Cross-cultural love story

Maine East musical features an affair that bridges class divides | PAGE 6
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Abandoned dog rescued from empty apartment

Niles police are searching for the owner of the dog, which was allegedly abandoned and left to starve inside a vacant apartment.

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Maine East High School students Matthew Dumay, left, Mariana Veneri, and John Collantes perform in "Once on this Island" at the school in Park Ridge Monday afternoon. KEVIN TANAHUOM SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Maine East High School students rehearse "Once on this Island" Monday afternoon at the school in Park Ridge. KEVIN TANAHUOM SUN-TIMES MEDIA

The pit orchestra is under the direction of Pamela Holt, Julie Crossen is vocal director, technical director is Jessica Buczek, lighting designer is Joanna Szewczuk and Kim Morris is costume designer.
Niles residents riled by pitch to regulate trees on private property

BY NATASHA WASINSKI
For Sun-Times Media | @natwaz

A tree ordinance that some claim tramples constitutional rights is headed back to the Niles Village Board.

Designed to preserve the town’s urban forest, the proposal was more than a year in the making when it went before trustees for discussion in January.

Niles is establishing the tree ordinance — which outlines rules for planting and removing trees on public and private property — in order to enhance the village’s tree canopy and to apply for Tree City USA status with the Arbor Day Foundation.

But officials delayed taking action and sent the ordinance to the Environmental Practices Committee for another review after hearing residents’ concerns.

Niles native Bob Zalesny said he chose to live in the village in part because the government doesn’t interfere with his private affairs.

“When I grew up, everything stopped at the sidewalk,” he said.

Since landscaping is considered an art, regulating what people plant on their personal properties violates the First Amendment, added Niles resident Joe Walsh.

Residents have been voicing worry that with the ordinance changes, the village would have a say in what trees they plant and cut down on their property.

“It’s more important to me that I live in a free city than a ‘Tree City,’” Zalesny said, referencing Niles’ pursuit of the prestigious Tree City designation.

Niles Trustee Rosemary Pałeki, who chairs the committee charged with drafting the new rules, said the ordinance’s merits are being misinterpreted.

She said the intention of the ordinance is to regulate trees on a village-wide basis, not house-by-house, since together they make up the green canopy over Niles.

In other words, as the saying goes, you can’t see the forest for the trees.

“We can’t say ‘every place but my property,’” Pałeki said. “If there is a problem, those roots are connected.”

She noted claims that only the village’s appointed forester could remove discarded trees are inaccurate.

“As a rule, the village is not coming onto private property,” she said. “We have enough to do.”

Rather, the ordinance requires people obtain a tree removal permit before performing the work. The application is free, but does require an on-site inspection by the village forester.

In the event of an emergency, residents can bypass the process without repercussions as long as they report the incident to the village within 48 hours.

Pałeki said the forester, a licensed arborist, would also be available to counsel residents as a free service.

Other highlights of the ordinance include extending rules against harming trees on public lands to private property; authorizing the village to prune plants on private property that interfere with access, visibility and the proper spread of sunlight; and requiring permits to plant new trees.

Penalties for not following the guidelines range from $50 to $1,500.

Palicki pointed out Niles’ neighbors already have protective tree ordinances in place.

“It’s not as if no one has done this,” she said. “We’re trying to be proactive.”

In Park Ridge, for example, homeowners can only remove trees under certain circumstances — such as if the tree is dead, diseased, or at risk of dying or becoming hazardous in the next three years. Trees with a diameter of 10 inches or more must be replaced.

Lincolnwood requires a $66 permit to remove and replace any tree eight inches or greater in diameter on private property. Permit fees — and, in some cases, replanting requirements — are waived for hazardous trees.

Park Ridge, Morton Grove, Skokie and Lincolnwood all currently have Tree City U.S.A. status.

Achieving the designation is one of Niles’ goals under the village’s 2030 Plan.

“I’m just hoping we can get the people of Niles to recognize the importance of this before it’s too late,” Palicki said.
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20TH STATE REP DISTRICT

State rep candidate: Focus on jobs, keep tax hike

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON

Khan, 28, is running as a Democrat in the 20th State House District which includes portions of Park Ridge, Niles, unincorporated Maine Township, Norridge, Rosemont, Schiller Park and Chicago. A 2003 graduate of Maine South High School, Khan holds a degree in accounting and is currently pursuing a law degree at Loyola University Chicago. He still lives in Park Ridge and has established his campaign office in Uptown at 428 Touhy Ave.

Khan's focus in the race has been on job creation and education. He believes the state must do more to build educational opportunities in digital technology and encourage college students to start their own businesses. Khan will face Democratic opponent Jerry Acciari, of Niles, in the March 18 primary, but Acciari has been largely absent from the race. Unlike Khan, who has raised more than $61,000 in campaign contributions, Acciari has not established an election fund and does not appear to have actively campaigned. Attempts by Pioneer Press to contact him at his Niles home have been unsuccessful.

Khan said he has not had any interaction with Acciari since the race began — though he did initially receive Acciari's support to run. "The only thing I know about my opponent is that he signed my petition to put me on the ballot in November," Khan told Pioneer Press.

The winner of the March 18 primary will face Republican incumbent Mike McAuliffe in November. McAuliffe is running opposed in the Republican primary after his only opponent was knocked off the ballot in December.

The following are questions Khan answered for Pioneer Press.

Q: Why should voters elect you in this primary election?
A: I'm running for State Representative for one main reason: to make the creation and retention of good paying jobs the state's top priority. And I am determined to make a difference. I will work hard to build bridges with all stakeholders to ensure that our schools are outstanding, our economic opportunities are expanding and our public trust in state government is improving.

Q: What are the top three challenges for the state?
A: Jobs. Jobs. Jobs. Most every other change the people of Illinois face stems from the fact that we are still deep in a jobs crisis and a never-ending stream of tax breaks for wealthy corporations will not solve our unemployment problem. Addressing our jobs crisis starts by realizing that the impact of technology on competitiveness is moving faster than we can anticipate.

The first thing we need to do is prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. That starts with putting technical education at the core of everything we do. At the same time, our fiscal strategy must make long-term sense. This means our focus on supporting start-up companies must be unequivocal because today's start-ups will create tomorrow's jobs. I support restructuring our tax incentive framework so that we promote, encourage and reward start-up companies in Illinois, with the strongest incentives reserved for companies creating good-paying jobs in Illinois' fast growing tech economy. Lastly, making sure that active workers and those searching for jobs have access to long-term job training through our community college network is imperative. Creating new job training programs for high-tech and advanced manufacturing jobs will open up economic opportunities for many and lead to a well-trained workforce.

Q: What are your thoughts on the current pension reform deal?
A: I feel it was unconstitutional because Article XIll, Section 5 of the 1970 Illinois Constitution states that "membership in any pension or retirement system of the state... shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired." Moreover, working-class people have held up their end of the agreement. Reducing their benefits to address the failures of politicians over the past several decades is not right. This issue is now with the courts.

Q: What capital projects would you try to secure state funding for in the 20th House District?
A: It is imperative that the 20th District substantially promote entrepreneurship. Start-up accelerators and small business incubator infrastructure development is critical to realizing this objective. My focus would be to secure public funding so that anybody in our district with good ideas and a willingness to work hard has an avenue for success. This will give everybody an opportunity to access start-up capital, receive mentorship from business leaders and interact with other entrepreneurs to learn and develop industry best practices.

Q: Illinois passed a medical marijuana law. Would you support a law regulating recreational use of marijuana like Colorado and Washington?
A: Illinois needs to focus on successfully implementing the new medical marijuana law, first and foremost. At the same time, we should have a close eye on Colorado and Washington, so that if the day does come where recreational marijuana passes federally or in Illinois, we will have the advantage of not repeating those states' mistakes, while being able to build upon their successes.

Q: The income-tax increase of 2011 is set to expire in 2015. Would you vote to keep it in place or let it expire?
A: Illinois has a "not-enough-revenue" problem. This problem goes hand in hand with our unemployment problem. Focusing our economic policy on building more businesses in Illinois, from the ground up, will broaden our revenue base and give us an opportunity to reduce tax rates in the future. However, all reports at the moment suggest that reducing the tax rate will leave a multi-billion dollar hole in our budget. If this is the case, I would vote to extend the temporary personal and corporate income tax because not doing so would mean drastic cuts to critical services provided to Illinois residents, especially working class families.

Q: Why should voters elect you in this primary election?
A: I'm running for State Representative for one main reason: to make the creation and retention of good paying jobs the state's top priority. And I am determined to make a difference. I will work hard to build bridges with all stakeholders to ensure that our schools are outstanding, our economic opportunities are expanding and our public trust in state government is improving.
NILES

Dog abandoned in apartment by evicted residents

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON
johnson@pioneerlocal.com

Niles police are searching for the owner of a dog that was allegedly abandoned and left to starve inside a vacant apartment.

The dog, described as a westiepoo mix, was discovered on Feb. 22 inside an apartment on the 9000 block of Terrace Drive, north of Golf and Dee roads, after a maintenance worker received an anonymous tip through the building’s hotline that an animal had been left unattended, Niles police said.

Though malnourished and suffering from infected eyes and skin lesions, the dog, who is being called Bruno, is recovering at an area animal hospital, said Niles Police Sgt. Robert Tornabene.

“He’s still being cared for, but he is starting to bounce back,” Tornabene said. “He is very friendly and at this point he’s expected to recover.”

According to police, the maintenance worker found the apartment’s door ajar and a distressed dog yelping inside the feces- and urine-covered residence. The animal did not appear to have food or water and had what the worker described as “mushrooms” growing from its eye area, police said.

The man told police he removed the obstruction from the animal’s eyes by rubbing warm water on its face.

Police noted that a bag of dog food had been left on a counter, but the dog was unable to reach it.

According to police, several eviction notices had been mailed to the tenant, a 40-year-old man, and he had until Dec. 31, 2013 to vacate the apartment.

How long the dog was left without food or water is not entirely known, Tornabene said. He did say that when found, the dog weighed only 8 pounds, though a normal weight would be closer to 25 pounds.

Investigators are still looking for the last occupants of the apartment to determine to whom the dog belonged, Tornabene said.

“There were multiple people living there,” he said. “If identified, the owner could, at the very least, face charges of animal neglect.”

A technician at the hospital where the dog has been recovering has expressed interest in adopting Bruno, according to Tornabene.

Niles Animal Control Officer Peter Babikan also said Bruno’s condition is improving.

“The dog is doing much better now that he has received medical attention and is eating on a regular basis,” he said.
CRIME BRIEFS

DUI
Isaac Frelihman, 58, of Park Ridge, was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol after he was arrested at the T.J. Maxx store on the 6100 block of Dempster Street. Police said Frelihman was stopped for a traffic violation and later failed sobriety tests. A court date was scheduled for March 31.

THEFT
Joseph Amabile, 47, of Chicago, was charged with theft after his arrest at the T.J. Maxx store on the 7200 block of Dempster Street in Morton Grove Feb. 24. Police said Amabile left the store without paying for beauty supplies valued at $25. A court date is scheduled for March 19.

NILES

RETAIL THEFT
Susan Turkowski, 56, of 3140 N. Olcott Ave., Chicago, was charged with retail theft on Feb. 23 after she allegedly stole five DVDs, valued at $49, from Meijer, 9000 Golf Road. She has an April 16 court date.

Joy Marc Querol, 29, of 820 McIn- tosh Court, Prospect Heights, was charged with retail theft on Feb. 24 after he allegedly stole five DVDs, valued at $49, from Meijer, 9000 Golf Road. He has an April 16 court date.

LEAVING THE SCENE
Nina Bakhtina, 51, of 9316 Oleander Ave., Morton Grove, was charged with leaving the scene of an accident and failure to give aid and information on Feb. 23 after she allegedly struck three parked cars in the parking lot of Golf Mill Shopping Center. Police said the vehicles belonged to Golf Mill Ford. Bakhtina has a March II court date.

MORTON GROVE

DRUGS
Jose Roja, 21, of Chicago, was charged with possession of cannabis and driving without a valid license after he was arrested on the 7600 block of Dempster Street Feb. 13. Police said Roja was stopped for a traffic violation, and officers later found .5 grams of cannabis after searching his vehicle. A court date is scheduled for March 31.

A 26-year-old Niles woman told police that on the night of Jan. 23 she saw a man expose himself to her while he was masturbating inside his vehicle, which was parked in a lot on the 9700 block of Doe Road. The woman did not call police until she saw the man again, this time inside his car at Golf Mill Shopping Center, police said.

A 62-year-old Chicago woman told police she believes two packages were stolen from her doorstep on the night of Jan. 23. Police said the suspect was in jail and he needed to bail him out, police said.

A 62-year-old Chicago woman told police her bag of just-purchased jewelry, valued at $500, was stolen on Feb. 22 after she left it behind on a bench for about 10 minutes at Golf Mill Shopping Center. A witness reported seeing a man in his mid-30s take the bag and walk in the direction of Sears; police said.

A woman is suspected of stuffing her jacket with cosmetics at CVS, 9540 N. Milwaukee Ave., on Feb. 23 and then leaving the store without paying.

A woman's wallet was stolen on Feb. 25 after she left it behind on a food court counter at Golf Mill Shopping Center.

Property Damage
A male wearing a white coat and black pants was seen leaving graffiti on the wall of a store on the 800 block of Civic Center Drive on Feb. 23.

MORTON GROVE

THEFT
$500 worth of scrap metal was reported stolen from the site of the former Dominick's store on the 6900 block of Dempster Street in Morton Grove Feb. 19.

$300 in cash was reported stolen from L.A. Fitness on the 6800 block of Dempster Street in Morton Grove Feb. 20. Police said the victim had locked the cash and other belongings into a locker, and the lock had later been removed by an unknown offender(s).

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Volunteering his time to help people he has never met has defined Adai Karuthalackal's young life.

The Maine East High School senior and Des Plaines native calls a 2012 clean-up of a tornado-ravished community in southern Indiana "the most important thing I've done in my life" and dreams of becoming a doctor in order to continue a life of providing aid.

