions will be held in 15-minute increments. Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove. Call 847-965-4220.

Pages: "Legends"
7 p.m.: In a dark future, when North America has been split into two warring nations, 15-year-old Day, a famous criminal, and prodigy June, the brilliant soldier hired to capture him, discover that they have a common enemy. Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.
BUILDING PERMITS

BY WRAPPORTS NEWS SERVICE

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

1. Fence
Address: 7546 N. Waukegan Road, Niles
Issue date: Sept. 23
Permit cost: $25
Construction cost: $1,000

2. Sewer repair/clean out
Address: 7645 N. Waukegan Road, Niles
Issue date: Sept. 26
Permit cost: $40
Construction cost: $4,800

3. Demolition
Address: 7020 W. Jarvis Ave., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 23
Permit cost: $248
Construction cost: $2,000

4. Single family - remodel
Address: 6910 W. Howard St., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 23
Permit cost: $36
Construction cost: $4,000

5. Single family - remodel
Address: 7919 N. Harlem Ave., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 27
Permit cost: $439
Construction cost: $22,839

6. Roof (commercial and residential)
Address: 7952 N. Neva Ave., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 27
Permit cost: $25
Construction cost: $2,000

7. Electrical service
Address: 7424 W. Lawler Ave., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 23
Permit cost: $40
Construction cost: $2,200

8. Commercial - remodel
Address: 6600 W. Howard St., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 24
Permit cost: $92
Construction cost: $5,865

9. Flood control
Address: 7731 N. Oriole Ave., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 24
Permit cost: $80
Construction cost: $8,000

10. Elevator (commercial and residential structure)
Address: 7333 N. Caldwell Ave., Niles
Issue date: Sept. 26
Permit cost: $220
Construction cost: $30,000
Chateau Ritz banquet hall keeps changing with times

BY IGOR STUDENKOV
For Sun-Times Media | @istudenkov

On the outside, the Chateau Ritz banquet hall looks more functional than anything.

The walls are brown and unadorned. The most eye-catching part is the sign by the parking lot entrance.

But when visitors step inside, they find a front lobby with stylish furniture, heavy wooden doors, large chandeliers and grand staircases. The reception hall looks even more extravagant, with even larger chandeliers, tiled walls, mirrors and wooden detailing.

It’s a design that looks at once modern and timeless — and that’s precisely what the owners of Chateau Ritz are looking for.

For almost four decades, the banquet hall has been hosting wedding receptions, business functions, fundraisers and other events. Chateau Ritz prides itself on the quality of its food, the ability to respond to changing times and the flexibility to accommodate their customers’ needs. But most of all, the reception hall prides itself on being a family business that continues to grow and learn from experience.

Chateau Ritz was founded in 1977. By 1989, its owners wanted to turn the hall over to someone else, and their turn to their distant relatives. Nick Megalis and his brother, Spiro Megalis, were working in the restaurant business. Running a banquet hall wasn’t quite in their field, but they decided that it presented an interesting — not to mention profitable — opportunity.

Since then, the company has continued to grow, making a profit even during lean economic times. Nick Megalis currently co-owns the company with Nick Theodos, and many members of the Megalis family have been involved with the company in some capacity.

Ari Megalis, son of Nick Megalis, worked for the company since he was 14, and he’s been a co-manager since 2006. He counts the ethnically diverse clientele as one of the best parts of his job.

“We’ve had an opportunity to experience hundreds of different cultures,” said Megalis. “Seeing how different cultures celebrate weddings is an interesting part of our job.”

Most customers come from the North Side of Chicago, as well as Niles and other nearby northern suburbs. That means that Chateau Ritz’s clientele is as diverse as the area’s demographics.

“It’s mostly Greeks, Poles, Romanians, Assyrians, Koreans, Latin-Americans,” said Megalis. “Indians, too. We get lots of South Asian cultures.”

Adjusting to the different cultural traditions can be a bit of a learning curve, but Megalis said that it’s worth it.

“Learning cultural intricacies helps us run [events] more smoothly,” he said.

While wedding receptions account for the majority of Chateau Ritz’ business, the banquet hall is open to company events, religious ceremonies and social events. It’s hosted a number of Niles Chamber of Commerce and Industry events, village government events and fundraisers.

Customers can book the entire reception hall, but it can also be split into two or three different parts using collapsible walls. The walls are soundproof, and each section has a separate entrance, so the hall can hold up to three events at the time without interruption.

Chateau Ritz also rents out bridal suites on the second floor.

Given the elder Megalis’ background, it’s no surprise that Chateau Ritz offers a wide variety of meal options cooked on-site.

“Our chef has 40 years of experience,” said Megalis. “We are very proud of the quality of our food.”

If the customers want something the staff has no experience in cooking, Chateau Ritz will work with “ethnic caterers” to put together what they need.

Over the last two decades, Chateau Ritz has done its best to stay modern.

“We always make changes and update things, so we don’t look like an old banquet hall,” said Megalis.

“We do something every year. And every five years, we make big renovations.”

The last major renovation was in 2009.

If nothing else, Megalis said, the changes keep Chateau Ritz fresh and interesting.

“If your sister got married here seven years ago,” he said, “you wouldn’t recognize it.”
Honors all around at District 63

BY NATASHA WASINSKI
For Sun-Times Media

East Maine School District 63 and the Education Foundation honored supporters and staff at the "Carry the Ball for the Kids" Big Event Dec. 5. Some 200 people attended the ninth annual dinner and awards ceremony at White Eagle Banquets in Niles.

The event garnered $15,500 for summer and after-school programming at the K-9 district's seven schools.

Nelson School secretary Peggy Mennes and literary specialist Pamela Sarandos shared the 2013 Employee of the Year Award. First grade teacher Andrea Mishkin was named TLC Staff Member of the Year for her work at Stevenson School. Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers was recognized for its volunteerism, while Niles-based APN received the Friend of Education Award. District 63 also recognized Asif Khan for nine years of leadership as the Education Foundation treasurer.

Carolyn Kosiba of Niles and Megan Garrity of Hoffman Estates | PHOTO BY NATASHA WASINSKI FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Niles Public Library staff (from left), Sue Wilsey, Linda Weiss and Barb Kruser, with Village and Library Trustee Danette Matyas and Library Treasurer Carolyn Drblik | PHOTO BY NATASHA WASINSKI FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

ABOVE: Bill Gibson of Skokie; Karen Foley of Hoffman Estates and George Ballas of Morton Grove | PHOTO BY NATASHA WASINSKI FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

ABOVE LEFT: Julie Diskin of Skokie, Mary Ward of Morton Grove, and Terri Bauer of Arlington Heights | PHOTO BY NATASHA WASINSKI FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

LEFT: Dan Barrie of Wheeling, Marge Schluttes of Niles, and Nichole Gross of Chicago | PHOTO BY NATASHA WASINSKI FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA
High School Cube News, Sun-Times Media's new high school sports website, launched this week. It's the latest evolution in Chicago area prep sports coverage. High School Cube News will integrate all the highlights and live games from HighSchoolCube.com with the comprehensive coverage formerly provided by Season Pass.

Go to highschoolcubenews.com or click "SPORTS" on your local newspaper site.
Couple personalize their Hindu wedding

Shena Patel and Mayur Patel

BY HEATHER DORNHECKER
Contributing writer

When Shena Patel and Mayur Patel got married, it was important to them to include traditional Hindu rituals and customs in a way that reflected their personalities.

“We wanted to make it personal to us. Our ceremony and attire was pretty traditional, but we used decorations to give our wedding a modern, elegant feel,” said Shena, formerly of Northville, Mich.

The couple steered away from tradition and saw each other before the ceremony to have a moment to themselves. Mayur, a Niles native, waited for Shena outside with a gathering of colorful balloons. They stood opposite each other and released the balloons into the sky.

Their wedding celebration officially started with the baraat, an hour-long, song-and-dance procession outside of the couple's wedding venue, the Diamond Center at Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, Mich. The procession announced Mayur, his family and his friends. Mayur arrived in a yellow Corvette decorated in Chicago Blackhawks gear. His family and friends wore Chicago sports jerseys to match.

The wedding ceremony took place under a gold mandap, or wedding canopy. Mayur waited for Shena under the mandap while white fabric was held in front of his face. To personalize the tradition, the fabric was printed with a picture of Mayur and the words, “Are you sure about this one?”

Shena and Mayur walked seven steps together around a sacred fire called the havan to signify the beginning of their life together. Each step represented a different marital vow.

To indicate the presence of Shena’s late father, Mahendra, a seat was reserved for him under the mandap with his picture. Shena also accented her bouquet with a picture of the two of them and a charm with lyrics to a Hindi song they used to sing together.

The couple’s first dance was to “Terrified” by Katharine McPhee. After they cut the cake, friends and family performed a mix of Bollywood-inspired skits and dances.

Shena and Mayur ended the night by lighting a Chinese lantern in memory of her father.

The couple married June 22, a date that satisfied their desire for an early summer wedding. Following the wedding, they honeymooned in Greece for two weeks.

The couple live in Chicago, where Shena is a health educator and Mayur is an information technology consultant.

Contact Renee Lee at rlee@bouquetcatcher.com or 312-651-6613 to share your wedding story. 
Facebook.com/BouquetCatcher 
Twitter @BouquetCatcher 
Pinterest.com/BouquetCatcher
Katie Kerr and Chris Sabino

Katie is the social media manager for personalizationmall.com, a personalized-gift company in Burr Ridge, and Chris is a commercial banking officer for First Midwest Bank in Westmont. Katie, a Lisle native, and Chris, from Streator, Ill., married at St. Daniel the Prophet in Wheaton. Their reception was Sept. 21 at Medinah Country Club. Katie and Chris crafted funny RSVP cards to send out to guests in July. When Katie posted a photo of the cards online, it went viral. A Huffington Post article described the cards as showing “their awesomely snarky personalities.” The cards gave guests reasons to select for attending or not attending. One reason the Aurora couple included for a guest to check attending: “Two words: Free. Booze.”
Why to sign up for camp early

BY KIMBERLY ELSHAM VAVRICK
For Sun-Times Media

Camp registration may not be the first thing on your New Year’s resolutions list. However, you have loads of reasons to enroll your child now — and it’s not just to secure a spot.

Get discounts and special requests accommodated.

Niki Papak, camp director at Banner Day Camp in Lake Forest: “Banner offers savings for enrolling early, and we take grouping requests. Signing up early also helps to ensure that we can accommodate these requests.”

Laura Gallagher, superintendent of recreation at Park District of La Grange: “Registration starts Feb. 1, 2014, for our camps. Register in February or March for any half day or full day camp and receive an early bird discount of 10 percent off the fee.”

Have time to read the fine print.

Heidi Mabie, associate program director at Camp Anokijig in Plymouth, Wis.: “The beginnings of a positive camp experience start with a smooth registration process. Parents: Pay attention to dates and details. When you get the packet of information confirming your child’s registration, look at it! If your child arrives at camp without having all the required paperwork on file, they may not be allowed to attend, or their space may have been given to someone else who does have all the paperwork turned in.”

Get your kid comfy with the idea of leaving for camp.

Kim Kiser, vice president of YMCA Metropolitan Chicago: “While the snow is flying, parents are not thinking, ‘Now’s the time.’ Parents are just jammed. We have parents call the night before, and you do the best you can to accommodate them, because availability is booked solid at that point. The earlier you sign up, the better you can help prepare them for the going away experience and being independent.”

Mabie of Camp Anokijig: “Choosing a summer camp should be a joint decision between parent and child. Involving the child in this process gives them a sense of ownership and also makes them feel that their opinion matters. Sit down together, research, ask questions. Figure out each other’s goals. Is it to learn a new skill? Spend some time away from home? Make new friends? Challenge yourself?”

Start building the parent-camp relationship.

Kiser of YMCA Metropolitan Chicago: “At least shopping [for camps] now gives you time to start the parent-director relationship. The majority of parents really need to get to know the director, for providing a superior summer experience where each boy is valued for his individuality. At Greenwoods, boys have the opportunity to explore a variety of interests as well as specialize in one activity area. The exceptional instruction combined with a custom program is designed to meet the needs and interests of each camper. Choose from more than 40 activities, including soccer, tennis, water skiing, go carting, sailing, horseback riding, culinary arts, golf and much more. The camp community provides a foundation through activities and sports where boys learn skills for life including leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity. Campers ages 6-15 attend from all over the United States and the world. Campers live in spacious, modern cabins with electricity, bathrooms and showers.
Gaining traction

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Fit Fitness into Your Workday
By John Rossheim, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

For those of us who spend long days at our workstations, sitting nearly motionless under fluorescent lights, fitness can seem like a pipe dream. How do you squeeze substantial physical activity into a job that squeezes most of the air out of your day?

Katie Hamlin, a senior account executive at public relations firm Edelman, puts her finger on it: “It’s hard to stay in shape when you work 9 to 5, especially when no one really gets out of work at 5.”

But even for cynics who believe at-the-office exercise is nothing more than a comedic routine involving finger calisthenics and laps around the conference table, there is hope. You can find time and ways to exercise at work, as long as you’re willing to think creatively about your situation, occasionally push the envelope of workplace decorum and perhaps even chuckle at yourself.

Start with Modest Changes to Your Routine
You may have heard the standard advice for workers looking to fit some fitness into their days: Park your car at the farthest corner of the lot. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Use the phone and email less, and walk to talk with your coworkers instead.

If you are among the most sedentary of the sedentary, these measures will begin to get your blood moving, but they’re really just a start. Nothing can replace solid, intense workouts, says Salvatore Fichera, an exercise physiologist. But being as active as possible all through the workday does make a difference over time.

Fichera recommends brisk exercise breaks of about 10 minutes. That should be enough time to give yourself a significant interval of cardiovascular exercise without taking up more time than a typical coffee break.

Fit In a Couple of 10-Minute Workouts
“If you take a break and climb the stairs for 10 minutes, you’ll burn 150 calories, assuming you weigh 150 pounds,” says Tammy Lakatos, a trainer and registered dietitian. Within that timeframe, you should be able to rev your metabolism without getting too sweaty, she says.

Will a 10-minute workout attract the wrong kind of attention from coworkers and bosses? If it does, you can try explaining why you’re doing it, or just keep at it and ignore negative reactions, which will likely fade with time.

Trainer Susie Shina recommends these intense exercises designed specifically for the white-collar environment: Wall presses (like push-ups, only against a wall), stand-ups (squats into your desk chair), march in place (try not to notice who’s staring) and knee-ups (in your chair, bring your knees up).

Sit for Fitness
Here’s another idea mentioned by more than one fitness expert: Replace your desk chair with a big exercise ball. “When I was a software developer, I brought one of those balance balls to my office and stopped using my desk chair,” says Jeff Wooten, president of The Body Mechanic. “It almost forced me to exercise while I worked.”

But Wooten and his exercise ball became trendsetters — and saved money for his employer, which was accustomed to shelling out hundreds of dollars for ergonomic chairs. Balance balls sell for as little as $20.

Leave the Office to Work Out
Still, we’ve got to admit that doing push-ups against a wall — let alone a cubicle partition — may be just too much. “Some of these activities could be difficult in some work environments,” says Scott Lucett, director of education at the National Academy of Sports Medicine.

The solution may be to take one longer, off-site exercise break. Does your company claim to give its employees a substantial lunchtime, like half or three-quarters of an hour, or even 60 minutes? Then test that claim, even if none of your coworkers do. When Hamlin was training for the New York City Marathon, she would sometimes take off for lunch, go to the gym a block from work, run three miles, shower and be back at her desk within an hour.

Finally, remember that when it comes to exercise, you have more at stake than a desire for a slimmer waistline or less generous hips. “Having a sedentary lifestyle increases your risk for coronary heart disease,” says Dr. Aliya Browne, clinical director of the Hainesport Women’s Heart Center.
AVTEC Registered Nurse Instructors
AVTEC - Alaska's Institute of Technology in Anchorage is seeking to hire two full time permanent Registered Nurse instructors. Salary is $6,093/month dependent upon experience or credentials. Applicant must have a minimum of 5 years patient care experience and comfortable teaching fundamental nursing and medical surgical subjects. AVTEC is operated by the State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Contact is Dick Harrell dick.harrell@avtec.edu. These positions are hired through Workplace Alaska, the State of Alaska's online recruitment system. To apply, go to http://workplace.alaska.gov.

Rewarding Opportunities available at Area Mental Health Center PSYCHIATRIC MEDICAL DIRECTOR AND STAFF PSYCHIATRIST
The Medical Director would be responsible for the overall delivery of psychiatric and clinical services at the Center, and management and supervision of the Medical Staff and Medical Services. Five (5) years experience as a practicing psychiatrist is required, and should be familiar with service delivery systems and current practice standards.

The Staff Psychiatrist is responsible for the delivery of timely, high quality psychiatric services. Experience as a practicing psychiatrist is required, and should be familiar with service delivery systems and current practice standards.

The ideal candidate should possess:
- Supervisory training skills
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Therapy Network Resources seeks Full Time Occupational Therapist for our Home Health Therapy Business. Must be eligible for Medicare. Excellent Compensation and Benefits. Email resume to princeton@pressprimes.com.

Instructional Assistant
Contact is Dick Harrell dick.harrell@avtec.edu. These positions are hired through Workplace Alaska, the State of Alaska's online recruitment system. To apply, go to http://workplace.alaska.gov.

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Registered nurses are among the most in-demand professionals in the U.S., and the need for people to fill open nursing positions continues to grow. A study by Monster Analytics found that the most advertised skills and technology in nursing job listings are for nurse practitioners, nurses, and registered nurses. The top three skills nurses are looking for in registered nurses today are:

1. **Emergency Room**
   - Emergency nurses are needed in emergency rooms to handle trauma and other critical situations. This role requires strong critical thinking and decision-making skills.
2. **Process Improvement**
   - Health care is a constantly evolving science, and the need for process improvement is critical. Nurses are needed to assess and improve processes in health care facilities.
3. **Quality Assurance**
   - Quality assurance nurses are responsible for ensuring that the health care process is efficient and effective. This role involves the use of metrics and data to improve patient care.

These skills are important to many facilities looking to hire nurses and many are willing to hire new nurses and train them on these skills.

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Copies of the detailed Annual Statement of Affairs for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013 will be available for public inspection in the school district/joint agreement administrative office by December 1, 2013. Individuals wanting to review this Annual Statement of Affairs should contact:

Ridgewood High School District 234
11700 W. Mootrose Avenue, Norridge, IL 60666
(708) 640-4424

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High School Cube News, Sun-Times Media's new high school sports website, launched this week. It's the latest evolution in Chicago area prep sports coverage. High School Cube News integrates all the highlights and live games from HighSchoolCube.com with the comprehensive coverage formerly provided by Season Pass.

High School Cube News features school and team pages for every area high school, with live game coverage and highlights from participating schools. Now, all 32 Pioneer Press weekly publications have their very own High School Cube News sites with a hyper-local focus on your favorite teams.

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news
SOPIA BUSH

THE ‘CHICAGO P.D.’ STAR ON PLAYING A COP AND HER PASSION FOR ALTRUISM
TASTE MAKERS

PEOPLE WHO GET FOOD
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**THINGS WE LOVE**

**Siena Tavern gelato to-go**
Satisfy that sweet tooth with Siena Tavern's popular, homemade gelato, now available in to-go pints. Created by Pastry Chef Amy Arnold, the dessert (based on her mother's secret recipe) comes in three flavors: hazelnut, salted caramel and peppermint. $10 per pint, $25 for the trio, 51 W. Kinzie; Sienatavern.com

**Yasou skincare**
Reset the clock and look refreshed with this new day-and-night regimen from Yasou, an organic line based in Glen Ellyn and founded by Chicago native Theodora Ntovas. The day cream hydrates and rejuvenates skin while the night cream works with your body's natural repair cycle to boost collagen production. $135 for the set; Yasouskincare.com

**Jermikko Status bags**
Broadcast your current relationship status with eco-friendly bags from this local line. Each is emblazoned with fun phrases, such as "Single Guy Shopping Chicago," "Hitched Shopping Chicago" and more. $20, 2233 S. Throop, Unit 618; Jermikko.com

**Foxtrot**
Founded by University of Chicago business students Michael LaVitola and Brian Jaffe, this app curates a menu of groceries, alcohol, pharmacy items and home goods and delivers them right to your door. City living has never been simpler. Free on Apple App Store; Foxtrotchicago.com

**AT THE SHOOT**
Sophia Bush met Splash at Drumbar (201 E. Delaware) — where she'd return later that evening for drinks with the "Chicago P.D." cast — and spent the morning posing in everything from Lanvin to local line Azza.

**need to know**

**What was your favorite teen TV show?**

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Splash is distributed weekly inside Sun-Times Media publications.
January 11

- **PROJECT RESCUE'S FREEZIN FOR A REASON**

Man up for man's best friend by jumping in the frigid lake at this Project Rescue Chicago fundraiser, benefiting our city's homeless dogs. And if you can't brave the icy waves, come anyway — there are various ways to participate, from wading in to just cheering on the crowd. Post-dip, the event moves to a local bar for warm beverages.

**Time:** 10:15 a.m.
**Place:** Foster Avenue Beach, 5200 N. Lake Shore
**Cost:** $25. For more information, call (312) 623-0939 or visit Firstgiving.com/projectrescue.

- **CHICAGO SKETCH COMEDY FESTIVAL**

At this 13th annual event — the largest of its kind in the nation — you'll find 150 troupes, 1,000 performers and more than 170 shows taking place in just eight days, meaning there's no way not to laugh this month. The wide-ranging roster includes such local favorites as Virgin Daquiri and The Cupid Players, along with talent from New York, England, Canada and Italy.

**Place:** Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont
**Cost:** Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays $14, Saturdays $15. For tickets call (773) 327-5252 or visit Stage773.com.

- **CATHEDRAL BALL**

Celebrate the 103-year history of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral at a fundraiser benefiting the landmark church (1017 N. LaSalle). Enjoy a seated dinner, dancing, silent auction and entertainment by Rythmos.

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.
**Place:** Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington
**Cost:** $175-$200. For tickets, call (312) 725-9837 or email Gala@annunciationcathedralchicago.org.

- **MADAMA BUTTERFLY**

The tale of Cio-Cio-San and the callous Lieutenant Pinkerton never grows old. A new-to-town production — from Tony and Olivier award winner Michael Grandage — arrives at Lyric Opera, with Amanda Echalaz, Patricia Racette, James Valenti and Stefano Secco sharing the starring roles.

**Place:** 20 N. Wacker
**Cost:** Tickets start at $54. Call (312) 827-5600 or visit Lyricopera.org.
next week

January 15-19

**TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS FESTIVAL**

Now in its 10th year, this winter event showcases a mix of acclaimed and up-and-coming local and national indie music and comedy acts. Check out sets from UK-based Jim Jones Revue, Minneapolis singer-songwriter Jeremy Messersmith and the Chicago-based School of Rock, as well as stand up from Natasha Leggero and Kyle Dunnigan.

**Place:** Venues across the city

**Cost:** Tickets range from $10 to $21. For more information, visit Tnkfest.com.

January 15-19

**PROGRESSIVE INSURANCE CHICAGO BOAT, SPORTS & RV SHOW**

Summer fun may be a few months away, but it doesn’t hurt to get excited for warm-weather months by checking out the upcoming season’s best recreational gear, plus meet John Godwin of A&E’s “Windy City Live,” and Cubs legends Ernie Banks and Fergie Jenkins.

**Time:** 8 p.m.

**Place:** Harry Caray’s Tavern on Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand

**Cost:** $150 in advance, $175 at the door. To purchase, visit Woodfamilyfoundation.org.

January 18-19

**TOO HOT TO HANDEL**

Handel’s great baroque oratorio “Messiah” gets an exhilarating, jazz-gospel spin, courtesy of 150 voices from the Too Hot choir, a 50-piece symphony orchestra and jazz ensemble, and powerhouse vocalists Rodrick Dixon, Alfreda Burke and Karen Marie Richardson.

**Time:** Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sunday 3 p.m.

**Place:** Auditorium Theater, 50 E. Congress

**Cost:** $25-$68. For tickets, call (800) 982-2787 or visit Ticketmaster.com/auditorium.

January 17

**WOODY’S WINTER WARM-UP CELEBRITY MIXER**

Retired Chicago Cub Kerry Wood and his wife Sarah host this third annual cocktail-centric fundraiser for their Wood Family Foundation, which works to improve the lives of children around Chicago. This year’s celebrity mixologists include WMAQ-Channel 5’s Allison Rosati, Ryan Chavel and John Godwin of “Windy City Live,” and Cubs legends Ernie Banks and Fergie Jenkins.

**Time:** Saturday 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to noon

**Place:** Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, 301 E. North Water

**Cost:** $60. For tickets, call (800) 843-2827 or visit Cubs.com.

January 17-19

**2014 CUBS CONVENTION**

New manager Rick Renteria plus players, coaches and some of the organization’s top prospects meet with fans at this annual get-together, which supports Chicago Cubs Charities. Attendees will also get a first look at the activities planned to celebrate Wrigley Field’s 100th anniversary.

**Time:** Saturday 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to noon

**Place:** McCormick Place - North Building, 2301 S. Lake Shore Drive

**Cost:** Adults $12, or $10 online before Jan. 16; 15 and under free. Visit Chicagoboatshow.com.

January 16-20

**PROGRESSIVE INSURANCE CHICAGO BOAT, SPORTS & RV SHOW**

Summer fun may be a few months away, but it doesn’t hurt to get excited for warm-weather months by checking out the upcoming season’s best recreational gear, plus meet John Godwin of A&E’s “Windy City Live,” and Cubs legends Ernie Banks and Fergie Jenkins.

**Time:** Thursday 12 p.m. to 9 p.m., Friday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Place:** McCormick Place - North Building, 2301 S. Lake Shore Drive

**Cost:** Adults $12, or $10 online before Jan. 16; 15 and under free. Visit Chicagoboatshow.com.

January 18-19

**TOO HOT TO HANDEL**

Handel’s great baroque oratorio “Messiah” gets an exhilarating, jazz-gospel spin, courtesy of 150 voices from the Too Hot choir, a 50-piece symphony orchestra and jazz ensemble, and powerhouse vocalists Rodrick Dixon, Alfreda Burke and Karen Marie Richardson.

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**Place:** Auditorium Theater, 50 E. Congress

**Cost:** $25-$68. For tickets, call (800) 982-2787 or visit Ticketmaster.com/auditorium.

The AmazingCosmetics® shade matching philosophy is simple. Match your skin tone. The key to creating a flawless face is a concealer that blends effortlessly with the skin that it’s on. And with 20 shades to pick from, AmazingConcealer® leaves no skin tone behind.
The Service Club of Chicago brought good cheer to kids in need at The 12 Days of Christmas luncheon, held Dec. 10 at the University Club (76 E. Monroe). Co-chairs Diane Freeman and Bonnie Rickard joined a sold-out crowd in donating gifts to the Hephzibah Children’s Association, a nonprofit that provides group homes, foster care, family services and day care for children and adults in the city. Sixteen local vendors — including Lulu’s on the Avenue and Tails in the City — were also on hand, as was the Chicago Gay Men’s Chorus, who provided a seasonal soundtrack for the afternoon.