Karuthalackal's participation in service projects through Maine East's Gifted Lyceum program and the youth organization at his church, St. Mary's Syrian Orthodox, earned him a "207's Best" honor from Maine Township High School District 207 and a Community Star award from the Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce.

Q: You helped raise money to assist victims of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. What did you do?
A: With my church's youth organization [the Mor Gregorios Syriac Orthodox Student Association] we made beaded bracelets and sold them to family members and community members. I've been involved with my youth organization throughout my life.

Q: What are some other things you've done through this organization?
A: I've done some work with Feed My Starving Children where we packed supplemental, nutritional food for third-world countries. In addition to that, in Chicago one day we cooked food around the holiday season and went to a soup kitchen and served the food to the homeless women's shelter and spent the evening with them.

Q: What was that experience like?
A: It was just really humbling and it was a nice opportunity to give back to the community that has raised me, really. I was able to connect with a couple of women, although I was a little bit younger. It was a good experience just to see the world that I live in — not just my school.

Q: Would you say your church has been a big part of your life?
A: Yes, my church has been very important to me. It's the cornerstone, really, of who I am. It's the foundation for anything I've done service-wise. It comes back to my church — which has guided me — and, ultimately, God. It's all for God.

Q: Are there other service projects of which you are proud?
A: The most important event of my life so far was the week-long tornado disaster relief assistance trip to Clark County, Ind. It was just this immense feeling of satisfaction and feeling a drive of purpose in my life when I was just cleaning fields that were filled with debris. And these fields, after we cleaned them, were inspected in order to place septic tanks for the communities to use. Although it was really hot, I didn't let it get to me. I just felt enjoyment in helping because I knew ultimately no matter how much of a dirty job it was, I had to do it because someone had to.

Q: You would like to become a doctor. Is there a specialty you are interested in?
A: As of right now I haven't chosen a specialty. I just know that medicine is a profession that requires a lot of persistence and overall hard work ethic and you have to be really rooted in what you believe, you have to be a people-person in order to serve others. I think ultimately that is what I want to do with my life. I want to serve others.

Q: What are you interested outside school and your service projects?
A: I play volleyball — a lot of volleyball. ... I like to spend time with my friends and my family. That's the most important thing to me. I like working out, just being in shape. And there's this new skill that everyone at school and I are obsessed with: it's called kendama-ing. It's a toy called a kendama and it takes coordination in order to land the ball into the specific region of the kendama. It's a trend that has just started. It's a really fun thing to do.

Q: How did you feel about receiving the Community Star award?
A: I know there are people who think are more qualified for this award, but I was humbled the committee picked me. I think everyone needs to be appreciated for the community service that they do. Everyone does community service in one way or another. No community service is more important than another.
Durbin tours organic foodservice program at Niles West

BY NATALIE HAYES
For Sun-Times Media | @NatalHayReporter

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) stopped by Niles West High School last week to check out the school’s organic-focused lunch program.

Two years ago, Niles North and Niles West High Schools traded in greasy burgers and pizza for a more health-focused menu after District 219 left the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and entered into a private contract with OrganicLife, a foodservice company that provides healthier, cooked-from-scratch meal options to Illinois schools.

Durbin toured the Niles West cafeteria Feb. 20 with District 219 Superintendent Nanciann Gatta and mayors George Van Dusen of Skokie and Dan DiMaria of Morton Grove.

During his brief visit, Durbin chatted with students about cafeteria food, physical education and college tuition costs.

Referring to a recent visit to a high school in Englewood on the south side of Chicago, where the only lunch options were corn-dogs, pizza and tater-tots, Durbin told student reporter Gabby Abesamie that many high school students still don’t have access to healthy food options during the school day.

It wasn’t long ago that District 219 students themselves were dining on a lunch menu of similar offerings like burgers cooked from frozen patties, clumpy nachos and french fries.

Since leaving the National School Lunch Program, District 219 now serves up food that is mostly cooked-from-scratch.

The food is prepared with more fresh and natural locally-sourced ingredients, including grass-fed beef, organic chicken, and 100 percent juices.

District 219 students can choose from a menu offering hundreds of lunch options, including about 100 a la carte items priced less than $5, eight food stations offering different entrée platters for $4.95, and four choices of rotating green plate specials for $2.75.

The switch to OrganicLife in 2011 was part of a comprehensive plan for the two high schools to become more environmentally sustainable over a five-year period.

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) visits the Niles West cafeteria to talk with students about the healthier food choices available in their district. (COURTESY OF NILES WEST)
Three-car crash sends three to hospital

Three people, including two children, were taken to the hospital after a three-car accident in Niles last week.

The crash occurred at 4:10 p.m., Feb. 27 near the Dempster Street entrance of the Big Lots shopping center west of Harlem Avenue. Niles Police Sgt. Robert Tornabene said a Honda SUV, driven by a 47-year-old Evanston man, was making a left turn out of the shopping center when it struck a car driven by a 12-year-old Skokie girl and a 7-year-old boy, were taken to the hospital was the Park Ridge woman and she was reportedly released later that day.

The driver of the SUV was ticketed for failing to yield turning left and given a March 21 court date.

Village launches new website

The Village of Niles officially unveiled its redesigned official website at the Feb. 25 board meeting.

The design emphasizes accessibility, significantly improving navigation and making it easier for residents to find services. The new design aims to improve communication between the village government and the residents, giving a way for residents to make complaints, suggest ideas and discuss issues with fellow residents. And, for the first time, it allows residents to pay water bills online thanks to the new e-pay system.

The redesign was developed by Manhattan, Kansas based CivicPlus website design company. They operated under direction of Ross Klicker, Niles' Economic Development Coordinator.

The redesign kept all of the existing pages while changing the way they appear and adding some new features in the process.

The most noticeable change is the top menu. The redesign moved all application and registration functions under “How do I...” heading. That's where the residents can go to apply for licenses, register for village programs and schedule waste and debris removal. The tab also includes links to village ordinances and other official documents.

Morton Grove Public Library conducting technology survey

Help improve the Morton Grove Public Library's technology services. Go to www.mgpl.org to take a short survey, after which you can enter a drawing for a Kindle Fire.

The survey will take about 10 minutes, is completely anonymous, and is available now. The survey will ask about your use of library technology services, both in the library and at home/school/work. This information will help the library improve its technology services and communicate the value of providing free access to computers and the Internet within the community.

You can help support the library by accessing the web survey from library computers or by visiting the library's website, www.mgpl.org, through March 20. Call the library at (847) 965-4220, for more information.

Rainbow Hospice picks temporary CEO

The Board of Directors of Rainbow Hospice and Palliative Care has appointed John Walton as interim CEO of the Mount Prospect-based organization.

The move comes as longtime CEO Patricia Ahern leaves Rainbow Hospice after 18 years on the job.

Walton will begin his new position on March 1 and serve until a permanent CEO is appointed, Rainbow Hospice said.

“With more than 27 years in healthcare and nonprofit leadership, he will be the perfect choice to maintain the strength of the organization as we finalize our plans for 2014,” John Baird, Chairman of the Board for Rainbow Hospice, said in a news release.

Walton's previous leadership roles have included chief operating officer of Integrated Health Services and group vice president for Resurrection Health Care. He is a graduate of Loyola University and has masters degrees in business administration and healthcare administration.

Ahern is leaving Rainbow Hospice on Feb. 28 to lead a hospice center in Buffalo, N.Y.

Rainbow Hospice operates an in-patient unit at St. Matthew Center for Health in Park Ridge.
The Real Union "Bosses"

Cinda Klickna
Illinois Education Association President

There are people who want you to believe the woman in the photo accompanying this column is a "union boss.

When people mention that to me, I like to laugh and say, "My husband thinks I'm a boss, but my members don't."

After 30 years as a high school English teacher, it's easy to laugh off such a silly comment.

But here's what's not funny: That charge is an example of the misinformation and the lack of respect that is being constantly communicated about Illinois public education employees and the organizations to which they belong. The insults being tossed at me are that quality and equity must be part of this conversation. We believe zip codes shouldn't determine the quality of a student's education. That's why we've been working to pass a fair funding plan that will allow schools located in areas with little or no property wealth to receive adequate funding.

When every child has access to a quality public education, that's when we win. Businesses have a better-trained workforce, our children have more stable employment as adults, and our communities are stronger.

When the middle class is strong, our economy is strong.

So the next time you hear that phrase, "union bosses," please remember who those "bosses" really are. They are the 130,000 teachers, assistants, librarians, janitors, bus drivers, higher education faculty and staff, as well as students and retirees, who are proud members of IEA.

They are your friends, neighbors and family members. They are hard-working men and women who strive each and every day to make a difference in the lives of the children in our community. They are fighting for smaller class sizes, safer schools and more accountability from the politicians and administrators charged with making decisions that affect your kids.

They are the voice of our union. They are the heart of our union. They are the "bosses" of our union.

They are education professionals and they've earned respect.

A message from:

Contractor makes good on bad tile job

Dear Help Squad,
Several months ago I purchased tile from Heritage Tile in Oak Park. I then selected Phil Zeleznikar from a list of tile contractors they provided. On the day of installation, Phil arrived and I then left for work.

The installation was complete within a day and a half, and the project was paid in full, $1,400. It was the weekend when I first had an opportunity to inspect the tiles. Several tiles were installed upside down, one was backward, cuts were not straight, a corner tile was pieced together and there were no holes placed to attach switch plate covers.

The grout was not mixed or applied properly leaving a large variation in color and uneven areas. According to a discussion I later had with Phil and staff at Heritage Tile, Phil admitted to allowing two of his workers to install these tiles unsupervised.

Phil has been contacted several times requesting that he replace several tiles and attempt to even the grout. In addition to my requests, Heritage Tile contacted him and an attorney sent him a letter. To date, all efforts have been unsuccessful.

I would appreciate your assistance with resolving this matter.

Sincerely,
Marie DiGiacomo, Oak Park

Help Squad reached out to Phil and we have to say, he could not have been any more pleasant and accommodating. He gave us two possible days that he could be at Marie's home to repair the work and he kept his word.

According to Marie, Phil replaced 12 tiles, re-grouted part of the project, and went the extra mile, replacing switch plate covers that weren't even part of the estimate.

Marie let us know that she is quite pleased with the way the kitchen looks, and that Phil was not only professional, but very concerned about making sure the job was done to her satisfaction.

Dear Marie,
I think anyone would agree that the kitchen is probably the room in which we spend the most amount of time either cooking, socializing or enjoying meals with family and friends. So Help Squad understands the importance of making sure the decor is everything we want it to be. We are so glad that you are enjoying your updated kitchen, and that Phil stepped up and did the right thing! Bon Appetit!

Tips for do-it-yourself tile projects

Since Phil did such a nice job on Marie's kitchen, we decided to call him back to get some advice and tips for do-it-yourselfers who might want to install some tile in their home. We found out that Phil, who is a former U.S. Marine, has spent 18 years working as a general contractor.

Tile tips
1. Sometimes people tile over drywall or plaster, which isn't wise. It's always better to create a flat, level substrate, which is an underlying surface that the tile goes on, and then tile over that. The substrate makes the project easier, and improves the quality of the work.

2. Do your homework when choosing an adhesive. There are several types, each meant to be used for different projects. In other words, you would use a different adhesive when laying tile on a floor versus a backsplash. Also, factors such as moisture, humidity, heat and foot traffic should be considered when choosing the appropriate adhesive.

3. Paint close attention to the tile you select. Different tiles work better in different areas of a home. For example, you shouldn't put a very porous tile in a shower because it will be too difficult to keep it sealed. Porous stone is much more appropriate for a floor or a backsplash.

4. When choosing your grout, take into account location, moisture, heat and other factors.

5. Always seal the tile after completion of the project, and continue to seal the area annually. Sealing protects and helps maintain the integrity of the grout, prevents staining, and makes cleaning it easier.

6. The biggest mistake people make is that they don't apply enough pressure to secure the tile to the substrate. If there's a void in that area, it will eventually start to loosen, and will cause the grout to crack.
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Senior groups shouldn’t work together

Hooray for those Senior Citizens who survived the Park Ridge Park District’s improvements at the Senior Center on Western Avenue. They had enough spirit left in their hearts to start over elsewhere with the Kemnitz project.

I hope that a collaboration of the two groups does not happen. By the time the “takeover” at Western Avenue was complete, many of us felt we were seen as old, inept and unproductive. There was a lack of empathy in the atmosphere.

The self-sustaining group was not bringing in enough money? Sorry! I’m one of those still mourning the loss of the cooperative mood we all once shared.

Renata Galassi
Park Ridge

League of Women Voters’ candidate guide available

The League of Women Voters of Cook County wants all voters to BE INFORMED AND VOTE. For that end, the League has prepared a Voter’s Guide for those candidates running for office in the Cook County and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District races in the March 18 Primary Election.

The Guide is posted on the League’s Website at http://cookcounty.il.lwvnet.org/VoterGuide.html. In addition to information on the candidates, the guide also provides information on where to find sample ballots with all the candidates for each party.

Diane Edmundson
Karin Hribar
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Cook County

Arizona religious protection bill was downright un-Christian

As it happened, two somewhat related events occurred last week that melded neatly in my mind.

The first event was the Arizona legislation dubbed the Religious Freedom act, which would have allowed businesses to refuse their services if doing so conflicted with deeply held religious beliefs.

As just about everyone knows, the bill, vetoed by the governor of Arizona, was meant to protect Christians from a lawsuit when they refused to provide their services to gay people.

The second event was a talk I attended in Libertyville about integrating your faith in the workplace. The Arizona bill wasn’t addressed specifically in the talk, but it hit the target in my mind.

Much has been discussed regarding the Arizona law and how it would have legalized discrimination against gays. To withhold a service to a customer who is ready, willing and able to pay for it is clearly discrimination anywhere in America.

But not much has been said about the religious point of view that has driven this particular issue to the forefront.

Let go of the idea that social policy trumps religion, and, on first blush, one might be able to agree that individuals should be free to practice their faith, in this particular case, the right of a Christian to refuse service for an event they believe to be sinful.