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

**CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN’S ALL ABOARD! PARTY**

In order to reach the reception at the Horticultural Society’s eighth annual All Aboard! Party, guests traveled through an edible gingerbread village stocked with sweets, and traveled across a cedar-lined hall decorated with elaborate horticultural displays. Finally, they reached the Chicago Botanic Garden’s (1000 Lake Cook, Glencoe) dining area, where they were greeted by the sounds of the Al-lium String Quartet before indulging in French-inspired bites such as steak tartare, beef tenderloin bourguignon and white chocolate mint pots de creme. Co-chairs Marianne Bestler, Carole Sandner and honorary chair Peggy Carr — a Woman’s Board member since 1960 — helped make the evening a success, raising $250,000 for the Woman’s Board Growing the Future campaign, which works to renovate the English Walled Garden at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.
It's time to flaunt those pearly whites, and we don't just mean your ear-to-ear smile. Pull out your best white wardrobe items — no longer relegated to warm weather months — and wear them everywhere from grand galas to chic cocktail parties. Winter whites ruled the runways at the Fall/Winter 2013 shows, making an appearance in luxe lines such as Proenza Schouler and Céline as well as accessible collections like J. Crew. The colorless cocktail dress can still pack a punch when worn with a dash of black, or can convey more subtle elegance when accented with sparkly, metallic accessories. Either way, we're waving a white flag and surrendering to the season's purest trend.
The year still had a full day left, but that didn’t stop more than 2,000 partygoers from waving goodbye to 2013 at HighSight’s annual Eve of the Eve party Dec. 30. At the bash, held in the Great Hall of Union Station (225 S. Canal), guests danced to live music by South of 80 and DJ Matthew Klich and crossed their fingers for a chance to win prizes like a week in Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico during the evening’s raffle. The night netted more than $165,000 for HighSight’s scholarship and education programs, making 2014 that much more promising for Chicago children.

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

BACK TO

Black

Chicago native Michael Ian Black takes on TV with a 'Bachelor' parody and a new game show BY ZAK STEMER

My memory is absolutely terrible,” confesses Michael Ian Black. It’s an ironic admission for the cult comedian, who’s best known for his bits on VH1’s popular “I Love the...” series, in which he looked back and lambasted the trends of the ’70s, ’80s, ’90s and aughts. Luckily, Black’s famously deadpan humor more than makes up for his lack of recall.

The former Chicagoan is bringing that dry wit back to TV this winter with two shows: the third season of E!’s “Bachelorette” parody, “Burning Love” and TBS’ “Trust Me, I’m a Gameshow Host,” which just wrapped its first season. On the former, Black plays the host of a distinctly familiar dating reality show - the only difference is, the contestants are played by actors like Michael Cera, Adam Scott, Colin Hanks, Jerry O’Connell and June Diane Raphael. “The great fun of it is that these are really tremendously talented people,” says Black. “The show is scripted, but obviously with these kinds of people, there’s a lot of improvisation that happens. It’s great to be with people you can respect and really count on to be funny.”

While Black is quick to praise the comedic brilliance of his castmates, when it comes to his own work, the actor is much more modest. Though he’s reached near offbeat-icon status by stealing the show in a series of comedy hits — including Comedy Central’s “Reno 911,” the quirky flick “Wet Hot American Summer” and alternative MTV sketch show “The State” — Black jokes that he’s still relatively unknown. “I’ve been blessed that I’ve never been very successful,” he says. “I’ve been a little successful, so raising the bar shouldn’t be that hard.”

His two-pronged TV takeover certainly contradicts that statement. But playfully poking fun at himself and his audience — is something Black has mastered. On “Trust Me, I’m a Gameshow Host,” Black and cohost D.L. Hughley try to deceive contestants with obscure or odd facts: One comedian tells the truth, the other lies. “It’s challenging in the sense that you have to balance being funny with actually running the show,” explains Black. “Contestants are trying to win legitimate money and you have to make sure they have the opportunity to do that.”

When he’s not on the small screen, Black is entertaining his nearly 2 million Twitter followers with snarky observations, such as “I find it’s easier to diet after I’ve just eaten a huge meal,” and “Tomorrow I’m going to my wife’s office holiday party. How many of her coworkers can I safely make out with before it affects her job?”

The five-time author is also working on penning a follow-up to his hilarious 2012 memoir, You’re Not Doing It Right: Tales of Marriage, Sex, Death and Other Humiliations. “I’m not sure what it’s about, even though I’m in the middle of writing it,” laughs the father of two. “[The main character] might be me. But that might change. It’s hard.”

Here, the Chicago native returns to his hometown for a laugh-out-loud Sunday:

Watch “Burning Love” Saturdays on E!

Catch up on “Trust Me, I’m a Gameshow Host” online at TBS.com.
Sophia Bush talks joining the force on ‘Chicago P.D.,’ her global charity work and her own brushes with the law.
n the realm of TV crime dramas, it seems like every show is created in accordance with a strict set of laws. Choose a city, give your head detective a wild idiosyncrasy, then watch the drama unfold as they fight clearly contrived crimes. The last step is to pick clever names—if it's a pun, even better.

But when Sophia Bush came across the script of “Chicago P.D.,” she knew she had her hands on something different. “It's a new kind of show,” says Bush, who recalls the entire cast leaning back in awe after they viewed the first three episodes. “[Chicago P.D.] isn't wrapped up in a bow every week. It's not pretty.”

In the “Chicago Fire” spinoff, which premieres Jan. 8 on WMAQ-Channel 5, Bush plays Detective Erin Lindsay, an undercover intelligence officer who lives by a firm set of moral laws. The series centers on Sgt. Hank Voight (played by Jason Beghe), who goes from dirty cop to head of the undercover intelligence unit. Bush's Detective Lindsay shares Voight's by-any-means-necessary views on crime fighting.

“The show's whole existence is based around the notion of, 'How do we take care of people? How do we protect people? And what lengths will we go to do that?'” explains Bush. Her character's unorthodox approach often clashes with Chicago's legal system, creating the show's tense drama. “What I enjoy about playing Erin is that she's not above saying 'I don't care if I'm not supposed to do that. I will stop this person, I will stop this from happening,’ says Bush. “For her, right and wrong is a very case-by-case evaluation. For her, the greater good is the point of everything.”

The same could be said for Bush, 31. Though she rose to fame as wild-child Brooke Davis on the teen drama “One Tree Hill,” the nearly decade-long role wasn't particularly reflective of Bush. Off camera, she's an activist who supports a wide range of charitable causes, such as Pencils of Promise (promoting education) and Invisible Children (which fights human rights atrocities). And when Bush supports a cause, she dives in headfirst, sometimes literally: The actress has gone as far as skydiving to raise money for women's rights group I Am That Girl. “I believe in what's right in the center of my bones,” she says. “It matters to me more than anything.”

When Bush talks, it's sort of like a brush fire: A small spark gets her on the subject of charity work and before long, she's fully ablaze and articulating her views on solving global issues. For example: A simple question about her past roles gets her talking about her study of social history, which she seamlessly integrates into her thoughts on combating gang violence and promoting education. “It comes with great responsibility to have a megaphone,” she says. “Life is very short. We should have conversations that matter. Conversations that service us and that service the world around us.”

That burning passion is part of what drew Bush to “Chicago P.D.” — playing the role of Detective Lindsay allows her to pursue social justice on screen. “I'm a fighter. I will fight to the death for people who matter to me and defend the people who deserve it. To be doing that at work all day feels very appropriate,” she says. On the show, that no-holds-barred approach leads Bush's character into a lot of difficult, morally ambiguous situations. But in real life, Bush's fearless nature is anything but a hindrance — she's warm, approachable and unguarded. “At the end of the day, I'm an open book,” she says.

To that end, she's willing to publicly admit her own mistakes — even when it comes to her love life. “I've dated a couple of the wrong guys, but I've also had great love in my life,” says Bush, who had a five-month marriage to “One Tree Hill” costar Chad Michael Murray in 2005. “I think every woman on Earth has dated the wrong guy at some point.”

Luckily, the actress has come a long way since then. At this point in her life, both professionally and personally, Bush knows exactly who she is and what she wants. “If I were looking at myself objectively, [I'd say] I'm a strong person and that can translate into a strong personality,” she says. “I'll give all the space in the world to fairness, but I don't have any room for intolerance. Similarly to Erin, I have a fierce understanding of right and wrong and I don't tolerate the wrong.” For Bush, that means continuing to live on the right side of history, being proactive about social change and using her fame as a platform to inspire goodness. “I have a lot of passion for society and how we should be treating each other,” she says. She pauses, then shrugs. “I'm a sucker for heroism.”
Lanvin dress, $4,161.116
E. Oak. Lanvin.com
Vintage earrings, $210,
large bracelet, $218, small
bracelet, $158, Lulu's
on the Avenue, 900
N. Michigan, 3rd floor;
Lulusvintagelore.com

MORE ONLINE
For more photos of
Sophia, plus a behind-
the-scenes video
of our shoot, go to
Chicagosplash.com
The whimsical Dusk ball gown is fit for a modern-day princess. But this season, big, billowy gowns are crafted from lighter material — a bride has to be able to dance, after all. "It's a wonderful alternative to the heavy satin ball gown," says Chicago-based designer Miriam Dixon, the brains behind the line Miriam Cecilia. The taffeta bodice boasts a sweetheart neckline, princess seams that flatter figures and frothy layers of hand-draped tulle that create a whimsical look. Even the gown's genesis sounds romantic: "It was inspired by the moment the sun sets, and the fireflies rise from the field and dance amongst the stars," Dixon says. "It has an elegance that makes a bride feel stunning and demure."

($2,000, Miriam Cecilia Showroom, 1223 W. Diversey; Miriamcecilia.com)
A streamlined dress is always in style, and the ethereal Amsale Preston silk gown seems heaven-sent, with an illusion neckline, slim silhouette and plunging back for ultimate grandeur. The soft trumpet shape — not too fitted, not too relaxed — adds to its allure. “This is for the modern-day Grace Kelly or Audrey Hepburn,” says Amanda Bonnell, owner of Belle Vie Bridal Couture. “It’s perfect for the demure bride who wants sleek but feminine.” ($4,300, Belle Vie Bridal Couture, 34 E. Oak, Belleviebridalcouture.com)

From soft pastels to bright hues, colorful dresses are giving classic white a run for its money. With this Douglas Hannant silk crepe satin gown, color is accompanied by a single-shoulder design, sophisticated draping, asymmetric detail and a deep front slit. While this gown is not for the faint of heart (though it also comes in ivory), it suits both brides with refined style and those who want to make a bold impact, says Bonnell. “Brides want to do red because it’s the color of love,” she says. “What’s beautiful about this dress is the one-shoulder strap. It’s romantic without being ostentatious.” ($5,600 at Belle Vie Bridal Couture)

For the bride who loves sparkle and wants to splurge on her big day, this divine Reem Acra Ilona dress may be love at first sight. The mermaid silhouette — one of the season’s top trends — is rendered in rich Italian silk and finished with cap sleeves and a French netting. The freshwater pearl and Swarovski crystal-encrusted embroidery is hand-stitched, which takes three months per gown. “This gown evokes nostalgia. It’s alluring,” Bonnell says. “This is for the girl who has a lot of depth to her.” ($9,900 at Belle Vie Bridal Couture)

Designers have turned their attention upward with flutter sleeves, illusion necklines and other details that make the top of the dress as eye-catching as the skirt. Dixon designed her Nightfall gown for the bride who wants maximum impact, with layers of hand-folded, twisted silk forming an oversized pouf, which flows into the bodice of the draped silk organza gown. “The one-shoulder accent, the petal-like peplum, the fit-and-flare shape — this dress creates a stunning silhouette for the bride who wishes to add major pizazz,” says Dixon. ($2,000 at Miriam Cecilia Showroom)
When Christina Fan traveled to Shanghai in 2011 for business, she had no idea that several months later, she would call the city home. But after the Chicago native and designer was introduced to Apple employee Toby Snuggs by a mutual friend, she couldn't deny the instant chemistry. Two years later, Fan and Snuggs tied the knot surrounded by 150 loved ones at Taiyuan Villa, an historic garden estate in the heart of Shanghai. “We went on walks there when we first met,” says Fan. “It was quite special.” The bride — who owns fur and accessory line C/Fan — created custom, hand-stitched traditional Chinese garb for her bridesmaids, and walked down the aisle draped in a custom C/Fan silver fox shawl, while Snuggs and his groomsmen honored his English roots by donning suits and tailcoats. At the reception, guests gathered at round tables and indulged in Chinese food, including seafood and suckling pig, topped off by a four-tier English wedding fruitcake. The couple shared their first dance to their favorite song, Adele’s “Love Song,” and a pianist from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music played for the remainder of the evening.

Chicago Bears players stepped off the field and onto the philanthropic scene this holiday season. DJ Williams took a mother and her children shopping for gifts Dec. 17, and Major Wright (above) surprised kids and families at Comer Children’s Hospital with a visit Dec. 20.

The stork is en route for Cen- taur Construction CEO Spiro Tsaparas and Splash cover star and eDrop-Off founder Corri McFadden. The two are expecting their first baby in July.

Congratulations to Prudential Rubloff Properties broker Janet Owen, who recently sold the highest-priced single-family residence recorded in the Multiple Listing Service in Lincoln Park for $10 million. This sets a company record as well as a personal best — and to top it off, Owen closed out 2013 with $50 million in closed real estate transactions.

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.
SWEET 'N BUNGALOW

In the Northwest Side's charming bungalows, everything is new — except the prices

BY MADELINE NUSSER

Chicago's cozy brick bungalows and their tidy yards look like something out of an old black-and-white family sitcom. Fast forward to 2013 and the bungalow belt, as enchanting as ever, is having something of a renaissance.

In September and October, Chicago neighborhoods Dunning, Belmont Cragin and Portage Park — which encompass the northwest corner of the city's belt-shaped, bungalow-lined strip — easily ranked among the top 10 city markets for single-family detached home sales, according to data compiled by Chicago Agent Magazine.

Why Northwest Side bungalows? "They're everything people are looking for in a suburb, but they're still downtown," says @properties broker Zak Herman (call 312-835-6444), who's helped fix up foreclosure purchases — some of which still ask for less than their estimated pre-recession values.

One of our favorites, rehabbed with neighborhood developer Kindybabyk Management, Inc., is Herman's delightful four-bedroom listing at 4210 N. Menard. True to Herman's observation, it offers easy access to the city or suburbs by CTA, Metra and highways. The 2,300-square-foot home also boasts new electrical, plumbing, HVAC, roof and garage, and features a slew of fresh finishes, including granite countertops, stainless steel appliances and handsome bathroom tile work. "We don't skimp," Herman says. "We try to go classic style with modern touches." Which makes the ask — $398,900 — that much more appealing.

Urban splendor

Another bungalow to consider is 3017 N. Narragansett — rehabbed by its current owner within the last five years. The four-bedroom home in Belmont Cragin is $325,000, and features hardwood floors throughout plus a finished basement with a bathroom and second kitchen. Suburban-like conveniences include the nearby Brickyard Mall, but the home retains tons of vintage urban character. "I mean, how many new houses have stained-glass-leaded windows?" asks @properties broker Marshall M. Magaro (312-618-0812).

VINTAGE CHARM

Say cheers to your new bungalow with these mid-century Gazelle highballs from Cushion Chicago. Local Etsy dealer Sarah Polster specializes in vintage housewares, furniture and textiles that offer a dose of sleek design and sweet nostalgia. $16; Etsy.com/shop/cushionchicago
The sound of life passing

August Wilson's blues-driven 'Seven Guitars' returns in a new Court Theatre production  

by Thomas Connors

As John Lennon once said, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." And he couldn't have put it more accurately. Take a close look at life, and it seems many meaningful moments occur in the most insignificant places. For the characters in August Wilson's "Seven Guitars," that place is the broken-down backyard of a house in Pittsburgh. Arguably one of the most engaging works in his multi-play epic of American life, Wilson's incisive show - which debuted at the Goodman Theatre in 1995 is now being revived at Court Theatre under the direction of resident artist Ron OJ Parson.

Set in 1948, the musically punctuated play follows a group of friends - four men and three women - who gather after the funeral of their pal, guitarist Floyd "Schoolboy" Barton, a smooth-talking soul whose life was beginning to look up just before it ended. As Wilson remarked at the time of the premiere, "When I started the play, I was trying to examine the relationship the blues musicians had with the black community and their relationship to the white community. In the black community they were revered; in the white community they were vagrants and winos. The social intercourse between men and women in the 1940s was also intriguing to me. So I began to bring those two things together."

The script is in good hands with Parson, who has worked on 22 prior Wilson productions - as both an actor and director. "His plays are love stories," he says. "Not only of man and woman, but love of culture, love of family, love of life and love of spirit."

Reviving the play at Court was a welcome opportunity for Artistic Director Charles Newell, and one that aligned with the theater's mission. "I saw the original production of Wilson's 'Ma Rainey's Black Bottom' on Broadway, and it changed my life," he says. "Here was a writer, working at the highest levels of artistry, telling stories that needed to be told. Since that experience, I have wanted to be a part of a theater community that would support this singular voice."

That voice, notes Parson, speaks equally eloquently to the specific and the universal, and is both grounded in African-American life yet not limited to that experience. "All ethnic groups can find many aspects in them to relate to," he says. "I think August was able to touch the heart and soul of his characters, and thus open up the heart and soul of many writers of today. He was able to 'crossover,' so to speak. He made us realize that a great play is a great play, and great writers are great writers."
IN CHARACTER WITH...

Connie Nielsen

'The Following' star on falling for Kevin Bacon and filming in Chicago

BY LIZ CROKIN

Becoming an actress was a matter of destiny for Connie Nielsen. "My mom was a part-time actress, and my grandfather made films," says the multilingual beauty, who grew up in Denmark. "I've always loved the idea of telling stories about who we are." Nielsen pursued acting in Paris before moving to New York City in the late 90s, when she landed her first big movie role, starring opposite Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves in "The Devil's Advocate." Since then, she's been in more than a dozen films—including the Academy Award-winning "Gladiator" with Russell Crowe—and, most recently, on the Starz drama "Boss," where she played the power-hungry wife of a fictional Chicago mayor.

Now, Nielsen, 48, is taking her considerable talents back to the small screen, joining the cast of "The Following" for the series' second season. On the dark drama—which follows FBI agent Ryan Hardy (Kevin Bacon) as he attempts to capture a cult of serial killers—Nielsen plays art dealer Lily Gray, a new love interest for Ryan. Nielsen says she was attracted to the role immediately because of her own passions. "I love art and I have been around it my whole life. I can sit at a museum and I'm in heaven. My character's family is her everything, and I'm the same way," she says. "I had a lot of things I could draw on naturally."

Role call: "They asked me to maintain my own accent — they liked the international aspect. She has a gallery in Paris and New York; she's bicoastal like me. She meets Kevin's character after an attack in the subway and she's drawn to him... I let my imagination roll free. I build on the character. My character takes on a life of her own. I haven't done a lot of TV — I love the ability to dive into the character and to keep on developing it."

Behind the scenes: "It's a laid-back kind of set. We sit around and joke. We come really well-prepared, and we actually have fun with the characters and enjoy the scene work. We have wonderful producers who make it a great place to go to work. It's funny when they talk about blood and it's so technical. They'll say, 'I think it should be a little bit darker.' We shoot in New York, so we have these extraordinary sets. We've been shooting at the New York Public Library — to be there after closing time is incredible. We'll run down streets in Soho with 3,000 extras."

Chicago connection: "We filmed 'Boss' for more than two years in Chicago — last year and the year before. It was smart and it was wicked. My character was so evil, but also so vulnerable. I had a great time playing her, and I loved shooting in Chicago. I was there during the best time, because it was the end of March and middle of July... The buildings are amazing. I would run along the river and the beachfront."

Watch the second season of "The Following" Jan. 19 on Fox.

Nielsen with co-stars Kevin Bacon, James Purefoy, Valerie Curry and Shawn Ashmore
Go fish

MACKU SIGNATURE COMBINES INNOVATIVE SUSHI WITH FINE-DINING FLOURISHES BY DAVID HAMMOND

Earlier this year, chef Macku Chan closed Vua Sua, a Vietnamese-influenced restaurant he'd opened just six months earlier. But he wasn't leaving for good. In that same space, he soon opened Macku Signature, a sister restaurant to Lincoln Park sushi spot Macku (2239 N. Clybourn), which was named one of the “Best New Restaurants of 2010” by the Chicago Sun-Times and received a recommendation in the Michelin guide.

Macku Signature's white-tablecloth dining room, fresh-cut flowers and candles set it apart from many sushi joints in Chicago, as does the live jazz band it hosts on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. “It gives the room more of a romantic feel,” says Chan. But what draws people most to Macku Signature is Chan’s innovative menu, which includes creative dishes like an amuse bouche of delicately sliced cucumber, sesame and crab, rock

bream with crunchy “crackers” of rolled bass skin ($20) and a white asparagus pudding made with raspberries ($8). Here's what else is happening at Macku Signature:

Chef stats: Macku and his brother Kaze previously joined forces at Kaze Sushi. Macku then worked at Mirai Sushi and Heat before opening the original Macku.

must-try dishes:

Order the carrot soup, a petite cup of pureed carrot, white miso and king crab topped with a delicately crisp rice biscuit ($6). The signature nigiri is a dazzling tour de force of raw fish artistry ($5 average per piece). The lineup includes white tuna drizzled with banana wasabi purée, striped bass layered with foie gras and spicy ponzu and baby squid with spicy tobiko purée and basil. These and other nigiri are torched to add slight warmth and bring the flavors together.

Drink up: Though there's a large wine list, sake is this spot's specialty. The Cherry Bouquet ($30/bottle) is, despite its name, not at all sweet, but fragrant and full with notes of melon and citrus. The Beauty of Akita ($150/bottle) is a super-premium sake brewed from rice polished up to 70 percent, and the Happy Bride ($60/bottle) is a lightly tart varietal that pairs well with the asparagus pudding.

Finger food: “Eat nigiri with your hands,” advises Chan. “That’s why we provide warm towels. Some people use it to wash their faces,” he adds, laughing. “But you should clean your hands and then dip just the fish — not the rice — into soy and wasabi.”

Seafood sculpture: Some fish dishes arrive in a chilled seashell-shaped frosted glass bowl, with fish heads, spines and tails arranged like a surrealistic centerpiece. “Our customers know fish,” says Chan. “I want them to be certain where their nigiri or sashimi came from.”

Above: Natalia Sheath, on sale for $98 at Peruvianconnection.com

Right: Scientific Organics at Mario Tricoci

The latest intelligence from the retail scene

The eyes have it

Turn back time with the help of Mario Tricoci Hair Salons & Day Spa's My Eyes Only event, held Jan. 5-11. Partake in complimentary mini-cellular age-reversal facials and learn how to combat aging with products from skincare brands such as B. Kamins, Glymed and Prevage. As an added bonus, the spot is also offering 25 percent off products Jan. 5-14. 900 N. Michigan. (847) 202-1900, Tricoci.com

To Peru

Peruvian Connection is ringing in the New Year with some seriously slashed prices. Through Jan. 12, take up to 40 percent off the Lincoln Park shop's 2013 spring, summer, fall and holiday selections, which include attire and accessories made from alpaca, wool and silk. 925 W. Armitage, Peruvianconnection.com

Winding down

Celebrate 2014 — and recover from the holidays — with a staycation, courtesy of Water Tower Place. Visit the mall’s second floor and look for the New Year New You sweepsakes display for your chance to win a one-night stay at the Ritz-Carleton Chicago (160 E. Pearson), Broadway in Chicago tickets, a spa package, a Water Tower Place gift card and more. Now through Jan. 28, 835 N. Michigan; Shopwatertower.com

Designer deals

At Roam boutique’s seasonal clearance, shoppers can score up to 75 percent off men’s and women’s pieces from lines including See by Chloe, Daniel Vosovic and Illesteva. Now through the end of January, 1419 N. Wells; roamchicago.com

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If you had a magic wand, what's one thing you would change about your life?

There are times when life doesn't always seem to go as planned — bumps in the road and twists and turns. Most of the time, we can move along without thought and things play out well. Other times, though, we may find ourselves going around and around on the proverbial hamster wheel, wondering how the hell we got there! Sometimes we want things to be different, but we're not sure how to take that step. Whether it's a new job, a new relationship or a new attitude, making the most out of life takes a certain amount of thought and effort. It takes change — and change can't happen when we're busy fighting the past. It happens when we place our energy and focus on the future.

Sometimes asking ourselves a simple, non-threatening question can provide clarity and direction. The idea of a magic wand rids our brain of obstacles. It's typical for many of us to entertain thoughts of "what if" or "I can't because." When we force ourselves to think without boundaries or obstacles, brainstorming occurs, dreams take place and new directions take form.

In other words, life plans start to evolve. If I had a magic wand, I would make my son Evan seizure-free. If you want something, go get it! The only thing stopping you is YOU! Read on to see what other people want to change in their lives...

Christine McClain: I'd have a self-cleaning house!

Vanessa Santos: To be kinder in all situations.

Jerry Hauser: To be the best person I could be and perhaps a better love life wouldn't hurt either...lol

Jessica Matthews: Free myself of cancer

Tanya Cooper @laytan75: I wouldn't change a thing! So grateful for everything! Our mistakes make us stronger people.

Tony @angiejoh75: I would change not having to work all the time so I could spend more quality time with my kids!

Tweet your response to @JennyMcCarthy and @Suntimes_Splash.

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- Renee, age 53

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Wedding belle

Local bridal wear designer Elda De La Rosa customizes a wonderful wedding day

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“Turn up the volume and rock out to your favorite artists while putting on your wedding dress.”

“Sexy, silky and shiny hair is a must for your wedding day.”

“Make a statement with a lip stain from YSL. New color collections are available at any Neiman Marcus beauty counter.”

“Save money on beautiful flowers and add color to your decor.”

> Save money on beautiful flowers and add color to your decor.

> “Add more sparkle to the finishing touches with a piece from Swarovski.”

> “My designs are for the classic, opulent woman. She’s not afraid to wear fashion with a confident yet feminine style.”

1. Peninsula Hotel Chicago: ballroom rental, price upon request, 108 E. Superior; Peninsula.com
2. iHome: LED color-changing stereo system, $98.97, Best Buy locations citywide; Bestbuy.com
3. Zazu Salon: Express Keratin treatment, $150; color and gloss, $100, 46 E. Superior; Zazusalons.com
4. Helene Lucille: Amethyst drops in rose gold, $2,350, 1 E. Delaware, Suite 304; HeleneLucille.com
5. Swarovski: Vona brooch, $125, 540 N. Michigan; Swarovski.com
6. Yves Saint Laurent: Rouge Pur Couture Vernis à Lèvres glossy stain, $34, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan; Ysl.com/us
7. Mariano’s Fresh Market: flowers begin at $25, Mariano’s locations citywide; Marianos.com
8. Elda De La Rosa Couture: wedding gowns starting at $1,800, 17 E. Pearson; (312) 836-1041
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Please drink responsibly.
BMW replaces 3-Series with all-new '4'

BY ANDY MIKONIS
For Sun-Times Media

The 4-Series is the new name for what used to be the BMW 3-Series two-door coupes and convertibles. It's not just a new name but an all-new car for 2014.

The 4-Series is offered as four-cylinder 428i, or the subject of this test, the six-cylinder 435i, in this case equipped with BMW's all-wheel drive system called xDrive.

The coupe's lines are perfectly proportioned. It's an inch longer than the 3-Series. The wheelbase was increased two inches, it is wider, and the roof is lower. A small boomerang shape behind the front wheel is a functional air vent to reduce drag over the wheelwell. In M Sport trim, it also had some extra aerodynamic accoutrements. Nineteen-inch run-flat tires ride on alloy wheels with five twin spokes, set off by black Sport brake calipers.

Controls were in easy reach. The switchgear felt as precise as you would expect from BMW. HVAC controls are no-nonsense and centrally placed. A knob and a few buttons conveniently located on the center console control the interface for the infotainment system. Updated for 2014, I found it quick-reacting and more intuitive than some, with sharp graphics and an ultra-contemporary look. Instruments are clean looking in typical BMW fashion. A head-up display projects your speed on the windshield, as well as other available info depending on equipment level.