Arizona Republican Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed the controversial bill.

“Our jobs are to serve our clients to the best of our ability. The carpenter from Nazareth did not ask if there were any sinners at the wedding in Cana before turning water into wine. He just made the best wine anyone ever tasted.”

But dig deeper on the faith question, and one has to wonder: Is such a practice even a correct interpretation of Christianity?

As someone who works for a living and tries to live more closely to his faith, I have to say no.

The idea you can refuse your service to a customer because you think their lifestyle is sinful is not just discriminatory and bad business, it’s not even Christian. Here’s why:

It’s a given that we are all sinners. Any busy owner who refuses to serve sinners will be out of business real quick. But let’s go beyond that some more.

Think of the Bible story where the scribes and Pharisees want to stone the woman who committed adultery. The story’s high point is when Jesus tells the crowd that the one without sin should cast the first stone. The story ends with the crowd dispersing, not with someone from Arizona hitting the woman in the head with a rock.

As Pope Francis said when questioned about this very issue, “Who am I to judge?”

Yes, who are any of us, sinners all, to judge?

Which brings me back to this idea of work and faith.

If we believe and know that God made us for work, then our jobs here on Earth are not to judge and cast stones at our customers. Our jobs are to serve our clients to the best of our ability. The carpenter from Nazareth did not ask if there were any sinners at the wedding in Cana before turning water into wine. He just made the best wine anyone ever tasted.
Shouldn’t those pennies be worth more?

Hey, good news for those of you planning to retire (or who just can’t find work!)

Turns out that dumping those pennies into empty coffee cans was a smart investment, one that could keep you from dining on Kibbles and Bits when Congress gets its wish and stops bothering with Social Security.

The recently released annual report from the U.S. Mint stated that it costs the government 1.83 cents to manufacture each penny. The cost includes materials, production and distribution.

So, since it costs more than a penny to make a penny, the federal government in 2013 lost $55 million in profitability.

This is not as bad as it seems. In 2012, the government lost $58 million, because it cost 2.41 cents to make a penny.

It occurred to me that perhaps you and I can come out ahead on this if we can find someone who will give us 1.83 cents for each of our pennies.

So, I guess we need to hang on to those pennies for a while, or be satisfied paying retail for everything.

This whole penny business is pretty ironic for me.

My father used to save Indian Head pennies. Had an entire cigar box full of them in his underwear drawer. Or, he had them until I found them. Then I embarked on a kid debauch — candy at Kronister’s, comic books and Cokes at George’s, ice cream at Anderson’s, army men at the dime store.

Whatever kid delights the neighborhood possessed, I bought with stolen Indian Head pennies.

Of course, I was caught and punished.

But some things in life we do are so rotten that we deserve to be punished over and over again, at least in guilt-ridden memory.

I saw on the Internet that one 1904 Indian Head penny is worth more than $2,000.

I'm glad.

I deserve to be punished more.
### Featured Home

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**8006 W. Lake St., Niles**

- **House size:** 1,235 square feet
- **Lot size:** 6,250 square feet
- **Year built:** 1962
- **Bedrooms:** 3
- **Bathrooms:** 1.5
- **Garage:** 1.5-car attached
- **Property tax:** $6,177.03 (2012)
- **Exterior:** Aluminum siding and brick
- **School districts:** East Maine School District 63 and Maine Township High School District 207

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**PROPERTY TRANSFERS**

BY AGGREGO NEWS SERVICE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Content appears as it is provided in public records.

**Niles**
7450 N Waukegan Road, #503: Laura T Tuleo to Janice F Jaworski for $175,000 on Jan. 14.

**Morton Grove**
7409 Davis St: Karl Oestreich and Karl L Oestreich Trust to Property Illinois LP for $140,000 on Jan. 15.

**Park Ridge**
1425 Garden St: Judicial Sales Corp and Mary Greaty to Thomas Jurczyk for $290,500 on Jan. 16.

**Albans to Kimberly Holzmann for $315,000 on Jan. 15.

**Bryant to John W Hsu and Julia I Hsu for $329,000 on Jan. 16.

**Norridge**

**Des Plaines**
10100 Potter Road: Nathan W Sanders and Nancy K Sanders to George Demertzis and Faye Demertzis for $340,000 on Jan. 16.

**Skokie**
9715 Woods Drive, #8: Michael J Boyce Trust, Lorraine C Cote and Julie S Fischer Trust to Steven J Fischer, Julie S Fischer Trust and C Cote Lorraine Trust for $762,500 on Jan. 15.

**Wilmette**
336 Hibbard Road: Seokjuh Rhee to Sung Hyun for $360,500 on Jan. 6.

**Sunok Rhee to Sung Hyun and Kyong Sook Hyun for $360,500 on Jan. 16.

**SCHILLER PARK**
7177 Wesley Terrace: Miriam Lopez to Ih3 Property Illinois LP for $410,000 on Jan. 13.

**Evanston**
92 Williamsburg Road: Vera H Steinfels and Lila Dicanio to Echoxfrotex LLC for $460,000 on Jan. 16.

**Sunok Rhee to Sung Hyun and Kyong Sook Hyun for $360,500 on Jan. 16.

**PARK RIDGE**
1425 Garden St: Judicial Sales Corp and Mary Greaty to Thomas Jurczyk for $290,500 on Jan. 16.

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NILES

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

Reading with Rover
7 p.m.: Students in kindergarten and older can sign up for a 20-minute slot to read to a therapy dog. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

Friday, March 7

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.

Saturday, March 8

Introduction to Lynda.com
9:30 a.m.: Learn how to use the training source available to Niles Library card holders to get instruction on over 2,300 subjects. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11

Preschool Story Time
10 a.m.: Stories, songs, and action rhymes for children ages 3 to 5. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

Family Story Time
7 p.m.: Stories, songs and activities for families with children ages 2 to 6. Attendees are welcome to wear pajamas. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

Toddler Time
10 a.m.: Stories, songs and rhythms for children ages 1 to 3 with a caregiver. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13

Resume Assistance and Review
9:30 a.m.: Schedule a 30-minute appointment to receive individual resume assistance with Mr. Bob Podgorski of R.P.P. Enterprises. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

CJE SeniorLife Resource Counseling
12:30 p.m.: Make an appointment for a private session with a Resource Specialist from CJE SeniorLife, trained to counsel adults 60 and older, their families and caregivers. 60-minute sessions are available. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 773-508-1054.

Friday, March 14

Bibliobab 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 847-663-1234.

Saturday, March 15

Hanbo: Korean Fancy Dress
1:30 p.m.: Learn about traditional Korean Hanbok dress, ceremonial bowing and more. For students in grades three to eight. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. For more information, call 847-663-1234.
**HAPPENING NEARBY**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 6**

**Protect Your Medicare!**
1 p.m.: The Illinois Medicare Patrol Program gives a presentation about Medicare fraud, including how to prevent, detect and report it. North Shore Senior Center, 6404 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Call 847-784-6030.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 7**

**Nonfiction Book Discussion**
10 a.m.: The group discusses "The Unwinding" by George Packer. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. For more information, call 847-825-3123.

**Park Ridge Panhellenic Club**
Noon: Features a luncheon and a program presented by Lynn Rymarz on "Famous Women in History." The Panhellenic Club is open to alumnae of college Greek letter sororities and awards scholarships to high school graduates in the Maine Township area. Park Ridge Country Club, 636 N. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. For more information, call 847-825-3123.

**Mother/Son Sports Spectacular**
6:30 p.m.: A fun night for boys ages 4 to 10 to play sports and games with Mom. End the night with ice cream sundaes and awards. Come dressed in comfortably clothes and gym shoes. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127. $26 per couple; $33 per nonresident couple.

**Beatles Nights On Tap**
7 p.m.: Hear classic Beatles tunes performed live onstage by talented local musicians 7 p.m. March 7-8. Proceeds benefit the Youth Ministry Fund at PRCC, which supports youth mission trips and activities. Park Ridge Community Church, 100 Courtland Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-823-3164. $10 at the door.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 8**

**Twice As Nice Moms Spring Resale**
8 a.m.: Gently used and like-new clothing for children up to age 8, including shoes and boots, coats and holiday clothing, swimwear, shoes and more. Bring a laundry basket or bag (please no strollers) for easier shopping. Park Ridge Presbyterian Church, 1300 W. Crescent Ave., Park Ridge. $1.

**Second Saturday Family Story Time**
10 a.m.: Stories and crafts for the whole family.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 9**

**Mega Movie Pajama Night**
6 p.m.: Kids can dress in their PJs for a night of games, snacks and PG-rated movies. For ages 4 to 9. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. For more information, call 847-692-5127. $14-$26.

**My Job as a Midwife**
10:30 a.m.: Amy Willen will discuss the age-old profession of midwifery, dispelling some misunderstandings about it and sharing how she became a midwife. Ethical Humanist Society, 7574 Lincoln Ave., Skokie. For more information, call 847-677-3334.

**Zumba! 100th Anniversary Celebratory Class**
11 a.m.: Celebrate 100 years of the Park Ridge Park District with 100 minutes of Zumba. For ages 14 and up; no registration required. Park Ridge Community Center, 1851 W. Touhy Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127.

**Get Health Coverage**
1 p.m.: Illinois Health Marketplace navigators will be available for confidential, individual consultation. Bring verification of income (pay stubs, income tax return) and a form of identification (driver's license, Social Security card, student visa) to complete the online registration. For further information, navigators can be reached at 773-282-6622, ext. 267. Morton Grove Public Library, 6410 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.

**Conversation: Holocaust Survivors from Hungary**
1:30 p.m.: Survivors of the Holocaust share their experiences, 70 years after the Jewish population of Hungary came under the control of the Nazi regime. Email reservations@ihmec.org for reservations. Illinois Holocaust Museum, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie.

**MONDAY, MARCH 10**

**Officer Friendly Story Time**
1:30 p.m.: Stop by the library for a fun story time led by a Park Ridge police officer. For all ages. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. For more information, call 847-825-3123.

**YA Babysitting Class**
6:30 p.m.: Learn babysitting including childcare, safety and finding employment. For students grades six to 12. This is a two-part class beginning at 6:30 p.m. March 10 and 9 a.m. March 15. Classes must be taken in succession. Registration required. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. For more information, call 847-825-3123.
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Despite debt, leaders say village's TIFs aiding development

BY PAM DEFIGLIO
For Sun-Times Media

As Morton Grove tries to spur economic development, the village's three tax increment financing districts are a key tool, leaders said Tuesday.

Geoff Dickinson, senior development consultant, presented a rundown on how the TIF districts are performing: One is doing well, the second has pretty much done its job and will expire in 2017, and the third is just over a year old and has relatively little to report.

TIF districts run for 23 years; Tuesday's meeting was a status update for 2012 figures.

"I believe there were clear goals and objectives set out for the TIF districts, and they're being met," said Village Manager Ryan Horne.

The village is focusing many of its efforts to attract new business in areas that have TIF districts, which include the Ferris Avenue/Lehigh Avenue TIF near the Metra train station (2000 through 2023); the Waukegan Road TIF (1995-2017) and the newbie, the Dempster/Waukegan TIF, mainly centering on Prairie View Plaza (2012-2035).

Villages and cities use TIF districts to rejuvenate areas of town which have fallen into disrepair or need a shot in the arm. Once they designate an area as a TIF district, the taxing bodies which normally receive property taxes from that area have those revenues frozen at the same amount each year; the municipality then invests the natural growth in revenues into the TIF neighborhood to make it more attractive to developers.

Dickinson noted that developers might need a large land parcel and might not want to deal with a hodgepodge of small outdated buildings or properties, so a municipality can use TIF cash to address that.

"It's a common problem," he said. "The size of a contemporary project can mean grouping together multiple owners' properties."

A village can buy the land parcels, raze unwanted buildings and assemble a good-sized land parcel that would be attractive to today's developers, he said. The village is doing that with one site in the Ferris/Lehigh TIF, and Nancy Radzevich, the village's Director of Community and Economic Development, said the village is marketing that land parcel on its website right now.

The Ferris/Lehigh TIF

The Ferris/Lehigh TIF district is the most active and has the best balance sheet, Dickinson said.

It had revenues of $2.3 million in 2012, which Mayor Dan DiMaria described as its bright spot. Expenditures were $1,777,527. However, the TIF fund has a negative balance of $5.8 million, largely because it still must climb out of debt.

"It still has a number of years left to run; the money will be recouped," said Trustee John Thill.

In 2012, the village used Ferris/Lehigh TIF monies to assist with the development of The Homestead, an 82-unit residential building for mixed-income residents 55 and older. The village provided a $1.7 million TIF loan and $1.1 in other project costs; the 2012 share of those costs was $33,000.

Waukegan Road TIF

While the TIF district's numbers don't look good on paper — it has a fund deficit of $7.17 million — Mayor Dan DiMaria said it's important to consider the infrastructure improvements made under street level, which otherwise would have cost money out of the village's general fund.

"I understand people's frustration with it, but the infrastructure improvements were great, and improve the quality of life," he said.

Horne also said when the Waukegan Road TIF came into being in 1995, one of its goals was to rid that section of Waukegan Road of unwanted motels, which had a high number of police calls. The fact that they were situated near a school and park made shuttering them even more important to the community, he said. They have long been closed.

Dickinson said that while the village's general fund is subsidizing the Waukegan Road TIF, sales tax revenues from the new businesses there — Walgreens, a bank and McGrath Acura — are flowing back to the village.

Horne said the village can't disclose the amount of those sales tax revenues.

Dempster/Waukegan TIF

This TIF district was designated in October 2012, and includes Prairie View Plaza, where Dominick's recently closed, the former Produce World grocery store building (the business relocated within Morton Grove) and nearby parcels. There's little to report on its 2012 activity, since it started with a zero balance and incurred costs of about $13,000, leaving it $13,000 in the red.

DiMaria remained optimistic about Prairie View Plaza's potential for redevelopment.