Accommodations are comfortable with a wide array of front seat adjustments including lumbar support, backrest width, and thigh support. Seat heat buttons are on either side of the center stack and offer three levels of power. When you shut the long door, a small mechanical arm called a "valet" extends to put the seat belt in easy reach. A large handle on top of the seat back makes for quick access to the rear seats, which are dished out into two comfy spots.

40/20/40 split fold down seat back

BMW's inline six-cylinder engines are legendary and the 435i xDrive did not disappoint. Three hundred horsepower is only part of the story. Inline sixes are inherently perfectly balanced and offer a lot of torque, in this case peak torque of 295 lb-ft from 1,200 to 5,000 rpm. Power is delivered in silky smooth fashion. At five seconds, the standard eight-speed automatic is faster to 60 miles per hour than the manual transmission; for the purists the six-speed manual is available as a no-cost option. The eight-speed's close ratios make for unobtrusive automatic operation, and you can select your own gear if you wish. The jury is still out on the shifter, which dispenses with the classic PRNDL pattern.

The 435i xDrive was also equipped to save some gas with automatic start/stop that shuts the engine off when you are standing still. I was pleased to note it operates. It returned a decent 19.3 mpg in combined, mostly city driving, much of it in bitter cold where the stop/start function doesn't operate.

Having all-wheel drive limits you from some performance suspension options, but the 435i xDrive carries on the fine handling traditions of the 3- and 4-Series.
### Grossinger's Winter Sell-Off!

**$0 Down on Over 300 Pre-Driven Cars!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>VIN</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2005</strong></td>
<td><strong>Buick Lucerne</strong></td>
<td>#B30012A</td>
<td>$8,990*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2006</strong></td>
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<td>#X1045</td>
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<td>#X2055</td>
<td>$219/Mo or $15,990*</td>
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<td><strong>Audi A7</strong></td>
<td>#X4005</td>
<td>$26,990*</td>
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<td><strong>Genesis G80</strong></td>
<td>#X5005</td>
<td>$29,990*</td>
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*Prices good for 2 days from date of publication. Pictures are for illustration purposes only. See dealer for details.*

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## New Year Sell-Off

**2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Bonus Cash</th>
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<td>New 2014 Jeep</td>
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<tr>
<td>PATRIOT SPORT</td>
<td>$10,995</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRAND CHEROKEE</td>
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<td>AVENGER</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHEROKEE</td>
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<td>DART</td>
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<td>DURANGO 5X1 4X4</td>
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Choosing the right camp for your child

BY NIKI PAPAK

Every child can benefit from camp. That's right. This statement might sound bold, but camp directors everywhere witness the power of camp and the transformative effect it can have on a child's happiness, self-esteem and character.

The key to ensuring that your child gains the extraordinary benefits of a camp experience is to select a camp that is the right fit for your child and for your family. The best camps provide the perfect combination of nurture, adventure, fun, friendship and safety so that kids can flourish and grow while having the time of their lives.

Many types of programs are available, and learning about what each program has to offer will allow you to make the best decision for your child. Take time to explore local traditional day camps, residential camps, park district camps, school camps and specialty camps before making your camp decision. Once you identify the type of camp program that you are looking for, visit the websites of various camps and request that information is sent to your home. You should schedule a time to tour any camp you are seriously considering to see the facilities, meet the directors and talk with them in person.

These are some of the important questions to ask a prospective camp.

1. Is the camp accredited by the American Camp Association? The ACA has specific standards applicable for day and residential camps.
2. What training does the staff receive on safety, supervision, allergies, counseling, problem solving and other issues unique to working with young children?
3. Is there a registered nurse on duty at all times?
4. Is door-to-door transportation offered? Is this included in the cost of camp?
5. Is lunch served or do campers bring their own sack lunch? Are snacks and drinks provided?
6. Are some facilities, such as dining halls or multipurpose areas, air-conditioned? Are some pavilions covered in case of inclement weather?
7. Does the camp offer daily swimming? Are there swimming lessons or is it simply recreational swimming? Is the swimming done on or off site? Is the pool heated? Do swim instructors or counselors teach lessons? What is the ratio of campers to instructors in the pool?
8. What is the ratio of campers to staff? How many professional, adult leadership are at camp to supervise the campers and staff?
9. What range of activities are offered? Is instruction in sports, arts and adventure activities offered? What type of experience do the instructors have?
10. How easy is it to communicate with camp about your child on a daily basis?

By carefully considering all available options, you can ensure that your child gains the transformative benefits of a summer spent at camp.
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The Best of Rick Telander: A collection of the Sun-Times columnist's greatest hits

This collection of columns highlights some of Telander's best work in his nearly 20 years at the Sun-Times, from his eight-part series on Murray Park, to lighter pieces, such as his column on a Cubs fan who suffered through more than 100 years of futility.
Eddy 'The Chief' Clearwater celebrates 79th at Space

By Myrna Petlicki

Eddy "The Chief" Clearwater knows how to party. To celebrate his 79th birthday, the blues legend will make his entrance wearing a colorful headdress and record a CD live during a concert Jan. 10 at Space in Evanston.

The Skokie resident wears that headdress and that "The Chief" moniker as a tribute to his grandmother Ida, a Choctaw Indian who raised him.

This is the third year that Clearwater has celebrated his birthday at Space. "I'll do some songs and give some reference to the meaning of the songs," he said. The concert will feature some of Clearwater's older numbers, including "I Wouldn't Lay My Guitar Down" and "Came Up the Hard Way," about the musician's experiences as a farmer in the South.

New numbers will include, "Party Hard in My Backyard" and "Common Sense." "You gotta make sense, you gotta make common sense," Clearwater joked. "It ain't rocket science."

The songwriter said that his numbers are often influenced by things people say. One song was inspired by something Clearwater's doctor told him following a heart operation a few years ago.

Clearwater recalled his doctor saying, "You've been out of surgery for a little over a week. You're almost ready to be released. As a matter of fact, you're in very good condition considering the shape you were in." The minute he returned home, Clearwater wrote the number, "I'm in Very Good Condition Considering the Shape I'm in."

Popular around the world, Clearwater toured Ecuador, Denmark, Argentina and Canada in October and November.

Clearwater has invited another acclaimed musician to join him at his birthday party.

"My special guest is Ronnie Baker Brooks," Clearwater revealed. "He's going to be on stage with me. We hope to have him a real good time."

The blues guitarist and singer is the son of the legendary blues figure Lonnie Brooks.

The musicians that most influenced Clearwater are Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry, B.B. King and Louis Jordan. It's likely that many of the younger blues musicians today are inspired by Clearwater. He certainly has earned the respect of 20-year-old Wilmette resident Will Jacobs, whose group, the Will Jacobs Band, will open the concert.

The New Trier High School graduate, who is studying at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, offers high praise for "The Chief."

"Eddy is a legend," Jacobs said. "He's somebody I look up to as a musician. Even to say, 'I got to play with Eddy Clearwater,' that's something on its own."

The young musician first opened for Clearwater three years ago. "I had a blast," Jacobs recalled.

For the birthday celebration, Jacobs is bringing a four-piece band, but he can't reveal what they will be playing - because he doesn't know yet. "I do prepare," he laughed. "But those don't come to me until the day before or the day of. And sometimes I don't even follow that list that I make because it's all about reading a crowd and what you think people are enjoying. But I know I'm going to be playing some of my new stuff that's going to be coming out on my new album. All I know is it's going to be real good."

That will certainly be true of the entire concert, given Clearwater's desire to please audiences.

His birthday wish is, "To stay healthy and continue performing in front of live audiences. I'll do my best to make people feel good and make them happy."
Brahms and more at 2014 Winter Chamber fest

BY DOROTHY ANDRIES
For Sun-Times Media

The first Winter Chamber Music Festival, held in Northwestern University's Pick-Staiger Concert Hall annually since 1997, marked the centennial of the death of Johannes Brahms. This year, several of Brahms' most beloved chamber works reappear.

The Miro Quartet, winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, opens the 2014 series Friday evening, Jan. 10, playing the composer's Piano Quintet, with pianist Shai Wosner. That piece was played during the finale of the inaugural Winter Chamber Music Festival with Daniel Barenboim, then music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, at the piano and on violin, Blair Milton, the CSO violinist and NU faculty member who established the festival.

Also, this year's penultimate concert Jan. 24 will be all-Brahms, with violinist Shmuel Ashkenasi, cellist Marc Johnson and pianist Andrea Swan playing the composer's Violin Sonata No. 1, Cello Sonata No. 1 and Piano Trio No. 1.

"Shmuel and I played in the very first festival as members of the Vermeer Quartet," explained Johnson. "We were quartet-in-residence at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, so we saw each other five or six days a week and developed a kind of telepathy. Andrea is my go-to-pianist when I'm in the Chicago area, and she knows what I am going to do musically before I do. So we are all very comfortable with each other."

Milton has put the spotlight this winter on rising as well as established quartets. "We'll have some younger groups this year," he added, mentioning the Parker Quartet on Sunday afternoon, Jan. 12, which won a 2011 Grammy for their disc of the Ligeti String Quartets nos. 1 & 2. "Next fall they will become quartet-in-residence at Harvard University," he added.

Last spring Milton engaged the Dover Quartet for Sunday afternoon, Jan. 19, and in September it was named winner of the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition. "They didn't just win the top prize, they won all the prizes in their category," Milton explained. "It was a clean sweep."

The Miro Quartet has played at the Festival in the past. "We all met at Oberlin Conservatory," said cellist Joshua Gindele, "and started playing together as part of our course work. The four of us took chamber music very seriously, so we decided to try some competitions and we kept winning."

"Every year the festival reserves one program for faculty members from NU's Bienen School of Music. This year they will play on Jan. 17 works by Schumann and Mozart, as well as pieces by 20th-century American composer Irving Fine and German composers Max Reger and Ferdinand Thieriot, whose music spanned the late 19th and early 20th century."

Oboist Jelena Dirks is playing on the Jan. 17 concert as a guest artist. She is a faculty member at DePaul University, and as a member of the Chicago Philharmonic, she's played in the Joffrey Ballet's "The Nutcracker." In September, she joins the St. Louis Symphony as principal oboe.

"I'm delighted to be playing in Pick-Staiger," she said. "It's a beautiful place to be and it's an opportunity to perform chamber music with such wonderful players."
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**MOBILE REVIEW**

As a celebration of courage in the face of impossible odds, "Lone Survivor" certainly gets the job done in a bare-bones sort of way.

It would have been so much more powerful, though, if it also had given us the chance to know more about the men it celebrates.

Based on a memoir by Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell, "Lone Survivor" is the story of a disastrous 2005 mission in Afghanistan, in which Luttrell and three others SEALs were ordered to locate Taliban leader Ahmad Shah in advance of a larger strike force. Luttrell (Mark Wahlberg) and the other members of the team (Taylor Kitsch, Emile Hirsch and Ben Foster) quickly locate Shah in a remote village, but the mission is compromised when they are discovered by goat herders. Faced with the choice of killing them, tying them up (and leaving them to freeze or be eaten by wolves) or releasing them, they decide to set them free — and are almost immediately surrounded by 200 of Shah's Taliban fighters.

Make no mistake, that spectacular battle is what "Lone Survivor" the movie is all about, as the four soldiers make a heroic, and extremely punishing, stand against impossible odds, each of them repeatedly wounded and the whole team taking bone-breaking tumbles down a craggy mountainside. Director Peter Berg ("Battleship," "Hancock," "The Kingdom") knows what he's doing when it comes to staging action scenes and this one's an adrenaline-pumper for sure. But a little less combat and a little more characterization could have provided much greater dramatic impact.

Berg (who also adapted the screenplay) seems much more interested in the idea of what it takes to be a SEAL than the character of the four individuals on screen. After a strange, documentary-like opening segment that shows us SEAL training at its most grueling, he takes a little time to introduce us to Luttrell and company at Bagram Air Force Base, but only to the extent of establishing their relationships with girlfriends at home and showing their good-natured hazing of a new arrival. Beyond that, with their near-identical beards and jungle fatigues, it's actually hard to tell them apart at times.

That's deep psychological revelation, though, compared to the treatment of the Taliban fighters, who are quickly established as anonymous, two-dimensional villains — as easily picked off as zombies in a point-and-shoot video game.

The SEALs are much harder to kill though, of course, and when they die, they die heroically, or at least ultra-dramatically, complete with soul-stirring music. It's just a shame there's more emphasis on how they died than who they were.
FAMILY FRIENDLY

BY MYRNA PETLICKI
For Sun-Times Media

Visit with a wolf at the Niles Library

Seeing a wolf and other animals up close will undoubtedly be one of the highlights for kids when John Basile, president of Big Run Wolf Ranch, visits the Niles Public Library, 6960 Oakton St., 2-3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 12. But Basile will be sharing an important message about protecting animals.

That's because Big Run Wolf Ranch is a federally licensed facility dedicated to educating people about wildlife and conservation. Many of the animals that live at the ranch were rescued by Basile, who has worked with large North American predators for 25 years.

Ranch residents include a black bear (who won't be coming to the library), cougar, groundhog, skunk, raccoon, porcupine and more. Basile will bring several animals along. Kids will learn a little about each of the animals and, most importantly, that all of these creatures deserve our respect.

Pick up free tickets starting at 1:30 p.m. that day at the Youth Services Desk. For details, call (847) 663-1234 or go to www.nileslibrary.org.

COMPETE AND EAT

Families will play themed bingo and have a breakfast treat during Alice in Wonderland Breakfast Bingo, 9:30-10:45 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 11 at Niles Public Library, 6960 Oakton St. Seating is limited so arrive early.

For details, call (847) 663-1234 or go to www.nileslibrary.org.