"Since the TIF began, activity among brokers has increased," he said. "I expect it to be highly successful."
TREND

More than 350 preview Chicago Botanic Garden Orchid Show

'ESCAPE TO PARADISE'
Previewing: Chicago Botanic Garden Orchid Show, thru March 16
Benefiting: Chicago Botanic Garden
Date: Feb. 14
Location: Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe
Attended: 350+
Website: chicagobotanic.org

1. Colleen Leider of Lake Bluff (left), and Mary Leider Barss of Kildeer; 2. Elizabeth Pamula of Park Ridge, and Greg Kemp of Gurnee; 3. Jennifer Kiefer of Winnetka (left), and Kelly Sullivan of Wilmette; 4. David Hanson (from left), Bryn Wagner Hanson, and David and Ellen Wagner, all of Evanston; 5. Kevin (from left) and Sharon Count of Glenview, and Sharon and Lee Oberlander of Northbrook; 6. Barbara Metzler of Winnetka, Weman's Board president (from left), and event co-chairmen Carolyn Katz of Winnetka and Lorill Haynes of Chicago | PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN
Rise and dine with Jeremy Piven to aid theater

BY NATASHA WASINSKI | For Sun-Times Media

Playing an exuberant, wheeler-dealer entrepreneur like “Mr. Selfridge” must be hungry work, because Jeremy Piven is looking to share a meal with one philanthropy-minded fan.

The Evanston-bred actor is rallying to raise $25,000 for the Piven Theatre Workshop this month with his “Breakfast with Piven” campaign. Those who pitch in by creating fundraisers of their own on crowdrise.com will receive daily, behind-the-scenes pics of Piven’s morning chow.

For every $100 donation, participants will be entered to win a breakfast date with Piven on the “Entourage” movie set. As if that wasn’t a treat in itself, the lucky winner will star as an extra in the hit HBO show spin-off.

Proceeds from the celebrity-endorsed, crowdsourcing campaign will support the Piven Theatre's scholarships, outreach and community programs.

Founded by Piven's parents Joyce and Byrne over 40 years ago, the Evanston theater center offers youth and adult acting classes, as well as special programming for people with developmental disabilities and under-served Chicago neighborhoods.

"Jeremy has always been a very generous supporter and advocate for our organization," said Executive Director Leslie Brown.

For more information and to donate to the cause, visit www.crowdrise.com/BreakfastWithPiven/fundraiser.
Journey in military helps couple find love

Shawna Paxson and Jesse Watkins

BY RENEE LEE
rlee@bouquetcatcher.com

There's no denying the military played an important role in Shawna Paxson and Jesse Watkins' relationship — it's what brought them together in the first place — but the circumstance of their journey together isn't exactly the happiest story.

Shawna, from Rockford, was living in downtown Chicago and working for the National Guard when she felt the itch to redeploy overseas. The only other unit that was deploying at the time was out of Oklahoma. Shawna moved to Fort Sill, Okla., in January 2010 to prepare.

Jesse, on the other hand, grew up in Oklahoma, and like Shawna, had been deployed before. Shawna's first deployment was to Afghanistan; Jesse's was to Iraq. For Shawna, she wanted to deploy again because "you go on one, and you want to go on another."

For Jesse, redeploying was about proving himself. He recently had beaten cancer — stage 3 Hodgkin's lymphoma — and according to Shawna, thought, "If I can beat cancer, I can [deploy] again."

The couple deployed to Afghanistan in 2011, but with different units, and didn't cross paths. At the beginning of the deployment, both were married. By the end, they both were divorced. Both were injured in battle — the twist of fate that brought them together.

Jesse was injured and sent to Germany; Shawna spent about two years in a hospital in the U.S. before Jesse got reinjured and joined Shawna in a hospital in Oklahoma in spring 2012.

"We were in the same hospital facility, both divorced, both injured, and we did recovery therapy together," Shawna said.

That's when they started dating. All of Shawna's family was in Illinois, and Jesse's family was about four hours away.

"We just had each other," Shawna said.

Now, Jesse is retired from the military, and Shawna is in the process of being retired. For their wedding, the two wanted to focus on happier times and choose to marry in Illinois.

The couple exchanged vows at First Presbyterian Church of Itasca, one of the churches that allowed any pastor to officiate. As a subtle nod to how they met, the couple's photographer and officiant had ties to the military.

Their reception took place at Cafe La Cave in Des Plaines. The Oct. 12 wedding day was filled with handmade decorations in blue, purple and gray. Bridesmaids wore white blue dresses that matched the groomsmen's attire. The bridal party wore blue Converse sneakers while Shawna and Jesse stood out in black Converse.

The couple live in Edmond, Okla., where both are going to school. Jesse also is working for the sheriff's office, and Shawna eventually wants to study law.
Dodge raises the bar in SUV segment

By IRA SELNICK
For Sun Times Media

With a sporty, muscular, and hunkered-down stance, the Dodge Durango is one of the best-looking SUVs in its segment.

Plus, Durango's beauty goes much deeper than that. Durango has a luxurious and comfortable cabin with loads of technology, and its driving characteristics are very impressive.

Now for 2014, Dodge has raised the bar with improvements to Durango's level of performance, technology and style.

The 2014 Dodge Durango features revised front and rear styling. Durango's face is new, and its new lower front fascia provides a wider and more aggressive look.

The rear fascia has been re-sculpted to fully integrate the trailer hitch. Best of all, Dodge has added sporty and elegant LED tail lamps that were inspired by the Dodge Charger and Dodge Dart.

To help improve fuel efficiency, Durango now features an eight-speed automatic transmission that Dodge claims will improve fuel economy up to nine percent.

The new eight-speed transmission is standard in all trim levels and delivers silky smooth, almost imperceptible shifts during most driving conditions.

Mated to the new eight-speed transmission is either a 290 horsepower V6 or 360 horsepower Hemi V8.

The 2014 Dodge Durango is offered in five trim levels: 31C ($29,795); SXT Plus ($31,495); Limited ($35,595); R/T ($38,995); and Citadel ($40,995).

The base 31C is actually very well equipped and features the powerful V6, which is surprisingly strong and able to tow up to 6,200 pounds with either rear-wheel drive or all-wheel drive.

If you plan to do much towing, though, you will likely prefer the Hemi V8. With the V8 you can tow up to 7,400 pounds with RWD (7,200 pounds with AWD).

AWD models with the V6 feature full-time AWD with a single-speed transfer case between front and rear axles. AWD models equipped with the Hemi V8 feature full-time AWD but with a two-speed transfer case, and a variable torque split between front and rear axles.

Because of its low stance, Durango is easy to enter and exit. The cabin is plush, luxurious and sophisticated-looking, even with base SXT trim.

There are three rows of seating with capacity for up to seven passengers, six when choosing second-row captain's chairs.

As expected, head and legroom is best up front and declines progressively as you move back. Still, the third row can fit most in comfort. When not needed, the second and third rows can be folded down to increase the cargo carrying capacity.

As a driver, I love the new seven-inch digital instrument cluster. Similar to the cluster in the Dart, Durango's cluster features clear graphics and the display is customizable through an intuitive interface.

Dodge offers many advanced technologies including adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning, blind spot monitoring, rear cross path detection for peace of mind when backing out of parking spaces, and more.

Add to that a truly impressive ride. For a vehicle this size, the 2014 Dodge Durango is very manageable in tight situations and it delivers a tranquil ride.
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>MAKE/MODEL</th>
<th>STOCK#</th>
<th>MILEAGE</th>
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**YEAR | MAKE/MODEL                  | STOCK# | MILEAGE | NOW*  |
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**YEAR | MAKE/MODEL                  | STOCK# | MILEAGE | NOW*  |
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Over Presidents Day weekend, Classic Kia showed off its new facility with a grand opening celebration. What shoppers found was a completely overhauled facility with more room to allow for indoor shopping year-round. How timely is that?

Says Fred Marks, “We set out to deliver the ultimate customer experience.” And it looks as if they succeeded with spacious customer waiting areas, complimentary refreshments, Wi-Fi, and a fully equipped children’s play room.

Along with an enhanced physical experience, Marks’ sister and operating partner Sheila Marks-Bondoc adds, “This is going to be a highline style treatment for our customers with complimentary car washes with any service – even oil changes.” In fact, visitors to Classic Kia found that they got a complimentary oil change certificate just for stopping by.

Adds Sheila, “We’re very proud of this new store. In our old facility we’ve been #1 in customer satisfaction in our region for 2 years in a row. The new store will allow us to serve our customers even better.”

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Downtown living offers plethora of amenities

BY JOHN ROBERTS for Sun-Times Media

While the big house with the white picket fence in the suburbs will likely always be popular for growing families, there are some distinct advantages to living in an urban setting.

For retirees, it could be the need to downsize and find maintenance-free living in an area where restaurants, theaters and shopping are nearby, close enough to walk to or easy to access via public transportation.

Throughout Chicago and the suburbs, options for urban living are many. It all depends on what you're looking for in terms of amenities.

Maybe you want to remain in the suburbs, and are looking to be in the heart of a suburban community's downtown area. That can be found in a number of locations, from Orland Park and Tinley Park to Naperville, Downers Grove, Oak Park and Evanston.

Housing options in these settings typically come in the form of town houses, condominiums or apartments, like those at the new Niney/Tifty On The Park in southwest suburban Orland Park (recently featured in the Spring Builder Showcase). It's common for developments to be near Metra stations or other public transportation to give residents easy access to downtown Chicago.

Some, however, want to be closer to the action, where they can walk out of their building and hop in a cab or take the "L" train and within minutes be at a favorite watering hole, a baseball game, theaters, museums or concert halls. Living in or near downtown Chicago is also popular with the younger set, especially those attending colleges or universities in the city.

Matt Farrell, president of the Chicago Association of Realtors and managing partner of Urban Real Estate in Chicago, pointed to a number of advantages to living in downtown Chicago. In terms of trends, many are looking for luxury amenities, such as pools, gyms and other services to make living easier.

"People are looking for places with some outdoor space and where they can have pets," Farrell said. "Some are the non-dog-friendly buildings."

Security also is paramount for some residents, Farrell said.

Some of the popular residential spots in downtown Chicago include 11 E. Walton and the surrounding area of Oak and Rush, River North as well as 340 E. Randolph, a high-rise residential development known as 340 on the Park.

As for the popular newer housing developments in downtown Chicago, Farrell pointed to the Legacy at Millennium Park, a 72-story luxury development, as well as The Grant, another luxury condo development in the South Loop.

The Trump International Hotel and Tower is another very high-end development. This development at 401 N. Wabash is a combination hotel and condos. The development features a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom condominium units as well as luxurious penthouses.

The penthouses are featured on floors 86 through 89 and offer expansive floor plans with up to 14,000 square feet sold as white-box space, allowing the purchaser to design the unit to fit his lifestyle, according to the website, trumpchicago.com. The development boasts of being the "highest-above-ground residences in the world" and its "endless views of Chicago and Lake Michigan."

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Sales Not for You? Don’t Be So Sure
By Peter Vogt, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

Sales -- to many a recent college grad, it’s the dreadful career path of last resort. A quick look at posts on the Career Planning for College Students message board shows:

• “I’ve been looking up jobs on Web sites and in local newspapers. I have had very little response, and the responses I do get are for sales jobs, which I am not interested in.”

• “I got a BSBA in marketing, and for some reason people think that the only thing you can do with a marketing degree is sales...not for me.”

• “I’m looking for something analytical, but instead I get a lot of sales position solicitations. At this time, should I just settle for one of these sales spots?”

Sales: No Way or Make Way?
Of course, it’s fine to decide against a job in sales. But too often, college students and recent grads rule out sales positions based on little or no real thought or investigation. They hear the word sales, and they immediately say to themselves, “No way!”

If you’ve never pictured yourself -- or even casually considered -- making your way in sales, you may be making a mistake. Instead, think about how working in sales might benefit you and how it might be different from what you think you know about sales.

More Than Widgets
It’s easy to fall into the trap of believing that the only things being sold in the marketplace are products. As one job seeker I worked with put it, “I won’t do sales. I don’t want to go around talking to people and trying to sell them stuff they don’t want.”

This statement is misguided on several levels, but two stand out:

• Who’s to say the job seeker would have to sell stuff -- i.e., products?

• Why wouldn’t this job seeker’s prospective customers want what’s being sold?

You may sell a product if you go into sales, but you might also sell a service or even a cause of some sort. If you find a product, service or cause you believe in and then take it to people who might also believe in it, you could find yourself in a gratifying career.
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Nintendo Town High School District, 219th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

All bids must be in the form of a bid deposit, which is required, and shall be made by cash, check, or certified check payable to the City of Park Ridge, Illinois. The bid deposit shall be in an amount equal to 5% of the estimated cost of the work to be performed. The bid deposit shall be returned to the bidder if the awarded contract is accepted within 10 days after the opening of bids. All bidders shall submit a proposal that includes a list of the materials to be used, including, but not limited to, the following:

- All materials to be used shall be of the quality and type specified in the bid documents.
- All materials shall be delivered to the site of the work in question and shall be ready for use.
- All materials shall be delivered to the site of the work in question and shall be ready for use.

A mandatory pre-bid meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, March 12, at 10:00 a.m. at the North High School Auditorium. All interested bidders are encouraged to attend the pre-bid meeting to have an opportunity to ask questions and receive information about the project.

Claims against the City of Park Ridge for work performed under this contract shall be filed with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, within 30 days after the work is completed or within 30 days after the last payment is made on the contract. No claim shall be entertained by the City of Park Ridge for work performed under this contract until the claim has been filed and the City of Park Ridge has had the opportunity to make a final inspection of the work and is satisfied that the work has been performed in accordance with the specifications and contract documents.

The City of Park Ridge reserves the right to reject any and all bids. The successful bidder will be required to furnish an IDOT Contract Bond for the full amount of the contract and a certificate of insurance in the amount of $50,000 per occurrence. The successful bidder will also be required to pay prevailing wage rates in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The City of Park Ridge reserves the right to change the date and location of the pre-bid meeting and to reopen and read the sealed bids at the Bid Opening.