THE SHADOW KNOWS

Shadow puppetry will show how light plays a part in everyday life when SeaBeast Puppetry presents, “The History of Light,” 7-7:45 p.m. Friday, Jan. 24 at the Book Market, Hangar One, Glen Town Center, 2651 Navy Blvd., Glenview. Registration begins Friday, Jan. 10.

For details, call (847) 729-7500 or go to www.glenviewpl.org.

A REAL HOOT

Owls fly without making a sound. Find out how at Owl Pellet Discovery, 6-7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 15 at Wildwood Nature Center, 529 Forestview Ave., Park Ridge. You and your children will search outside for owls and the remains of their dinners and then analyze the owl “hair balls” inside. Cost is $15 per family.

For details, call (847) 692-3570 or go to www.prparks.org.
An easier, speedier way
to eat more veggies

BY SARA MOULTON

I t's the same thing every year. We overindulge during the holidays, then make solemn (and quickly abandoned) promises to eat healthier and shed pounds in the new year.

So here's a sane and simple resolution that will help you achieve both goals in a single stroke - eat more vegetables.

It's no secret that almost all vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories. Most also are good sources of dietary fiber, potassium, folate and vitamins A and C. If you did nothing more than pile your plate with vegetables, add a small portion of lean protein, and ramp up your daily exercise a bit, you'd probably find all that extra holiday baggage dropping away without having to count calories.

The only problem with eating more vegetables is that it can take a significant amount of time to prep them, and even more time to cook them. Messing with root vegetables is often a marathon. Beets require 45 minutes to steam or an hour to bake. Carrots or parsnips also can be pretty time-consuming. You can cut the cooking time if you first slice them into smaller pieces, but not all of us are aces with a knife.

This is why I love my food processor. If you use it with the grating disk attachment - as I do for this trio of recipes - you're home free. Those marathon beets! You can grate and saute them in minutes. Same for the carrots and parsnips. Best of all, having cooked up your grated veggies in a bit of oil, you have maximized their flavor, as opposed to steaming or boiling them, which dilutes it.

As an added psychological benefit - at least for me - there's something crudely satisfying about the raw power of the grater. After a bad day at the office or a rough afternoon with the kids, it's a pure pleasure to noisily grind down those vegetables chunk by chunk.

Enhance the finished product however you want, with nuts, your favorite spices or herbs, or a squeeze of citrus or other acid. Just be sure to put a mix of colors on the plate; for the most part, the brighter the color, the better the nutrition.

And on a night when you are truly squeezed for time, you don't even have to cook your shredded veggies. They're equally delicious raw. Just toss them with lemon juice, extra-virgin olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Have fun with your vegetables. You'll be delighted with what happens when you move them to the center of your plate.

BY SARA MOULTON

SHREDDED PARSNIPS
With walnuts
Servings: 4

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 pound parsnips, peeled and grated using the large grating disk of a food processor
Kosher salt

1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes (or to taste)

Fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup unsalted peanuts, toasted and chopped

In a large skillet over medium heat the oil. Add the parsnips and a pinch of salt; then cook, stirring often, for 3 minutes. Add the red pepper flakes and cook, stirring often, until the parsnips are tender and good. Stir in the peanuts, raisins, and cranberries, then cook, covered, until tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in a bit of lime juice and the scallions and peanuts.

Nutrition information per serving:
160 calories; 50 calories from fat; 7 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 9 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 5 g protein; 210 mg sodium.

SHREDDED BEETS WITH BALSAMIC
Servings: 4

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 pound beets, peeled and grated using the small grating disk of a food processor
Kosher salt

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup dried cherries

In a large skillet over medium heat the oil. Add the beets and a pinch of salt; then cook, stirring often, until the beets are tender and good. Stir in the vinegar and cherries, then cook, covered, until tender, about 2 minutes more.

Nutrition information per serving:
160 calories; 50 calories from fat; 7 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 9 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 5 g protein; 210 mg sodium.

With help from a food processor, dishes of shredded beets, parsnips
and spicy carrots can be made in 15
minutes apiece.

AP PHOTOS

AP PHOTOS
Travel Film
2 p.m.: Enjoy a family-friendly movie traveling through a different part of the world. Call 847-825-3123 to find out what movie will be playing this week. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge.

Do the Downton: Documentary and Talk: The Secrets of Chatsworth House
7 p.m.: Explore one of the most famous historic homes of Britain with the documentary "The Secrets of Chatsworth House" and with first-hand accounts. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. For more information, call 847-663-1234.

Biblioop Dance Party
10 a.m.: Family and friends are invited to boogie down at the library. OJ Miss and a minimum of two food or drink purchases. Zanies Comedy Night Club Rosemont, 5437 Park Place, Rosemont.

Friday Fun Time
10 a.m.: Infant through school-age children and their caregivers are invited for an hour of stories, music and play. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. For more information, call 847-677-5277.

Film: 'Elysium'
1 p.m.: A screening of the 2013 sci-fi film, starring Matt Damon and Jude Foster, about a man who tries to bring equality to a polarized, futuristic world. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. For more information, call 847-677-5277.

Family Movie Night: 'Despicable Me 2'
7 p.m.: A screening of the 2013 animated movie about a reformed villain who is recruited to help stop a powerful new super criminal. 98 minutes. Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie. Call 847-324-3149.

'Earth Tales From Around the World'

Biblioop Dance Party
10 a.m.: Family and friends are invited to boogie down at the library. OJ Miss and a minimum of two food or drink purchases. Zanies Comedy Night Club Rosemont, 5437 Park Place, Rosemont.

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Annual Chamber Meeting
8 a.m.: The Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce hosts a breakfast to celebrate the installment of the 2014 board, featuring a swearing-in ceremony led by Mayor David Schmidt. All members are welcome to attend. Registration required. Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce, 720 Garden St., Park Ridge. Call 847-925-3212.

Feature Film: 'The Way Way Back'
2 p.m.: Watch the 2013 film about a shy teenager who has a difficult time fitting in while on vacation with his mom and her boyfriend. 104 minutes. A second showing begins at 7 p.m. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. For more information, call 847-825-3123.

Uptown, Evanston

World Movie: 'Winter in Wartime'
7 p.m.: A screening of the 2008 foreign film about a boy who becomes involved in the Dutch resistance when he tries to help a wounded British soldier. 103 minutes. Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie.
FRIDAY, JAN. 17

Andy Woodhull
8 p.m.: The comedian, who made his debut on Comedy Central's "Live at Gotham," performs stand-up. Additional performance at 9:30 p.m. Must be 18 or older to attend. Admission is $22 and a minimum of two food or drink purchases. Zanies Comedy Night Club Rosemont, 5437 Park Place, Rosemont.

SATURDAY, JAN. 18

Skokie Madden Bowl VI
Neon: Compete with Madden NFL 13 players of all ages for a gift certificate to GameStop. Snacks, drinks and prizes are provided. Registration required. Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie. Call 847-673-3733.

SUNDAY, JAN. 19

Jim Green in Concert
2 p.m.: Green, performs songs in a humorous musical review that includes popular tunes, blues, country western, folk and Americana styles. Call 847-929-5101 or visit www.msgl.org for more information. Morton Grove Public Library, 6440 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.

Live@Lincolnwood: Mark Valenti, Classical Piano
2 p.m.: Valenti gives a performance. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. For more information, call 847-377-5277.

Tony Lucca with Dan Godlin
7:30 p.m.: The singer-songwriter, who is a former member of the Mickey Mouse Club and second runner-up on the second season of NBC's reality talent show "The Voice," performs with the pop rock musician. Evanston SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston. Call 847-492-8860. $15-$27.

THURSDAY, JAN. 23

Captive Free Concert
6:30 p.m.: Listen to an uplifting performance. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 5850 N. Canfield Ave., Chicago.

THURSDAY, JAN. 16

Russ Williamson
8 p.m.: The actor, who has appeared in NBC's "Chicago Fire," performs a stand-up routine. Must be 21 or older to attend. Admission is $22 and a minimum of two food or drink purchases. Zanies Comedy Night Club Rosemont, 5437 Park Place, Rosemont.

with a screening of the 1977 animated film about the beloved bear and his friends in the Hundred Acre Wood. 74 minutes. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights.
the half-hour firefight that's the centerpiece. Peter Berg ("Battleship") knows action, and enemy lines by Taliban fighters. Director other three other SEALs (Wahlberg, Kitsch, Afghanistan during which Lutrell and the is the story of a disastrous 2005 mission memoir by Navy SEAL Marcus Lutrell, this about the men it celebrates. Based on a greater tribute, though, if we learned moñkind of way. It would have been a much against impossible odds, "Lone Survivor" Emile Hirsch, Ben Foster and pervasive language LONE SURVIVOR directed the fantasy adventure. Stars: Mark Wahlberg, Taylor Kitsch, Emile Hirsch, Ben Foster As a celebration of courage while battling against impossible odds, "Lone Survivor" certainly gets the job done in a bare bones kind of way. It would have been a much greater tribute, though, if we learned more about the men it celebrates. Based on a memoir by Navy SEAL Marcus Lutrell, this is the story of a disastrous 2005 mission in Afghanistan during which Lutrell and the other three other SEALs (Wahlberg, Kitsch, Hirsch and Foster) were attacked behind enemy lines by Taliban fighters. Director Peter Berg ("Battleship") knows action, and the half-hour firefight that's the centerpiece of "Survivor" is an adrenaline-pumper. But a little less combat and a little more characterization might have had greater dramatic impact.

THE LEGEND OF HERCULES

** 1/2
Rated R for strong bloody war violence and pervasive language
Stars: Kellan Lutz, Gaia Weiss, Scott Adkins
After being betrayed by his royal stepfather (Adkins) and sold into slavery the legendary hero (Lutz) must fight his way back to his kingdom. Renny Harlin ("Die Hard Z") directed the fantasy adventure.

LONE SURVIVOR

** 1/2
Rated R for strong bloody war violence and pervasive language
Stars: Mark Wahlberg, Taylor Kitsch, Emile Hirsch, Ben Foster
As a celebration of courage while battling against impossible odds, "Lone Survivor" certainly gets the job done in a bare bones kind of way. It would have been a much greater tribute, though, if we learned more about the men it celebrates. Based on a memoir by Navy SEAL Marcus Lutrell, this is the story of a disastrous 2005 mission in Afghanistan during which Lutrell and the other three other SEALs (Wahlberg, Kitsch, Hirsch and Foster) were attacked behind enemy lines by Taliban fighters. Director Peter Berg ("Battleship") knows action, and the half-hour firefight that's the centerpiece of "Survivor" is an adrenaline-pumper. But a little less combat and a little more characterization might have had greater dramatic impact.

THE PAST

Rated PG-13 for mature thematic material and brief strong language
Stars: Berenice Bejo, Ali Mosaffa, Tahar Rahim, Pauline Burlet
Subtle, complex and remarkably real — painfully real at times — Iranian writer/director Asghar Farhadi's follow-up to his Oscar-winning "A Separation" shows just how emotionally disastrous a marriage gone wrong can be. There are many complications and more than one guilty secret in store when estranged Iranian husband Ahmad (Mosaffa) returns to Paris at the request of his wife Marie (Bejo, of "The Artist") to finalize their divorce and Farhadi very, very slowly suggests why they parted. Ultimately, though, we're expected to fill in the details on our own.

STILL PLAYING

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

★★★ 1/2
Rated R for language including sexual references, and for drug material
Stars: Meryl Streep, Chris Cooper, Julia Roberts, Sam Shepard, Margo Martindale
There's not much hope for any family reunion occasioned by a suicide, but the prospects are particularly bleak for the aggressively unhappy Weston clan — featuring three generations of Oklahoma women who can barely stand the sight of each other. It's a real family-trauma horror show, but the amazing thing is how much soothing humor the get-together generates in this all-star adaptation of Chicago playwright Tracy Letts' Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning play, without sacrificing an iota of dramatic comp. Streep gives a predictably powerhouse performance as the cancer-stricken, pain pill-addicted, dragon-lady matriarch Vi, who turns abuse into an art form.

PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: THE MARKED ONES

Rated R for pervasive language, some violence, graphic nudity and some drug use
Stars: Molly Ephraim, Andrew Jacobs, Crystal Santos
The same demon that possessed the last couple of protagonists in the series targets a young Californian man (Jacobs). Christopher Landon (son of TV legend Michael Landon) wrote and directed this installment in the horror franchise.

HER

★★★★
Rated R for language, sexual content and brief graphic nudity
Stars: Joaquin Phoenix, Amy Adams, Scarlett Johansson, Kristen Wiig
A remarkable thing about this extraordinary film from director Spike Jonze ("Being John Malkovich," "Adaptation") is how perfectly natural it begins to seem that a man (Phoenix) could fall deeply in love with the voice of his computer's operating system (Johansson). And vice-versa. Jonze's subtle, brilliantly detailed story (which ruminates about the nature of existence and the definition of true love while it explores our increasing obsession with virtual reality) drags a bit toward the end, but it's never less than fascinating. You may never look at a movie romance in quite the same way ever again.
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Showtimes

(From left) Meryl Streep, Julianne Nicholson and Juliette Lewis star in "August: Osage County."

Movie times are effective Friday, Jan. 10, through Thursday, Jan. 16. Please note that theater schedules are subject to change.

CENTURY 12 EVANSTON/
CINEARTS 6 AND XD
1715 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.

PICKWICK THEATRE
5 S. Prospect Ave.
Park Ridge
(847) 604-2234
www.pickwicktheatre.com
Contact theater for showtimes.

ROSEMON'T 18
9701 Bryn Mawr Ave.
Rosemont
(847) 447-1030
www.muvico.com
Contact theater for titles and showtimes.

Her (R)
Fri, Sat 12:35-3:40-6:45-9:45-12:40 a.m.; Sun 12:35-9:45-6:45-9:45

The Legend of Hercules in 3-D (PG-13)
Fri, Sat 5:00-7:45-10:15-12:45 a.m.; Sun 5:10-7:45-10:15

The Legend of Hercules (PG-13)
Fri-Sun 12:30-2:35

Leen Survivor (R)
Fri, Sat 1:05-4:05-7:10-12:50 a.m.; Sun 1:05-4:05-7:10

ROSEMONT PREMIER
9701 Bryn Mawr Ave.
Rosemont
(847) 447-1030
www.muvico.com
Contact theater for showtimes.

REGAL GARDENS STADIUM 1-6
4999 Old Orchard Center
Skokie
(847) 673-4037
www.regmovies.com
Contact theater for showtimes.

REGAL GARDENS 7-13
4999 Old Orchard Center
Skokie
(847) 674-0184
www.regmovies.com
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<td><strong>Central United Methodist Church</strong></td>
<td><strong>Devar Emet Messianic Synagogue</strong></td>
<td><strong>KOL EMETH</strong></td>
<td><strong>Beth Hillel Congregation</strong></td>
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<td>8237 Kenton Ave., Skokie</td>
<td>7800 Niles Ave., Skokie</td>
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<td><strong>Bnai Emunah</strong></td>
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<td>(847) 673-1311 <a href="http://www.skokiecentralumc.org">www.skokiecentralumc.org</a></td>
<td>847-674-9146 <a href="http://www.devaremets.org">www.devaremets.org</a></td>
<td>Rabbi Barry Schechter</td>
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<td>Worship: Sundays at 10:30 AM</td>
<td>Join us for Shabbat Services at 10am</td>
<td>5130 Touhy, Skokie</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bhcbe.org">www.bhcbe.org</a></td>
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<td>&quot;A Community of Jews who believe and teach that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Promised Jewish Messiah&quot;</td>
<td>(1 block west of Eden's)</td>
<td>Kabbalat Shabbat Fridays 6:00 PM</td>
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<td>Shabbat Service - Saturdays 9:15 AM</td>
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<td><strong>St. Timothy Campus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Carter-Westminster United Presbyterian Church</strong></td>
<td><strong>SKOKIE CENTRAL TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jr. Congregation, Tot Shabbat, Torah Time 10:30 AM</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9000 Kildare Ave. Skokie</td>
<td>4950 W. Pratt Ave., Skokie</td>
<td>Traditional Service - Mixed Seating</td>
<td>Followed by Kiddush</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday Worship</strong></td>
<td>WE'RE GROWING &amp; MAKING CHANGES!!</td>
<td>Services led by:</td>
<td>Daily Minyan AM and PM</td>
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<td>9 am:</td>
<td>9:30 a.m. Praise and Celebration Service with Praise Band</td>
<td>Rabbi Dr. Michael Gottesman</td>
<td>Rabbi Annie Tucker</td>
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<td>Noon:</td>
<td>Adult Sunday School (All ages)</td>
<td>Minyons: Mon. &amp; Thurs. 8:00 AM</td>
<td>Cantor Pavel Roytman</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Timothy's Lutheran</td>
<td>10:45 am Traditional Service with Choir</td>
<td>Kabbalat Shabbos-Sept. to June at candle lighting time</td>
<td>Rabbi Michael Cohen, Ed. Dir.</td>
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<td>(Adult Classes in English &amp; Assyrian)</td>
<td>Saturday 9:00 AM Followed by Kiddush</td>
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<td>Fridays 7:00-9:30 pm</td>
<td>Sunday 8:30 AM Followed by breakfast</td>
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<td>Assyrian Fellowship</td>
<td>Sanctuary handicapped accessible!</td>
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<td>Tuesday Evenings 7:15-8:45 pm</td>
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<td>New Lyfe Youth Group (for Jr &amp; Sr High Youth)</td>
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<td>Monthly 7:30-9:30 pm-cW Café with Open Microphone:</td>
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<td>Guitar, Singing, Poetry, Comedy</td>
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<td><strong>Evanshire Presbyterian Church</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ezra-Habonim, the Niles Township Jewish Congregation</strong></td>
<td><strong>KEHILLAT SHALOM</strong></td>
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<td>Every Sunday at 11 AM</td>
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<td>Wmtemplechicag.com</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wmtemplechicag.com">www.wmtemplechicag.com</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.ehnt.org">www.ehnt.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:pastorcranford@gmail.com">pastorcranford@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Weekly Shabbat Services - Fri 8PM, Koleinu 7PM &amp; Sat 9:30AM</td>
<td>Sunday Service: 11:30 AM</td>
<td>(847) 966-1095</td>
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<td>Minyan Mon-Thurs 7PM, Sat &amp; Sun 6PM</td>
<td>Sunday School: 10 AM</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wmtemplechicag.com">www.wmtemplechicag.com</a></td>
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<td>Monthly Shabbat dinners at 6:30PM</td>
<td>Bible Study: Wednesday, 7 PM</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pastorcranford@gmail.com">pastorcranford@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Religious School Tues &amp; Sat; Rabbi Jeffrey Weil</td>
<td>Intercessory Prayer: Tuesday &amp; Friday, 12 PM</td>
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<td>Rabbi Neil Brlet, Emeritus</td>
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<td>Sunday Service: 11:30 AM</td>
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General Information
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Death Notice Page

A paid death notice may be ordered to appear in the Pioneer Press when funeral arrangements are made, and must be submitted in writing. Information about charges for death notices may be obtained from area funeral directors or by calling (847) 998-3400. A 24-hour fax service is offered at (847) 486-6836 or death notices may be emailed to deathnotices@pioneerlocal.com.

An in memoriam or card of thanks may be placed using the same information above.

The deadline for placing a death notice, in memoriam or card of thanks, is Monday at 5:00 pm. Photos must be submitted by Monday at 2:00pm.

The death notice department is staffed from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Saturday and 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Sunday.

Family and friends may visit our website and sign a guest book at Pioneerlocal.com.

Death Notices

Stoneberg, Edward R.
Age 56, of Skokie, suddenly. Beloved son of Docia "Jody" and the late Donald; dear brother of Gary (Denise), Jim (Ellen), Pam (John Norman) Johnson, Randy (Cheryl), and the late Michael (Kathy); loving uncle of Carolyn, Greg, Jennifer, Marie, Michael, Rachel, Connor, Jimmy Jr., Jessica, Patrick, LIndy, Phillip, Donny, and Megan; cherished great-uncle of eleven; fond nephew of Marilyn Farber and June Groves.

Visitation Friday, January 10, 2014, from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., at HABEN Funeral Home & Crematory, 8057 Niles Center Rd., Skokie. Funeral Service and Interment will be private. Funeral info: (847) 673-6111 or www.habenhineral.com.
HOROSCOPES: JANUARY 15 – JANUARY 21

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Although you're getting kudos and other positive reactions to your suggestions, don't let the cheers drown out some valid criticisms.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Following your keen Bovine intuition pays off, as you not only reassess the suggestions some people are putting in front of you, but also their agendas for doing so.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You continue on a high-enthusiasm cycle as that new project you've assumed takes shape. You're also buoyed by the anticipation of receiving some good news.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Your eagerness to immerse yourself in your new assignment is understandable. But be careful that you don't forget to take care of that personal situation.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) This is a good time to learn a new skill that could give a clever Cat an edge in the upcoming competition for workplace opportunities. Enjoy the arts this weekend.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) You could risk creating an impasse if you insist on expecting more from others than they're prepared to give. Showing flexibility could prevent a stalemate.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Although you can weigh all factors of a dispute to find a solution for others, you need the skilled input of someone who's taken on the role of a running mate.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) This is a good time for Sagittarians to start making travel plans while you still can select from a wide menu of choices and deals.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Like your zodiacal sign,ocus set on your purpose and you won't allow obstacles in your path to keep you from reaching your goal.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Let your head dominate your heart as you consider the risks that might be involved in agreeing to be a friend's co-signer or backup in a financial matter.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Resolve to close the door and let your voice mail take your phone calls while you finish up a task before the end-of-week deadline.
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  - Oak Lawn, IL 60453
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  - Plainfield, IL 60586
  - 855-298-3761

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  - 855-299-1448

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  - Downers Grove, IL 60515
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  - 855-250-4119

**SUZUKI**
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  - 725 W. Roosevelt Road
  - Lombard, IL 60148
  - 877-870-3816

**TOYOTA**
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  - 725 W. Roosevelt Road
  - Lombard, IL 60148
  - 877-870-3816

**VOLKSWAGEN**
- Bill Jacobs Volkswagen
  - 2211 Aurora Ave.
  - Naperville, IL 60540
  - 855-665-3348

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**CAR STORY**

» We want to tell your car story. Email it to kevin.bargnes@rapports.com.

**Jim Boros' 1932 Ford**
Submitted by Car Owner

Over the past 40 years, I have owned a number of pre-war Packards and Cadillacs and at one time was the director of the Greater Illinois Region of the Classic Car Club of America.

I have always loved old cars, but I missed the simplicity of the American Hot Rod.

After owning a 1969 Ferrari for more than 10 years, I told my wife I was going to sell it and buy a hot rod, which I did. I had a semicustom '41 Ford (with a '48 Mercury engine, with 3 twos, Isky cam and all the goodies) in high school, but this time around I wanted to find a '32 Ford roadster or cabriolet — a roadster doesn't have side windows and a cabriolet does.

After looking for more than a year at approximately 30 hot rods of this vintage, I found the right one. She is a '32 Ford cabriolet, now with power windows, a small block Chevy and all the right stuff. I acquired it about 2 1/2 years ago and have had a lot of work done to it since, mostly refurbishing the engine because it originally was built around 1990 by a man down in North Carolina who eventually sold it to a friend, so I am the third owner since it was made into a hot rod.

The most enjoyable parts of the car hobby, whether it is a pre-war, "classic" Packard or just a hot rod Ford, are seeing people smile and give you a thumbs up when you drive by or simply taking the car out for a spin on a nice sunny day. Out of all the old cars I have owned over the years, this little Ford is the most fun.
**Imports 64 percent of sales**

When purchasing cars in the month of September, Niles residents opted to purchase domestic vehicles 36 percent of the time. Purchases of domestic vehicles by residents totaled 90 of the overall 251 auto sales in the month.

Ford topped the domestic sales chart with 38 sales of the 90 total sales of domestic cars to Niles residents. The breakdown of the 38 total Ford sales was 22 used and 16 new over the course of the month.

Residents of Niles went with imports 64 percent of the time in September, as 161 of the overall 251 auto sales in the month came from this category. Toyota was the most popular import purchased in the month, accounting for 39 of the total 161 import sales. A total of 21 preowned vehicles and 18 new vehicles comprise the overall total of 39 Toyota purchases in September.

The most popular import bought used in the month of September was Toyota, with its 21 sales, followed by Nissan (18) and Honda (10). Popular imports bought new by Niles residents included Toyota, with 18 sales, followed by Nissan (nine) and Honda (six).

On the other hand, the most popular domestic make purchased used was Ford, with a total of 22 sales, followed by Chevrolet (eight) and Jeep (four).

Gulf Mill Ford sold more domestic vehicles to residents of Niles than any other car dealership in the month of September. Fields Jeep and Jennings Chevrolet rounded out the top three list of top dealers of domestic cars and trucks to Niles residents in the month. In the category of import sales, Bredemann Toyota led the way in September, followed by Star Nissan and O'Hare Hyundai.
Looking for fun? Check out our Top Five picks for the weekend's best bets.

I’LL BET YOU DIDN’T KNOW...
Brought To You By
JENNINGS CHEVROLET

Minnesota running back Adrian Peterson was a worthy recipient of the 2012 NFL MVP award with 2,097 yards rushing, second most in league history. But it wasn’t just the yards; it was also the consistency. In the process, Peterson joined just three other running backs in NFL history who averaged at least 100 yards per game and at least 5.7 yards per carry in the same season. All three are in the Hall of Fame. Any guesses? The three others are Jim Brown, O.J. Simpson and Barry Sanders.

San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick took the NFL by storm and the 49ers to the Super Bowl in 2012, but on reflection it should have come as little surprise — at least if you judge by his accomplishments in college. He took over the starting job in the middle of his freshman year at the University of Nevada, and by the time he graduated, Kaepernick had become the only quarterback in NCAA history to pass for more than 10,000 yards and rush for more than 4,000 yards in his career.

Ever heard of Kate Spotz? Probably not, but she just might be the greatest endurance athlete of all time. Since 2005, Spotz has — get ready — become the youngest person to row across the Atlantic Ocean (in 70 days), bicycled across the United States — twice — became the first person ever to swim the entire 325-mile length of the Allegheny River, ran a 62-mile ultra-marathon in Australia, and in her spare time finished numerous marathons and triathlons. It’s tiring just to read what she’s done.
MAINE SOUTH

Abtahi invests in self, earns scholarship

Park Ridge Country Club caddie was the recipient of the 2012 BMW Hole-In-One Scholarship

BY MATT HARNESS
mharness@pioneerlocal.com, @harnesspreps

Park Ridge Country Club caddie was the recipient of the 2012 BMW Hole-In-One Scholarship.

The first thing Mark Abtahi bought with the money was a bike.

After starting his job as a caddie at Park Ridge Country Club, Abtahi saved up enough to get himself transportation to work from his home in Niles. Buy purchasing the bike, Abtahi was investing in himself.

According to his mother, Monad Abtahi, her youngest son always has made smart decisions, even as a middle-schooler.

Mark Abtahi's time in the caddie program is now paying for his college education. The 2013 Maine South graduate was named an Evans Scholar by the Western Golf Association. The honor earned him four years of free tuition and a housing grant to the University of Illinois, where the 18-year-old is a freshman studying civil engineering.

Mark Abtahi was the recipient of the 2012 BMW Hole-In-One Scholarship, which was made possible thanks to Steve Stricker's ace on the par-3 sixth hole at the 2012 BMW Championship at Crooked Stick Golf Club in Carmel, Ind. Stricker played golf at Illinois and is one of the best players in the world.

I probably still would have gone to Illinois, but I would have been paying off student-loan debts for a long, long time," said Mark Abtahi, who met Stricker at the 2013 John Deere Classic in Silvis. "This gave me an opportunity to go to school and not have to worry about the money for all of the years."