The City of Park Ridge reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, and to award the contract to the bidder whose bid is in the best interests of the City of Park Ridge. The City of Park Ridge reserves the right to make changes to the project documents and specifications at any time before the bid opening.

For further information contact: Jean Hedges, Purchasing Agent, 505 Butler Street, Chicago, IL 60637. Telephone: 312-603-8411.

All bidders must be registered with the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, Division of Employment Security, 222 E. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601. Telephone: 312-837-2000. Bidders who fail to register will not be allowed to bid on any City of Park Ridge contract.

All bidders must be in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Bidders who have been found to be in violation of any such laws and regulations may be disqualified from bidding on any City of Park Ridge contract.

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Things We Love

Sarah Jessica Parker, who easily qualifies as the queen of stilettos thanks to "Sex and the City," drops by Nordstrom Michigan Avenue Mar. 7 at 4:30 p.m. to present her new SJP collection, featuring handbags (starting at $245), the Manhattan trench ($495) and, of course, a heap of stylish heels (starting at $195). The actress will even sign new purchases. 55 E. Grand; Nordstrom.com

From left: The Carrie ($355), The Anna ($345) and The Ina ($355) all from the SJP collection.

Graziela Gems ear cuff
Chicago-based Graziela has struck red-carpet gold with the sparkling Wave ear cuff. The upside-down earring has become a favorite of celebs like Amber Heard, Anna Kendrick and "Chicago P.D." star Sophia Bush (right), and at $440, it's a great way to add Hollywood glam without a blockbuster budget. Elements, 741 N. Wells; Grazielagems.com

OPI Brazil nail lacquer collection
Give your manicure a tropical punch with new vibrant hues inspired by beaches and rainforest flora. Our fave? The "I Just Can't Cope-Acabana" yellow, which adds a little South American zest to any outfit. $9, Ulta locations citywide; Ulta.com

>Thatcher's Organic Artisan spirits
We're not sure if a spirit can qualify as a health food, but the small-batch, organic spirits and liqueurs from the Barrington-based distillery come close. Made using natural extraction processes, the liqueurs come in flavors like elderflower, blood orange, pickly pear and apple spice ginger, and all blend beautifully with Thatcher's original vodka. $19.99, Mariano's locations citywide; Mariano's.com

Favorite Chicago shop: "I love Space51 [900 N. Michigan] and always try to check it out when I'm in town. Last time I was there I bought a new geode to add to my geode-scape at home. Just when you think you have enough geodes, add more."

On the coffee table: "I have a Dali art book and a horn. I'm really into horn accessories right now, like a horn magnifying glass. I also have a lot of succulents in cool vases. I buy little ones for $10 and now I have about 20 of them."

Favorite home accessory: "Beautiful and interesting trays in different materials. They work for serving drinks or appetizers as well as displaying objects, catching mail and elevating the day-to-day messes (like my son's Legos)."

MIND FOR DESIGN
They may earn their keep doling out design advice to others, but here, three interiors experts reveal their personal decor favorites.

Jonathan Adler
Founder of Jonathan Adler, 676 N. Wabash; jonathanadler.com

Jennifer Banks
Bella Maison Interior Design, 1610 Honore; bellamaisonltd.com

Alison Pickart
Interior Designer, Alison Pickart, LLC.; alisonpickart.com

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Splash is published weekly by Splash Publications LLC, a Wrapports Company, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago, IL 60654

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Splash is distributed weekly inside Sun-Times Media publications.

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THE CALENDAR
• ARTS & CULTURE | • PHILANTHROPY | • FOOD | • FASHION

this week

March 7
• LITTLE CITY’S SEEING HOPE TOGETHER
Calling all card sharks! Little City Foundation—which has empowered children and adults with developmental disabilities for more than 50 years—ups the ante at this poker tournament and casino fundraiser, where players compete for the grand prize of a seat at the World Series of Poker, valued at $10,000. During breaks, kick back in the on-site Spex “chill and chat” boutique.
Time: 6 p.m.
Place: The Montgomery Club, 500 W. Superior
Cost: $150 and up. For tickets, visit Littlecity.org/poker.

March 8
• CAMP KESEM’S FAMILY NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
This unique fundraising gala invites families for an evening of philanthropy, discovery and fun at the Field Museum, including a scavenger hunt, camp songs, arts and crafts, plus dinner and a live auction with one-of-a-kind items such as a luxury trip to Napa Valley. Chicagoans Richard and Dara Levy are the 2014 honorees.
Time: 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Place: The Field Museum, 1400 S. Lake Shore
Cost: $150 per adult, $50 per child. For tickets, visit Familynightatthemuseum.org.

March 8
• BIG MAC UNDER GLASS
Benefiting the Ronald Mc-

Donald House Charities of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana, which keeps families of hospitalized children together in a “home away from home,” this swank evening includes a lavish dinner, live entertainment and top-flight auction packages.
Time: 6 p.m.
Place: Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, 301 E. North
Cost: $475. For tickets, visit Rmhccni.org/bigmacunderglass.

March 8
• GLASSQUERADE
This “celestial evening” — with dinner and dancing to the music of Dr. Bombay

Water
March 12-April 16

RENT

Aurora's Paramount Theatre continues its crowd-pleasing Broadway Series with Jonathan Larson's tale of young love and loss on New York City's Lower East Side.

Place: 23 E. Galena, Aurora
Cost: $36-$49. For tickets, visit Paramountaurora.com.

March 13

Cameron Rocks On 2014

It might have been a while since you've played 'Capture the Flag,' but get your old camp groove on at this family-friendly fundraiser.

Proceeds benefit Adam Backus, an 11-year-old with spina bifida, and the Cameron Can Foundation's donation to YMCA Camp Independence for children with spina bifida.

Time: 6:30 p.m.
Place: The Montgomery Club, 500 W. Superior
Cost: $125 in advance, $150 at the door. For tickets, visit Cameron-can.com.

March 14

Night of Flight

Halcyon Theatre's annual gala honoree Nambi E. Kelley will be honored at Night of Flight with special food from host sponsor Lettuce Entertain You Restaurants, including RPM Italian, Three Dots and a Dash, Hub 51, R.J. Grunts and Bub City.

Time: 9 p.m.
Place: Chicago Children's Museum, Navy Pier, 700 E Grand
Cost: $110. For tickets, visit Supportplay.org.

March 15

27th Annual Hope Through Caring Award Dinner

This year's Les Turner ALS Foundation benefit honors the steadfast support of founding member and board president Harvey Gatten. Best-selling author Jonathon Elling hosts, with music provided by the Dick Judson Orchestra.

Time: 6:30 p.m.
Place: The Ritz-Carlton Chicago, 160 E. Pearson
Cost: $350. For tickets, call (847) 679-3311 or visit Les-turnerals.org.

March 15

Spectacle Lunatique

A benefit for the wildly transformative and innovative Redmoon Theater, this dynamic evening features enticing libations, palate-pleasing delights, interactive installations and a preview of the company's upcoming "Great Chicago Fire Festival."

Time: 8 p.m.
Place: 600 W. Cermak
Cost: $100-$450. For tickets, call (312) 850-8440 or visit Redmoon.org.
On Feb. 22, more than 300 guests poured their philanthropic energy into the Art Institute of Chicago, turning out to The Casino (195 E. Delaware) for the fifth annual Uncorked: A Case for Wine. Hosted by the museum’s Auxiliary Board and co-chairs Frank Ponterio, Lauren Grundhofer Peterson and Phoebe DePree, the vino-centric gala welcomed guests with glasses of Cooper’s Hawk sparkling wine, followed by an array of wine-tasting stations featuring blends from Terlato Wines International, Wines of Brasil, Carnaval, Aurora and Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits. The wine flowed through dinner, too, as Buehler wines accompanied the meal and guests participated in live and silent auctions that included hot-ticket items such as rare bottles and Napa tastings and winery tours. The event “crushed it,” raising more than $175,000 to support the Auxiliary Board and the Institute’s special exhibits. — Katerina Bizios

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event. The Sun-Times Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust will match every dollar donated to the Art Institute of Chicago up to a total of $5,000. Up to $1,000 can be matched per individual donation.

Above: Phoebe and Spencer DePree
Right: Dustin O’Regan models a coat from McElroy Furs, an auction item.
Don’t be late to the tea party! A throwback to ’50s style (with a brief moment in the ’80s), tea-length dresses are back in full-skirted force, this time with modern lines and playful pleats. Designers like Proenza Schouler, Michael Kors and Christian Siriano all sent the revived silhouette down the runway this spring. Carrying the formality of floor-length gowns, these dresses come with a bonus: They’re the perfect way to show off your fabulous shoes. It doesn’t take a soothsayer to read these leaves: It’s definitely time for tea.
More than 600 guests donned their best crimson, cardinal, and ruby hues to help take a stand against heart disease at the annual Go Red for Women Luncheon Feb. 21. Held in Macy’s Walnut Room (111 N. State) and emceed by WLS-Channel 7’s Kathy Brock, the afternoon event blended both inner and outer beauty, as guests took in healthy cooking demonstrations by Sodexo, then tried their luck in a “Personality” silent auction, featuring handbags by Tory Burch and Marc Jacobs. Chefs cracked open the Go Red for Women cookbook to whip up a heart-healthy meal of herb-crusted chicken, followed by an orange almond cake with citrus coulis and Chantilly cream. The luncheon helped raise more than $840,000 to benefit the American Heart Association’s research and education programs to prevent heart disease in women. — Alicia Hange

The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.
A patriotic crowd packed the House of Blues (329 N. Dearborn) Feb. 20 to honor the men and women of the Armed Forces at the Lone Survivor Foundation's Concert for a Cause. WFLD-Channel 32's Corey McPherrin took the stage and introduced Navy SEAL Jeff Nichols, who spoke about his personal experience with the organization before veteran band BoDeans closed out the night with a performance of their appropriately titled song "Closer to Free." Proceeds from the evening benefited the foundation — founded by retired Navy SEAL and New York Times best-selling author Marcus Luttrell — and its efforts to support and empower wounded warriors of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families by providing education, rehabilitation recovery and wellness programs. — Alicia Hauge
The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.

Michael Volz and Meredith Ahern
PHOTOS BY SHERI WITKO PHOTOGRAPHY

Lyndsey Ager, Lindsay Hearn and Mackenzie Porter

BoDeans bring down the house.

Elizabeth Reed, Julius Few and Shay Moinuddin

Above: Kendra Moten and Tie Martin
Left: Courtney Dayne and Shalina Hurley
PHOTOS BY RAMZI DREESSEN

BEAUTY SHOP

Dr. Julius Few and his team of nurses, aestheticians and makeup artists hosted the ultimate pampering party at their fourth annual Night of Beauty Feb. 20. Guests turned out to the Few Institute (875 N. Michigan) to take in demonstrations of the latest anti-aging, body-shaping and beautifying technologies, then tried their luck in a raffle featuring prizes such as chemical peels, Glo mineral makeup, a package deal at Salon Duo and skincare giveaways. Proceeds from the evening benefited the Few Initiative for Children, a charity founded to support underprivileged youth. — Alicia Hauge
The Sun-Times was the media sponsor of this event.
GET SMART

Northwestern grad and 'Intelligence' star Marg Helgenberger takes a break to soak in the city

BY ZAK STEMER

The Twittersphere has spoken — and it has dubbed Marg Helgenberger a total and complete badass. It's a title that Northwestern grad and star of CBS action drama "Intelligence" is extremely proud of. "I love it," says Helgenberger, 55. "Personally, I don't consider myself a badass, but I love being thought of as that as a character."

"Intelligence," which premiered in January, follows Gabriel, an unpredictable agent at an elite government cybersecurity agency who's had a computer chip implanted in his brain, giving him direct access to the global information grid — basically transforming his mind into a supercomputer. Helgenberger plays Lillian Strand, who oversees Gabriel's missions while managing the challenges that a human-computer hybrid presents. (Like your Facebook account, Gabriel's brain can be hacked and infected with all sorts of nasty viruses.)

"The show is epic badassery," Helgenberger says. "The suspense level is pretty intense. Every episode there's a time clock and there's always something at stake."

Fans of the show will recognize the famous redhead from her 14-year role as Catherine Willows on the über-hit series "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," but the actress's credits go far beyond that: She won an Emmy Award for her role as K.C. Koloski in the '80s drama "China Beach," and has appeared in classic movies like "Species" and "Bad Boys." Even before her small-screen success, Helgenberger was rubbing elbows with bigwigs — though she didn't know it at the time. "I was [at Northwestern] with a few people who are doing quite well," she remembers. Julia Louis-Dreyfus and I played hookers together in "The Three Penny Opera." I played Low Dive Jenny and Julia was one of my girls."

She also shared the stage with "Shawshank Redemption" star Clancy Brown in "A Streetcar Named Desire" (he played Finch; she played Blanche DuBois) and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Bruce Norris in "Taming of the Shrew."

Still, "CSI" stands out as Helgenberger's most significant role yet, something that might intimidate most actors in her position. But the down-to-earth star is determined not to fall victim to industry pressures. "I don't think you can compare a show von let to another show. So much has happened in the 14 years since 'CSI.' The kind of success it had right out of the gate — that doesn't happen very often, she says. And in typical badass fashion, Helgenberger is confident in the choices she's made and at ease about the future of her career. "You just put faith into everyone else's abilities and the rest is fate."

Watch "Intelligence" Mondays at 9 p.m. on CBS.
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GREENS
From Werp Farms in Michigan
Lucas Neff reads two pages from 20 different books every day. He's attempted an ultramarathon. He does stand-up comedy as a middle-aged alter ego. And he studies physics in his spare time. He's the mustached "Most Interesting Man in the World" from the Dos Equis commercials, but when it comes to being an interesting person, the 28-year-old "Raising Hope" star and Chicago native ranks pretty high. There's a fair amount of things I try to keep a finger in," he says.

It's a stark contrast to Jimmy Chance, the charming but hapless goofball he currently plays on the Fox comedy "Raising Hope." The show, now in its fourth season, is based on the premise that Jimmy fathered a daughter, Hope, with a death row prisoner, and for help raising her he turns to his crazy but loveable family, including his mother, played by Steppenwolf ensemble member Martha Plimpton, and great-grandmother, played by Cloris Leachman. "He's a character that is really sweet, and that's an easy choice to play someone who is likeable," Neff says. He's pragmatic about why he took the job — "I was really broke and it was the best opportunity I had," he says. Neff is hardly biding his time, anyway. This year, his focus is on his writing career. He's currently shopping around a few pilots. "It all comes from the same place to me," Neff says of the multiple art forms. "In a selfish way, writing can be a lot more satisfying, because it has so few collaborative filters — it's what I want to say and how I want to say it. Wheras when you're an actor, you're a vehicle or conduit for other people's ideas. You serve a much bigger purpose."

That doesn't mean he's abandoning acting. Later this year, he'll star in "Glitch," a rom-com starring fellow Chicagoan Lamorne Morris from "New Girl." And he's currently hard at work on the Pixar movie "The Good Dinosaur," in which he'll voice Arlo, the title character. It's set to be released in November 2015. "It's a dream come true to work with Pixar," he says. "It's like being invited to the Chocolate Factory. But then you think, I might not be Charlie. I might be Augustus Gloop. You're always hoping and savoring every minute, because you never know when you're going to get sucked up that tube out of a chocolate river."

In his spare time, Neff is always pushing himself to learn more and do more. He's in the middle of dozens of different books at any point (see sidebar), and he recently ran an ultramarathon, though he finished only 37 of the 62 miles before his body collapsed. "It was my fault, I didn't train very well," he says. "But it was a blast. I learned a lot about myself when you're in that much pain. I'd love to do it again."

Neff returns to Chicago often to visit family, and when asked what he does when he comes back, he rattles his list off quickly: "Get a slice of Tedino's pizza, go to the Coffee Studio to get a drink, go to Hopleaf to get the mussels. And then I try to do as many improv shows as I can, at iO usually and sometimes Second City." But now that he's gotten a dose of California sunshine, he's a little more particular about when he returns. "I'm happy to skip October through March. Winter is no joke, man," he says. "I know people will call me all sorts of names, and I say, go ahead. Call me the worst thing you can think of. I'll take that name and sit back in my T-shirt and shorts in February. That's the one bad rap it really has against it. But it's a great town."
There’s an intensity of passion in the Chicago theater community. There’s a real idealism that can be rejuvenating to be around.’

’NEFF SAID

“I try to read at least two pages of about 20-30 different books every day,” Neff says. “It’s really refreshing, mentally. As I started reading a few pages of everything a day, I went from fiction into nonfiction, and I started reading about all these fascinating characters in history. All of a sudden I was like, why am I not studying science? I don’t have to pass a test. I can take my time until I come to a good grasp. In doing that, I really began to open my eyes to this new information about how the planet functions, how the universe functions, how we function. It’s all about coming to a closer understanding about who we are.”

In no particular order, here’s what’s currently on Neff’s reading list:

- Dreams of a Final Theory: The Scientist’s Search for the Ultimate Laws of Nature by Steven Weinberg
- The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe by Steven Weinberg
- “Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman!” (Adventures of a Curious Character) by Richard P. Feynman
- The Story of Civilization by Will and Ariel Durant
- Moby Dick by Herman Melville
- The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Great Expectations by Charles Dickens
- Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace
- Why Does the World Exist? An Existential Detective Story by Jim Holt
- Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking by Daniel C. Dennett
- The Emperor’s New Mind: Concerning Computers, Minds, and the Laws of Physics by Roger Penrose
- Masters of Light: Conversations with Contemporary Cinematographers by Dennis Schaefer
- My Lunches with Orson: Conversations between Henry Jaglom and Orson Welles by Peter Biskind
- Tenth of December: Stories by George Saunders
- The Tin Drum by Günter Grass
Four new boutique hotels — with more on the way — prove downtown Chicago is in the midst of a hotel revival

BY MADELINE NUSSE
Formerly the Amalfi Hotel, this River North establishment reopened in February with a name change and a multimillion dollar facelift courtesy of a new investor.

**Rooms:** Average around $200

**Design:** The rehabbed design draws from the story of hotel namesake Mr. Kinzie, an early Chicago settler and the father of the city's first hotelier. A rather complex life story (exploring the Chicago river, escaping Fort Dearborn and — wait for it — a murder trial and acquittal) provides decor motifs that resonate as visually simple and pleasing.

**For locals:** Just north of the Loop, this spot is good for a quick staycation near the office and is still walkable to River North entertainment.

20 W. Kinzie; kinziehotel.com

### Making Rooms

Several more hotels are in the works as well — ranging from almost-ready to mere whispers.

**Openings:** Hotel in the former Chicago Athletic Association (12 S. Michigan), Fall 2014; Loews Chicago Hotel (435 N. Park), January 2015; AC Hotel by Marriott (630 N. Rush), spring 2015; Hyatt Chicago The Loop (100 W. Monroe), 2015; Indigo Hotel Millennium Park (168 N. Michigan), 2015; McCormick Place Marriott Marquis (2215 S. Michigan), 2016; Lincoln Park Hotel (N. Fremont south of North), TBA; OUT Hotel (3343 N. Halsted), TBA

**Whispers:** Brooklyn Bowl Hotel in the West Loop, Nobu Hotel in the West Loop, unnamed hotel across from 1K Fulton in the West Loop, unnamed hotel in the London Guarantee Building, Hilton Garden Inn on E. Wacker

Debuting in 1995 in London as a “members-only house” catering to those in film, media and creative industries, the global company has since expanded (with locations in Manhattan, Miami Beach and West Hollywood) and plans to open a West Loop locale this summer.

**Rooms:** Start at $160

**Design:** Exposed concrete interiors and an ornamental entrance maintain the character of the building, the 1907 Chicago Belting Factory, rehabbed to accommodate 40 bookable guestrooms and loads of amenities, including rainforest showers and Cowshed products.

**Restaurant:** Pizza East and Chicken Shop — both popular concepts owned by the Soho House group — serve up dishes with local, seasonal ingredients, and are also open to the public.

**Luxurious elements:** The fifth floor offers members-only areas, including the Drawing Room, Pantry Bar, Club Bar and House Kitchen Grill. To top it off (literally), the roof features an outdoor deck with an 80-foot pool and the glass-enclosed Rooftop Bar & Kitchen. A 12,000-square-foot gym contains steam rooms, three studios and a boxing ring.

**For visitors:** At some point, Mr. Kinzie smitted a silver double-barred cross, giving the sixth-floor Double Cross Lounge its name. The spot serves Chicago-themed drinks and snacks to hotel guests only.

**For locals:** Just north of the Loop, this spot is good for a quick staycation near the office and is still walkable to River North entertainment.

20 W. Kinzie; kinziehotel.com

The opening date of Richard Branson’s “next generation of lifestyle hotels” has been pushed back since whispers of its Chicago entree swirled in 2011. But with a GM now on lockdown (Anna Anderson, formerly of Hotel Sax and Iron Horse Milwaukee), the fall 2014 launch looks pretty solid.

**Design:** Set in the 27-story Dearborn Bank Building, the hotel has plans to refurbish and re-create its historic 1928 edifice. Expect 250 guest rooms and 40 one-bedroom suites that make use of existing art deco details and add a bit of Virgin’s trademark swagger.

**Restaurant:** Mum's the word on a restaurant, but we expect one — or more — to open inside the building.

**Luxurious elements:** Keeping in line with Branson’s self-proclaimed “rock-star businessman” profile, two Rock Star suites welcome high-rollers.

**For visitors:** The Loop location is ground zero for business and financial workers journeying to Chicago. Additionally, Virgin promises functional design that “removes many of the common pain points” of today’s business-weary travelers.

**For locals:** Like a quick trip across the pond, this surely-glitzy Brit-owned hotspot should provide respite from downtown's big-shoulder mentality.

203 N. Wabash; virginhotels.com

Opening this summer

**Soho House**

**Opening this fall**

**Virgin Hotel**
Tracy Campbell & James Hulshof

Tracy Campbell and James Hulshof agree that their first date didn't exactly go as planned. "It was a disaster!" laughs Campbell. First, Hulshof admitted he'd forgotten to make a reservation at the Pump Room on a busy Friday night, and at the start of the date, his colleagues showed up and crashed the occasion. At the end of the evening, when the bill came, Hulshof handed over his credit card only to find out they didn't accept Discover. But despite his three strikes, Campbell gave Hulshof another chance. "It was the best decision I've ever made," she says.

Hulshof, Red Bull's district manager, was able to win over Campbell, a dermatologist, on the many dates that followed, and after a two-year courtship, the pair tied the knot this winter at St. Michael's (1633 N. Cleveland). The soirée continued at Trump International Hotel & Tower (401 N. Wabash), where planner Rachel Bradley created a Chicago-centric winter wonderland for the couple and their 140 guests. Stunning crystal candelabras stood as tabletop centerpieces, while multiple ice sculptures decked the room, including a martini ice luge in the shape of the city's skyline. Even the couple's nine-tier wedding cake included a mini-Willis Tower in silver fondant icing. Despite their not-so-perfect beginning, Campbell says it was the perfect wedding. "I was just so happy the entire day. I'm so lucky I married this man." — Kristin Larson

IT'S IN THE DETAILS
Planner: Rachel Bradley, Rachel Bradley Events; Rachelbradleyevents.com
Reception venue and catering: Trump Hotel Chicago, 401 N. Wabash; Trumphotelmagazine.com/chicago Band: Becca Kaufman Orchestra; Beccakaufmanorchestra.com Florist: Richard Remiard Design, 451 N. Paulina; Richardremiard.com Photographer: Jai Girard Photography, 1358 N. Campbell; Jajigirard.com Videographer: REM Video; Remep.com Ice sculptures: Nadeau Ice Sculptures; Nadeauice.com Cake: Cake Chicago, 1635 N. Walnut; Cake-chicago.com Hair: Frankie Christina, (708) 307-0890; Frankiechristina.com Makeup: Stella Mikhail, (847) 845-0812; Stellaibeauty@yahoo.com Invitations: Pulp & Ink, 1344 N. Wells; Pulpandink.com

CHEERS!

West Loop-based shoe company Bucketfeet celebrates its third anniversary, and to honor the milestone, founders Aaron Firestein and Raaja Nemani will premier their Chicago Collection — a series of six new designs doodled by local artists — available starting March 2 at their Block 37 store (108 N. State).

Talk about a wild wedding: Peter Christman and Kristen Dold are tying the knot next July at the Lincoln Park Zoo. Christman, a student at the University of Chicago, recently popped the question to Dold, a writer. The duo met as undergraduate students at the University of Notre Dame.

Former freelance PR consultant and event pro Kate Gleason has struck a delicious deal: She joined the team at XA The Experiential Agency as an account director, taking on clients like Japonais by Morimoto, Le Colonial and Jake Melnick's Corner Tap.

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.
The perfect abode is just a click away

BY MADELINE NUSSEZ

Around 90 percent of today's homebuyers start their search online — and that number might soon surge even higher. In January, a record 70 million unique users visited Zillow, the leading consumer real estate website in the Chicago area. While cold temps kept some homebuyers from pounding the pavement, real estate websites saw a boost in traffic. But how best to harness the real estate portal space in order to find your dream home? The decidedly untechnical answer: Find a good broker.

“The information that’s now available online — brokers think it makes us less useful. But it makes us more useful, because buyers don’t understand what it all means,” says Matt Laricy (right), who runs Americorp brokerage Laricy Group. On Seattle-based Zillow and its competitor, San Francisco-based Trulia, Laricy’s profile ranks as one of the highest globally. To get this ranking, he uses the websites’ paid services (they’re free for consumers) and answers dozens of message board questions daily from the real estate curious. He also runs a paperless business, uses digital contracts, downloads profile sheets to a client’s Dropbox and responds around the clock via email. Though older generations can be reluctant to adapt, busy millennials see time savings. “In downtown Chicago, my bread and butter, people can work until 8 or 9 at night. We make their lives easy,” Laricy says.

Regardless of the broker, websites like Trulia and Zillow allow buyers to see taxes, past sales and neighborhood information, and search for properties with hot features, like Laricy’s 1300 N. Astor unit 25A, which boasts floor-to-ceiling windows in more than 1,600 square feet of space. (Call Laricy at 708-250-2696.) The southeast-facing two-bed two-bath asks $525,000 (though still needs a bit of work) — and with the help of an Internet-savvy broker, it’s only a click (or two) away.

The living room of 1300 N. Astor, unit 25A

RED-HOT PROPERTY

One of the most prominent real estate websites in Chicago, Redfin (left) doubles as a full-service broker. It uses MLS data to load and constantly refresh listings on its site, which offers smart search options — even enabling users to search by school district. The recently added feature might lead a buyer to 2936 N. Lincoln unit 3N (left), a sizable two-bed two-bath near coveted Burley Elementary School for $474,900 (call Redfin broker Nate Brecht at 773-432-7364).

Best of all, Brecht says, agents are paid salary and not by commission. “We’re consultants, not salespeople.”

BEST BED

Bedroom rehabbers will like Crate & Barrel’s easy online Bedding Planner, which lets you see how mix-and-match beds (duvet, quilt, sheets, pillows, shams, oh my!) look on your bed. One of our favorite new-to-season choices: Marimekko Rantapuisto Citron bed linen. $39.95-$149.95, Crateandbarrel.com/bedding-planner.
Birds of a feather

Lonely hearts find love — or do they? — in Christian O’Reilly’s ‘Chapatti’

BY THOMAS CONNORS

Chicago audiences have long enjoyed performances by Irish theater companies, from Dublin’s Abbey to Galway’s Druid, and along the way, attendees have been exposed to some of the country’s best contemporary playwrights, including Martin McDonough and Mark O’Rowe. Now, Skokie’s Northlight Theatre throws the spotlight on Irishman Christian O’Reilly as it debuts his moving, humorous, two-character show “Chapatti,” starring John Mahoney and Penny Slusher and directed by BJ Jones.