Ali and Monad Abtahi came to the U.S. from the Middle East in the 1980s to attend college and they met in Chicago. Ali Abtahi, who is from Iran, and Monad Abtahi, who is from Iraq, both valued their education and emphasized its importance to their three children.

"All of the boys are very smart and work hard," said Monad Abtahi, who's oldest son, Matthew Abtahi, earned a degree from the University of Illinois. "As a parent, you do your best to get your kids to learn."

Mark Abtahi had heard about the Evans Scholars Fund from other caddies around the golf course. In 2008, while he was in middle school, both of his parents lost their jobs in the IT industry. Monad Abtahi, who later worked as a substitute teacher, said the family was smart about saving its money, and she and her husband were able to provide for their sons while they looked for full-time employment.

But Mark Abtahi said the scholarship became that much more of a goal for him. An Evans Scholar is required to have two years of caddie experience, a B-plus academic record after the junior year of high school, demonstrate a need for financial assistance and display strong character.

"I was aware of it, and it was in the back of my mind," he said. "It was something I started reaching for because I knew it would benefit our family. It really motivated me to work hard."

Once Mark Abtahi got to Maine South, he got going on his quest for the scholarship. He carried a straight-A average after his freshman semester while also playing football for the Hawks. He also added tennis and Spanish Club to his résumé that year.

During his sophomore year, Mark Abtahi took his first Advanced Placement course and joined the student council, where he was the organization's treasurer as a junior and vice president as a senior. Mark Abtahi, who graduated from Maine South with an A-plus average, also was involved in Model United Nations, Constitution Team and Speech Team. It was no surprise that his senior superlative was most involved in his class.

"I needed to separate myself from the others, so I did whatever I could to make myself the best candidate for the Evans Scholarship that I could," Mark Abtahi said.

On the suggestion of a friend, Andrew Abtahi, Mark Abtahi's older brother, started caddying at Park Ridge Country Club before attending high school at Maine South. When Mark Abtahi was 13 years old, he followed Andrew Abtahi into the caddie program. Neither one had any experience with the sport.

Andrew Abtahi said he remembers Mark Abtahi was the one waking him up at dawn most days to get an early start on the day.

"We would race our bikes to the golf course," said Andrew Abtahi, the second of three boys in the Abtahi family and a senior at Northwestern.

Andrew Abtahi said he loved having Mark Abtahi around the club, and his younger brother was a favorite of the members from the start.

"I consider him my best friend," Andrew Abtahi said. "It was great to have someone there to talk to, to hang out with while you wait for a loop."

Two months ago at The Peninsula hotel in downtown Chicago, Mark Abtahi told his story in front of more than 300 people as part of the WGA's third annual Green Coat Gala fundraiser.

That night, Mark Abtahi got to meet Jack Nicklaus and listen to the winner of 18 major golf tournaments share his story about his relationship with caddies.

"The scholarship means the world to me, and I am grateful for it," Mark Abtahi said of the Nov. 6 black-tie event. "I realized there are a bunch of others with similar stories."

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I hope this will enable me to continue on the path of success."
MAINE EAST

Hard work helps Pokorski in the pool

Blue Demons swimmer striving to break school records in his final season

BY DAN SHALIN
For Sun-Times Media, @danshalin

Maine East's Ricky Pokorski joined the boys swim team as a freshman as a way to stay in shape between the soccer and track seasons.

He had never swum competitively in his life.

Pokorski's arrival coincided with the hiring of coach Peter Przekota, the man everyone calls "coach Pete." Pokorski said the youthful coach helped transform him from a competitive swimming novice into one of the more talented swimmers in recent Blue Demons history.

Now a senior, Pokorski is hoping to break school records in three individual events: the 200-yard freestyle, the 500 free and the 100 backstroke. The 200 and 500 free records date back over 30 years.

Pokorski even hopes to get himself in contention for state-meet qualification.

"Coach Pete saw my potential," Pokorski said. "[Przekota] is so much fun to work with. He's younger than other coaches and he's got all this energy. It comes out in practice and motivates us to practice harder."

Early on, Przekota encouraged Pokorski to play water polo in the spring a sport he also coaches, and to do club swimming in the summer and fall. Pokorski needed to take advantage of every opportunity in order to close the gap between him and swimmers from other schools.

"It's hard knowing [many opponents] have been swimming since they were 4 or 5," Pokorski said.

"But it's something you have to put out of your head and just swim for yourself," Pokorski said his breakthrough came during the sectional his sophomore year when he broke 2:00 in the 200 free for the first time.

"I realized this is something I'm actually good at and I decided to focus on swimming and water polo," he said.

Pokorski has flourished since becoming a year-round swimmer.

Last year, he and Mike Babula, Johnny Ho and Kevin Tom set a school record in the 200 free relay.

Now, Pokorski is looking to make his mark in a few individual events.

"He came in with very little experience, but [his success is] a testament to what hard work can do," the 28-year-old Przekota said. "He committed to the offseason and rarely missed a practice. That effort made him the elite swimmer he is."

"He's not going to swim in college. But we'd like to see him ride off into the sunset, break some of those records and get his name on the board. All-conference is real realistic. State is going to be tougher, but every year he's had really good time drops at the end of the year."

Chris Childs holds the school records in the 200 free (1:49.90) and 500 free (4:58.90), both of which he set in 1981. Pokorski's best times in those events as of Dec. 30, 2013, are 1:52.21 and 5:26.53. The record in the 100 backstroke is held by Jerzy Wojcik (56.82) and was set in 1994. Pokorski was a few seconds from that as of Dec. 30 at 1:01.00.

Reaching state will require even bigger time drops.

"I think if I focus more on state, because state is faster than the [school] records, then I should be able to get the records," he said.

Babula, a fellow senior, said he's been impressed by his classmate's ascent.

"When freshman year started, Ricky and I weren't the fastest swimmers. We were learning how to swim," Babula said. "But we just got faster and faster. Ricky has totally changed. He's really fast in the water. In practice, he just puts his heart and soul into it."

Przekota said both swimmers are shining examples of what can be achieved through hard work and commitment.

“They were part of my first true class and are the rocks in my foundation," Przekota said. "It's cool to see those two take off and grow the way they have. They have lofty goals [for the rest of the season]. A lot of our kids come in with limited swimming backgrounds. They have to start from the ground up and have a lot of catching up to do. But those two [Pokorski and Babula] did it."
Fitness first for Wolves’ Reinemann

**Reinemann clearly was tired as he worked on his fitness. He put his hands on his knees after most of his sprints, but he kept pushing himself.**

“I’d like [my conditioning] to be a little better, but it’s good enough right now,” he said. “It’s going to get better. I just go until I’m tired — until I’m really tired — and then get some sit-ups and push-ups in.”

The Lewis-Hoegen match went full six minutes. Near the conclusion, Reinemann did 50 sit-ups at a rapid pace. He then rolled over and did 35 push-ups.

Reinemann, 18-4 through Monday, climbed to his feet and finished his conditioning with four sprints. An outside linebacker on the football team, Reinemann went full speed across the wrestling room as if he was back chasing running backs for the Wolves, but then he was done.

He wasn’t the only Niles West wrestler to run sprints after competing against the Vikings. The Wolves wrestled at the Waubonsie Valley Quad on Saturday, and coach Anthony Genovesi said many of his wrestlers were using post-match conditioning to prepare for it.

At the quad, Reinemann wrestled St. Charles East senior Isaiah Vela, who’s ranked No. 1 in Class 3A by Illinoismatmen.com, and Waubonsie Valley senior Jimmy Davis, who’s ranked No. 6. Reinemann lost 9-7 in overtime to Vela, and dropped a 3-1 decision to Davis, but the way he pushed himself on Friday figures to help him later in the season.

“He had a good run today,” Genovesi said. “We’ve just got to keep getting him in better shape and getting his cardio up to gear up for the state series.”

**recently came through in one of Niles North’s biggest dual meets of the year.**

Niles North and Niles West were tied at 24-24 Friday with two matches remaining, including Edmond’s match with Niles West junior Rafael Awad.

Neither Edmond nor Awad were able to score in the first period, but Edmond took down Awad in the second.

The senior used his size, quickness and leverage to send Awad to the mat. Edmond was unable to complete the two-point take-down, however, because he had too much momentum. Edmond, in an instance which showed he still needs to work on some of his moves, toppled over Awad. Awad quickly took advantage of the opening to seize a 2-0 lead with a reversal.

Edmond kept his composure with the pressure mounting. He quickly scored on an escape to cut Awad’s advantage in half, and then he thwarted a shot by Awad near the end of the second to take a 2-2 lead. Edmond extended his lead to 5-2 with a reversal in the third period and then, seconds later, he was able to role Awad over for the match-clinching pin.

Edmond’s triumph gave the Vikings a 30-24 lead, and junior Hermez Abraham ended the meet with a pin of Niles West’s Sam Hermez Abraham. Niles North’s biggest dual meets of the season because he needed surgery to fix a torn meniscus in his left knee in December 2012.

Edmond returned this season, and both he and Niles North wrestling coach Chris Albandia said the senior heavyweight dealt with predictable rust.

“I kind of lost some matches I shouldn’t have, but I started picking it up as the year went on, and hopefully I’m not at my full potential yet,” Edmond said after he improved to 16-6 on Friday. “Hopefully later on, down the road, I’ll be as strong as I [can be].”

Edmond, who was a sectional alternate as a sophomore, added: “I’m better than I was two years ago. That’s definitely something I’m happy with.”

Edmond said the rust from missing his junior campaign has shown itself in two different ways. First, he has squandered some winnable matches, like the championship match of the Rus Erb Invitational at Glenbrook South on Dec. 21, 2013. Edmond went to overtime against Waubonsia senior heavyweight Max Mattaliano, but lost by a 4-2 decision partly because he thought the match was entering the third period when sudden-death overtime began.

Another challenge Edmond faced when he returned was trying to regain his skills and moves on the mat, he said.

Albandia added that Edmond, a three-year starter on the Vikings’ football team, also has had to grow accustomed to having the lights squarely on him when he’s on the mat. Wrestling is more of an individual sport than football, Albandia explained, but the senior
Barzowski cradling opponents into submission

Sophomore worked hard in offseason, finished second at Preseason Nationals

BY MATT HARNESS
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NILES — When asked what makes Jake Barzowski successful on the mat, Notre Dame wrestling coach Augie Genovesi didn’t hesitate one second.


That was undeniable in Barzowski’s final match Friday at 132 pounds, a victory by technical fall against Maine South sophomore Jake Taalman. The win helped the Dons earn a 38-26 victory over the Hawks.

“I always try to go to the cradle first,” Barzowski said. “That’s my go-to move, and I use it as much as I can.”

Barzowski attacked and scored two points within the first 10 seconds of the match. He led 11-0 after the first period and concluded the match early in the second.

Almost all of Barzowski’s points — four near-falls — came courtesy of the cradle.

“He has such strong hands and a great grip,” Genovesi said. “There are other things that he can do, but that is working right now.

“If it’s not broken, why fix it?”

Barzowski, who improved to 24-8 after two wins Friday, said he doesn’t remember who first taught him the cradle, a crippling move that traps an opponent’s leg and head in an uncomfortably tight position.

“If I can get them on their back, I will score points,” said Barzowski, who finished fourth at 126 pounds at the Class 3A Lake Park Dual Team Sectional in December.

After bowing out in the first round of last year’s Class 3A individual sectional tournament at 120 pounds, Barzowski, who won 28 matches as a freshman, dedicated himself to his craft in the offseason. He said he wrestled more than 50 matches in addition to lifting weights and sparring at Notre Dame during the spring, summer and fall.

The highlight was taking second place at the USA Wrestling/Cliff Keen Preseason Nationals in Cedar Falls, Iowa, at 126 pounds in the ninth- and 10th-grade division. That accomplishment validated all of his hard work, and he said it prepared him for his second season with the Dons.

“That helped a lot,” he said. “It was good competition, and you want to wrestle as many good kids as you can.

“It made me better.”

Barzowski brothers help Dons go undefeated at home quad

NILES — The Barzowski brothers punctuated the Notre Dame wrestling team’s undefeated day with consecutive wins against rival Maine South on Friday.

Freshman Josh Barzowski eked out a 3-2 victory at 126 pounds, and sophomore Jake Barzowski followed with a win by technical fall at 132 pounds to earn the Dons a 38-26 win over the Hawks in Notre Dame’s third and final match of the home quadrangular.

“I knew Josh could pull it off,” Jake Barzowski said. “That was a big win for him and for us.”

Maine South led early, but Notre Dame pulled ahead with two pins and a forfeit to lead 27-16 through nine matches. The Hawks got within 27-26 with three to go before the Dons won the remaining bouts.

Jake Barzowski, who is ranked No. 6 at 126 pounds in the Class 3A individual rankings on the Illinois Matmen website, scored a decisive decision over sophomore Jake Taalman.

He went up 11-0 after the first period with three near-falls on his signature move before closing out Taalman early in the second with a reversal and another near-fall.

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“It made me better.”

In this Jan. 25, 2013, photo, Notre Dame’s Jake Barzowski (right) wrestles St. Patrick’s Alex Kamberis in the 120-pound weight class during the ESCC wrestling championships at Notre Dame in Niles.
Home sweep
Notre Dame goes 3-0 at its own quad
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Notre Dame's Narco Orlandi looks for back points against Ottawa's Chaz Shorev as during their 170-pound match at Friday's quad hosted by Notre Dame in Niles. | BRIAN D'OMOHONEY FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA
High School Cube News, Sun-Times Media's new high school sports website, launched this week. It's the latest evolution in Chicago area prep sports coverage. High School Cube News will integrate all the highlights and live games from HighSchoolCube.com with the comprehensive coverage formerly provided by Season Pass.

High School Cube News features school and team pages for every area high school, with live game coverage and highlights from participating schools. Now, all 32 Pioneer Press weekly publications have their very own High School Cube News sites with a hyper-local focus on your favorite teams.

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