A co-production of Northlight and the Galway Arts Festival, where the piece will play in July, “Chapatti” details an encounter between Dan and Betty, two lonely 60-somethings who love their pets. “I like to put two people in a room or on a bench and get them talking,” says O’Reilly, whose past works include “The Good Father,” in which a cadd embraces the prospect of unexpected parenthood, and “Sanctuary,” the story of an intellectually challenged couple in love. “I’m interested in seeing two characters spark off each other and struggle for control. I’m curious to see what conflict may reveal about them.”

Booze and familial and communal dysfunction have figured often in Irish plays. Though “Chapatti” doesn’t tread that path, it’s not entirely a heartwarming fireside tale, either. “My intention with ‘Chapatti’ was to show two people who seldom have the opportunity to communicate with others in a deep and intimate way, but who gradually discover a way to do this,” O’Reilly says.

Built from interweaving monologues, “Chapatti” (the title takes its name from Dan’s dog, named after the Indian flatbread) generates both a sense of intimacy and distance. “The monologue form has become synonymous with Irish theater,” O’Reilly says. “It just seemed like the right form for ‘Chapatti,’ which is a story I had also experimented with in more conventional fashion.

It’s a play about two lonely people, and the monologue seems to me like a lonesome sort of form — one person, on their own, telling their story.”

It’s never easy for a playwright to present a finished piece for the first time. But in this instance O’Reilly can rest easy — Northlight audiences got a taste of “Chapatti” in 2012 as part of the company’s Interplay Reading Series. “I am hopeful that American audiences will respond well to the play, but I would be a fool to be complacent,” he says. “But if the Interplay audience is representative of American audiences, they will be open, curious and embracing of it, if it moves and engages them.”
Shoe savvy
New to the North Shore, Tria boutique welcomes shoppers to its 5,000-square-foot space, dedicated to designer footwear and accessories. Join co-owners Jody Strauss-Figura and Tony Patel for the grand opening March 3 and peruse shoes by Stuart Weitzman, Fratelli Rossetti, Derek Lam and Rupert Sanderson, and accessories by Andrea Fohrman, Pippa, Jason Wu, DVF and more. Monday through Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 720 N. Waukegan, Deerfield, Shoptria.com

Secret sale
Clever Alice, a mobile marketplace that helps designers sell samples and overstock from their showrooms, swoops into Chicago March 6-9 for its quarterly pop-up shop. Snag up to 75 percent off hard-to-find pieces from designers like Super Trash, Allison Collection, 81 Poppies and Wendy Katlen. 845 W. Chicago, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Cleveralice.com

Test drive
Try before you buy at appliance and plumbing store Pirch. On March 8 at 10 a.m., the Oakbrook Center flagship store — the first outpost outside of its native California — swings open the doors of its 30,000-square-foot space, revealing live cooktops, ovens, refrigerators and grills, as well as working showers, sinks and baths by brands from around the world. 100 Oakbrook Center, Oakbrook; Thepirch.com

Cindy + Johnny dress, retail $120, on sale for $50

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Cindy + Johnny dress, retail $120, on sale for $50
The ‘Teen Wolf’ actress talks auditions, archery and bonding with her castmates

Even though she's based in LA, 29-year-old Crystal Reed is a Midwesterner at heart. After growing up outside Detroit, she moved to Chicago to cut her teeth in local plays and commercials. Now, she stars on “Teen Wolf,” which — with more than 2.4 million viewers — has become a certified hit and has been renewed by MTV for a fourth season.

Road to Hollywood
“Every actor has her one actor heartbreak — you put all of your thought into [an audition] and imagine yourself as Audrey Hepburn, then all of a sudden your bubble bursts. I auditioned for ‘The Dark Knight’ and went really far and then didn’t get it. I was completely devastated. The next week or so, I remember looking out my window and they were filming. I thought it could either turn me into a depressed person, or I could take it as a sign that I need to move, so I did the latter and moved to LA and got an agent.”

Role call
“[The producers of ‘Teen Wolf’] wanted me to come in and have the prop master show me how to use the bow and arrow, but there's nothing worse than when I'm watching something and can tell the actor has no idea what he's doing — so I said I actually wanted to learn [how to use it]. They set up archery lessons for me and I learned everything I could about the proper way to shoot and different techniques. I love being physical with my job, so it was nice for me.”

Set stories
“When we all got [cast], we had basically started with nothing, so it was really great to be able to work with a bunch of people who had no egos, were just up-and-coming actors who wanted to make a good show. We became really close and formed a bond that we'll never forget, that makes for a really beautiful set life.”

Fan favorite
“I don't really feel like I've made it — I feel like I'm just a silly girl from Detroit that's on a TV show. But there was a moment last summer at Comic-Con where I was taken aback. It was the first time we had to have security because there were masses and masses of fans, and that could be a security threat. I had a slight feeling like if they just reached me, things could get out of hand. That whole crazy fandom is insane.”

Star-struck
“My favorite actor, and one that I wish to emulate, is Meryl Streep. If I met her, I might just be completely speechless. My motto in life and on set is ‘What Would Meryl Do?’ because she can do no wrong in my book. But for the most part, the stars I look twice at are musicians, because I have no idea how they do what they do; actors, I know how they do it. I get it.”

What's next
“Film is an avenue that I really want to explore more. I've learned that my personality is quite impulsive and spontaneous, so the idea that I could play a character for six months and then play something else immediately after is really appealing to me.”

“Teen Wolf” airs Mondays at 9 p.m. on MTV
Celeste brings a little taste of heaven to River North

BY ANTHONY TODD

With a crop of new restaurants opening every month in Chicago, it’s tough to make sweeping, superlative statements about any one place — heck, it’s tough to even keep up. But we’re going to say that River North spot Celeste — the French word for heavenly — might be the prettiest new restaurant in the city. Housed in an 1888 Louis Sullivan building (formerly home to Swirl Wine Bar), just entering the main dining room feels like stepping back into an art deco supper club, replete with dim lighting, authentic tunes (think big band and soft jazz) and a bustling but civilized atmosphere. “The size and delicate nature of the building lent itself to a feminine identity,” says Nader Hindo, who owns the spot with his brothers Rafid and Fadi. That identity is reflected in delicate moldings, gold-leaved ceilings and filigree chinas. Just must not “feminine” for soft — the cocktail menu rivals Chicago’s best, and the simplicity of the menu is a refreshing addition to the city’s culinary landscape. Here’s our take on Celeste.

Menu musts: Upon first glance the menu looks sparse, offering a small selection of dishes that markedly lack the array of crazy ingredients diners have never heard of before. But don’t be fooled into judgment. “We’re so used to seeing ‘fusion’ menus that we feel people have forgotten what simple, classic food looks and tastes like,” says executive chef Aaron Lirette, who most recently helmed the kitchen at the now-shuttered Duchamp. For example, scallop crudo ($14) is topped with celery root crumble and a surprising hit of spicy pepper. The burrata and farro salad blends a range of textures, adding smoked grapes, braised endive and Marcona almonds. Each beet in the beet salad is plated standing on end, a row of delicious edible soldiers standing in a swatch of yogurt and caraway-honey vinaigrette ($12). And what could have been a simple steak is enhanced with a bone marrow-cognac sauce that will make you wish you had a whole loaf of bread to sop it up ($34).

Split levels: Celeste’s four floors are divided into four different concepts. Right now, only two levels are open to customers: The second-floor dining room, which serves a full menu, and the first-floor bar, which has small plates and its own cocktail list. The owners are tight-lipped about plans for the third floor, but tell us that the fourth floor will be a English-style garden rooftop, complete with Louis Sullivan tile, Victorian furniture and its own food and drink menu. It’s slated to open in April, weather permitting.

Drink up: Stretching over five pages, the list of cocktails ranges from crazy and challenging to old classics. Bar program director Fred Sarkis (formerly of Sable Kitchen and Bar) says everything is arranged based on phases of the moon, with “waxing crescent” representing approachable drinks and “full moon” standing in for those that are more challenging. “Those of us in the cocktail world forgot that not everyone likes amaro or funky eau de vie like we tend to,” says Sarkis. That said, if you’re looking for something funky, this is the place — try a Patriot’s Ride, with gin, Bonal and Aperol, served at room temperature ($13).

Cocktail globetrotting: Rather than inventing the entire cocktail list in-house, Sarkis gives a nod to his peers, devoting a page to drink recipes borrowed from his industry pals. “The goal was to include drinks that fall outside of our ‘house style,’” he explains. For dinners, this means you can taste the best of bars from around the globe without leaving River North. Try the Aztec Cold/Hot Chocolate ($13), a blend of chocolate and chili-infused crema de mezcal, Kahlua and mole cream, courtesy of Steve Olson from Apt. 13 in New York City.

111 W Hubbard, (312) 829-9000; Celestechicago.com
Room for improvement

1. Lucy Rose Design Collection: Miss Print, starts at $140 per roll, Urban Source, 1429 W. Chicago; Urban-sourcechicago.com
2. Bonobos Guide Shop: Rhodes collar oxford, $88, 845 W. Armitage; Bonobos.com
3. Charlotte Seeling: Fashion; 150 Years of Couturiers, Designers, Labels, $60, Barneys New York, 15 E. Oak; Barneys.com
4. Space519: encrusted sawtooth stool, $795, 900 N. Michigan; Space519.com
5. Coyle & Herr: Taccia table lamp, $1,200, 1200 W. 35th; Coyle-andherr.com
6. Fire Clay Tile: tile in lagoon, $25.80/square foot; Fireclaytile.com
8. Interior Define: Sloan chair in cerulean, $500, 2027 W. North; Interiordefine.com
9. Earth Cadets: Tri Tri Again pillow, $45; Shopearthcadets.com
10. Wrightwood Furniture: iron and glass cabinet, $1042, 3036 N. Lincoln; Wrightwoodfurniture.com

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"Bold blue accent pieces provide a great counterpoint to neutral-toned sofas and rugs."

"Make them pop with unique throw pillows."

"We love mixing industrial accents with contemporary and vintage pieces. This cabinet provides a great combination of display and storage."

"Mixing wood or stone accents is an easy way to elevate your space."

"We like placing interesting materials and textures in unexpected places. For example, a tile wall in a living or dining room."

"We love accessories that play double duty. These walnut serving bowls look as good on a kitchen counter as they do on a coffee table or sideboard."

"Mixing wood or stone accents is an easy way to elevate your space."

How Rob Royer and Steve McClearn, founders of Interior Define, pull spaces together with style.
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Lauren Geremia & Korey Smith

Lauren, originally from Orland Park, and Korey, from St. Louis, married Oct. 12 at Holy Name Cathedral and celebrated with a reception Pazzo's Cucina Italiana, both in Chicago. The couple live in Chicago.

We want to share your engagement, wedding or anniversary story — free of charge. For more information, contact Renee Lee at rlee@bouquetcatcher.com or 312-651-6613.

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*Bedroom Furniture is 10% off in March.*
John Mahoney back at Northlight for ‘Chapatti’

BY CATEY SULLIVAN
For Sun-Times Media

A decade after his last episode on the hit sitcom "Frasier," venerable actor John Mahoney, 73, can afford to be super-selective about when and where he wants to work. Having famously portrayed Martin Crane on the well-regarded TV show from 1993 until 2004, the Oak Park resident allows that he has the luxury of being particular with his projects. Over the past year, he's opted for roles that took him from Hollywood to Liverpool, England and finally, to Skokie, where he'll star in Northlight Theatre's world premiere production of playwright Christian O'Reilly's bittersweet drama, "Chapatti."

"I don't pursue TV or film much anymore, unless it's something I really, really want to do," Mahoney explains shortly after returning from stints in California, where he played Betty White's boyto in "Hot in Cleveland" and from Liverpool, where he shot a guest starring spot on the acclaimed British series "Foyle's War." "I'm perfectly happy with that scene at the vet, where there's nothing to read on the plane back to Chicago, so I read it. And when we landed, I called BJ."

In "Chapatti," Mahoney plays Dan, a suicidal man in "late middle age" who plans on hanging himself just as soon as he finds a good home for his beloved dog Chapatti (the canine is named for an Indian dish his owner fancies). The two-actor cast co-stars Penny Slusher as Betty, a strong-minded widow with an affinity for cats. But while Dan and Betty form the nexus of "Chapatti," Mahoney and Slusher are also charged with playing crowds of additional characters including a veterinarian's waiting room full of pet owners, a cantankerous invalid whose world is upended when her favorite feline gets squashed by a car, a punk teenager and an assortment of office personnel trying to round up half a dozen escaped kittens.

"It's extremely challenging, trying to make the audience see different characters in you, all the different people you have to bring to the stage. And who you have to interact with on stage, even though they aren't really physically there. Like that scene at the vet, where there's all these people and all these kittens running around," says Mahoney.

"Chapatti" points out something that I try to keep very close to myself in my everyday life which is that you have a choice about what kind of life you're going to have," says Slusher. "You're going to have challenges and difficulties. But how you handle those big moments, those times when it seems that nothing is going your way, that's what gives you your power." "Look, it's a privilege to be in the world premiere of 'Chapatti' at Northlight Theatre. The play follows two lonely animal lovers who form companionship in each other.

John Mahoney and Penny Slusher are starring in the world premiere of "Chapatti" at Northlight Theatre. The play follows two lonely animal lovers who find companionship in each other.
After 20 years as founder and conductor of the Park Ridge Civic Orchestra, Maestro Edgar Muenzer is stepping down from the podium. "It's hard to believe that it's been 20 years since we started," said the acclaimed violinist, 86. "But this will be absolutely, truly, the last time I conduct."

The program includes two large works by Richard Strauss: "Don Juan" and the suite from his opera "Der Rosenkavalier." It also reflects Muenzer's affection for the classical repertoire of Spain, opening with Manuel de Falla's "The Three-Cornered Hat." "We played that piece in our first season in 1994 and this will be the only time we've played it since," Muenzer explained. Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo's popular Concierto d'Aranjuez will follow the da Falla, with Ann Waller as soloist. Waller is on the faculty at Northwestern University School of Music and in addition to giving guitar lessons, she teaches a class on the history of lute and guitar music. She has organized the Segovia Classical Guitar series given at NU's Evanston campus, now in its 21st year. It was at Northwestern that she met Edgar Muenzer, who taught at its Bienen School of Music for 18 years.

Muenzer's successor on the podium is his son Victor Muenzer, who has conducted the Park Ridge Civic Orchestra in the past and is a Grammy Award-winning music producer.

Music has deep roots in the family. Edgar's father was a violinist and his mother a concert pianist. He attended Lane Tech High School in Chicago and like most young men of his era, he went on to serve in the military. After his service, he studied at Peabody Conservatory in Boston under the GI Bill.

Fast forward to 1994, when he and his wife Nancy were viewing a film at the Pickwick Theatre in Park Ridge, where they had made their home. "I looked around and said to Nancy, 'This would be a great place for an orchestra concert,'" he recalled. They were members of the Park Ridge Country Club and spoke to fellow members about the possibility of forming a civic orchestra.

"About a dozen of us kicked in a thousand dollars each," he said. "I said that I would conduct for the first year without pay if the players would agree to play free that year also!"
A PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATION  NIL

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2014

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

and GALWAY ARTS FESTIVAL

Chapatti
by CHRISTIAN O'REILLY
directed by BJ JONES

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For Sun-Times Media

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BY MYRNA PETLICKI
For Sun-Times Media

MOVEMENTS HAVE MEANING
Your family will learn the nonverbal methods animals use to communicate at Shake Your Tail Feathers, 6-7 p.m. Wednesday, March 12 at Wildwood Nature Center, 529 Forestview Ave., Park Ridge. The cost is $10 per family. Registration is required. For details, call (847) 692-3570 or go to www.skokielibrary.org.

A DRUM ROLL, PLEASE
There will be plenty of them during Second Sunday Korean Drumming, 2-2:45 p.m. March 9 at Niles Public Library, 6960 Oakton St. In celebration of the local Korean community, the drumming will range from folk music to royal court music. Pick up tickets at the KidSpace Desk starting at 1:30 p.m.

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

SAY YES TO SCIENCE
Getting kids excited about science is the goal of the 2014 Family Science Expo, 2-5 p.m. Sunday, March 9 at Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St. Many Chicago area science organizations will bring interactive exhibits for families to explore at this drop-in event.

For details, call (847) 324-3149 or go to www.skokielibrary.org.

IN PERFECT HARMONY
There will be singing, dancing and instrument playing at Harmonious Horizons - Family Music Class, 10:20-10:50 a.m. or 11-11:30 a.m. Monday, March 17 at Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave. The class is designed for children ages 1 month-5 years, with an adult. Registration is required.

For details, call (847) 625-3128 or go to www.parkridgelibrary.org.
Fate delivers romance in ‘The Lunchbox’

BY BRUCE INGRAM
Film Critic

One of the things we learn from “The Lunchbox,” a very modern, yet also very old-fashioned, romance from India, is that sometimes the wrong train will get you to the right station.

If you have the courage to get on board.

Warm and wistful with a subtle undercurrent of melancholy, “The Lunchbox” is the story of two lonely, unhappy people who connect through a fateful mistake that’s literally one in a million. Those are the odds, according to debut writer-director Ritesh Batra, reported by Harvard mathematicians who calculated the likelihood of an error in the 120-year-old system used by Mumbais often-illiterate dabbawallah delivery men.

Who deliver, almost unfailingly, elaborately coded hot lunches each day from countless housewives to countless office-worker husbands in the city of 12 million. But not in this case.

Ila (quietly luminous Nimrat Kaur) is a neglected wife trying to put some spice back into her marriage by sending especially delicious lunches to her withdrawn husband. One day, she is thrilled when the lunchbox is returned licked-clean, but instead of her husband, it went to Saajan, (Irrfan Khan, “Life of Pi”) a reserved, ungenial widower, who knows how to appreciate a good meal. When Ila discovers the mistake, she encloses a note in the next lunchbox, thanking him for giving her momentary happiness when she thought her husband had enjoyed it.

And so begins a daily exchange of notes that starts with curt critiques of the cooking and gradually develops into a relationship as Ila and Saajan share more and more details of their personal lives. Eventually, especially when Ila shares her conviction that her husband is having an affair, their relationship slips into something akin to courtship, a virtual romance of the type they might have struck up in an Internet chat room — but using the more personal, sensuous, only recently discarded medium of handwritten letters. And Saajan starts to imagine they could start a new life together.

“The Lunchbox” is more a remembrance of the forgotten pleasure of receiving honest-to-goodness, pen-and-ink letters than it is a celebration of good food. And it’s also a memorable portrait of day-to-day life in an impossibly crowded city in which people, nonetheless, manage to be unhappily isolated. Mostly, though, it’s a thoroughly charming fable about the hope for a better future two of them glimpse when they’re connected despite astronomical odds. One that’s marred only by an inconclusive ending that’s likely to leave you wanting more.

Frustrating as that may be, though, it underscores the importance of getting on that train when you have the chance.
Tablescapes 101:
Layering on the opulence

Add charm, whimsy and decadence to your table with these easy (and affordable) tips and tricks.

Think big by thinking small

“When it comes to creating memorable tablescapes, you need to pay attention to the details,” says Rebecca Eckblad, Floral Director of Mariano’s. Eckblad and her team of floral designers are adept at creating rich, decadent settings without breaking the bank.

Before getting started, Eckblad recommends choosing a theme to set the tone for your event and tie disparate elements together. Next, start layering your table with items that are beautiful, alluring and functional. “Our floral designers love to think outside the box by adding elements of surprise or using items in unconventional ways,” says Eckblad.

For example, try replacing traditional chargers with large Monstera leaves (available from or by ordering at most floral shops and Mariano’s), or swap mason jars for drinking glasses for a rustic flair. Need a clever idea for place card holders? Try using artichokes. Simply chop off the stems and attach each card with raffia or ribbon.

The floral designers of Mariano’s take advantage of the lush luxury of flowers and fruits layered with sculptural elements and rich materials.

Make a big impact for less

“To save time and money, use flowers that are big on impact and small on fuss,” says event planner extraordinaire Debi Lilly. As the founder and owner of “A Perfect Event,” http://aperfectevent.com, Lilly spends hours creating tablescapes for large events and intimate occasions.

One of her favorite tips is to fill a pretty vase with one or two large hydrangeas, which creates the illusion of a full flower arrangement without all the work.

Another eye-catching flower is the cymbidium orchid. Its vibrant colors add elegance and sophistication, while its ability to survive several hours without water makes it the perfect adornment for a place setting or napkin.

Function and form

Lilly is also a strong advocate for using tablescapes to make your life easier and simpler. “Try creating an edible centerpiece, with a visual explosion of gorgeous foods,” she says.

Incorporate big wheels of cheese, olives, salamis and jams, which require little prep work and taste great at room temperature.

For a sweet ending to special occasions, set up a dessert vignette on a side table or buffet. Display a collection of delectable treats such as chocolate truffles, miniature cookies and bite-size cupcakes, or add a pop of color with glass containers (bowls, jars, martini glasses, etc.) filled with gumdrops, jellybeans and licorice rope. A stack of small bags lets guests take home a bag of treats and doubles as a party favor while serving as a clever way to get rid of extra candy.

Event planner Debi Lilly says a single hydrangea in a small vase has the impact of a much larger flower arrangement.

Unusual items, like a picture frame, add a note of surprise to a tablecape, like this one created by Flaire Design Studio for last year’s Flower and Garden Show at Navy Pier.

A tablescape of gorgeous edibles, suggested by Debi Lilly, is beautiful and practical for a party.

LEARN MORE

Spring blooms this month with the Chicago Flower and Garden Show at Navy Pier, March 15-23. Floral designers at Mariano's, along with several other entertainment experts, will showcase their tablescape talents throughout the show. There will also be workshops, demos and free activities for the kids and you're sure to get some new ideas for your next entertaining adventure. More information at chicagoflower.com.
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GO CALENDAR

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2014

Classic Film Series: ‘Mildred Pierce’
I p.m.: A screening of the 1945 film noir drama about a woman who struggles to win the favor of her spoiled daughter and prove she can be independent after cheating husband leaves. Ill minutes. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7829.

Cinematic Classics: ‘No Man of Her Own’
I p.m.: When dumped by her boyfriend, a poor and pregnant woman takes the identity of another woman killed in a train crash. Stars Barbara Stanwyck, Michael Ashley, William Holden, and Jane Wyman. 130 minutes. Eisenhower Public Library, 4600 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. Call 847-677-5277.

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 is playing this week. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge.

Classic Film Series: ‘West of Zanzibar’
7 p.m.: Silent film with piano accompaniment by David Drazin. 85 minutes. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. Call 847-677-5277.

‘Put Up Your Dukes, Part Two’
7 p.m.: Show dates are 7 p.m. March 6-8 and 14-15 and 2 p.m. March 9. For more information, call Kelly Munro at 847-823-1211 or email kellymunro@comcast.net. George Washington Elementary School, 1500 Stewart Ave., Park Ridge. $7 in advance, $10 at the door.

Friday, March 7

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. Call 847-677-5277.

Book & Travel Reviews: Annette Baldwin Presents Coco Chanel
10:30 a.m.: Lively and frank, the unforgettable “Coco” will share her fashion theories, reveal her business secrets and candidly discuss the men in her life and their influences on her work. Coffee at 10 a.m., program at 10:30. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. Call 847-677-5277, ext. 232.

Morning Matinees: ‘Instructions Not Included’
10:30 a.m.: A man who’s made a new life for himself with the child that was left on his doorstep six years ago finds his family threatened when the mother resurfaces. 100 minutes. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. Call 847-677-5277.

Film: ‘Last Vegas’
I p.m.: Three sixty-something friends come together to throw a bachelor party in Las Vegas for their remaining single friend. It stars Morgan Freeman, Michael Douglas, Robert De Niro and Kevin Kline. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. Call 847-677-5277.

Mother/Son Sports Spectacular
6:30 p.m.: A fun night for boys ages 4 to 10 to play sports and games with Mom. End the night with ice cream sundaes and awards. Come dressed in comfortably clothes and gym shoes. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127. $26 per couple; $33 per nonresident couple.

Beatles Nights On Tap
7 p.m.: Hear classic Beatles tunes performed live onstage by talented local musicians 7 p.m. March 7-8. Proceeds benefit the Youth Ministry Fund at PRCC, which supports youth mission trips and activities. Park Ridge Community Church, 100 Courtland Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-623-3164. $10 in advance, $15 for students; $15 at the door.

Nature’s Palette’ Reception
7 p.m.: The opening reception of the center’s new nature-themed art exhibition, featuring work by local artists. Emily Oaks Nature Center, 4650 Brummel St., Skokie.

Saturday, March 8

Skokie Art Guild
9:30 a.m.: The group offers figure drawing workshops every Saturday. There are live models but no instructor. Devonshire Cultural Center, 4400 Glenview Rd., Glenview. Call 847-724-4663. $40.

Friends Book Sale
I p.m.: Browse a selection of discounted items, including hardcover books, DVDs and CDs for $1 and paperback books for 50 cents. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7829.

Afternoon at the Movies for Families: ‘Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs 2’
2 p.m.: A screening of the 2013 animated film about an inventor who has to leave his new post to address the problems with his infamous machine that creates food-animal hybrids. 95 minutes. Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood. Call 847-677-5277, ext. 232.

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 847-825-3123.

Healthy Children Conference & Expo
10 a.m.: The American Academy of Pediatrics invites parents, grandparents, caregivers and kids to its first-ever Healthy Children Conference & Expo. The event will combine education and fun with experts from around the country discussing the latest information on children’s health and wellness for all ages from babies to teenagers. For more information and to register for the event visit www.healthychildrenexpo.org. Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Road, Rosemont. Call 312-556-1770. $10.

ABC Parent Group Vendor and Craft Fair
10 a.m.: This family-friendly event includes entertainment for the kids, raffles, snacks, a bake sale and a lot of shopping. Lincoln Middle School, 9750 Soreng Ave., Schiller Park. Call 847-529-8204.

Northbrook Women’s Club Spring Fashion Show
10 a.m.: Shop the mini-boutique, then join in for a delicious lunch and watch some of the club’s members model the newest spring and summer fashions from Country Classics, Juniper Boutique, Mainstream Boutique and Payton Rose. For more information, call Kathy Paleczny at 847-205-7931 or visit www.northbrookwomensclub.org.

Boy Scouts Host Pasta Dinner
I p.m.: Join Franklin Park Boy Scout Troup 158 for an all-you-can-eat dinner, desserts, raffles, door prizes and more. $5 for kids and seniors; $7 for adults. All proceeds benefit the Boy Scout troop. American Legion Post 974, 2757 Pacific Ave., Franklin Park. For more information, call 847-288-0459.
GlenVIEWINGS: 'Blue Jasmine'
1:30 p.m.: A New York housewife struggles through a daunting life crisis, ending up divorced, broke and untethered in San Francisco. Supported by a repertoire cast led by Cate Blanchett, this is Woody Allen's 73rd film. Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview. Call 847-729-7500. Free.

The Flat
1 p.m.: The documentary focuses on director Arnon Goldfinger, who discovers shocking family secrets while clearing out his grandmother's flat after her death. North Shore Senior Center, 847 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Call 847-784-6030. $8-$11.

Trivia Night
8 p.m.: Winners receive gift cards. Specials include $4 Budweiser products and 60-cent wings. Buffalo Wild Wings, 7020 Carpenter Road, Skokie. Call 847-529-9333.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

Film: 'Discover Ireland'
11:30 a.m.: 180 minutes. For more information, go to calendar.mgpl.org or call 847-825-3123. Morton Grove Public Library, 6410 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove.

Feature Film: 'Captain Phillips'

Flower Arranging
7 p.m.: Learn the basic steps of brush drawing and create an orchid painting. Niles Public Library District, 6860 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

Family Story Time
7 p.m.: Stories, songs and activities for families with children ages 2 to 6. Attendees are welcome to wear pajamas. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-1234.

MONDAY, MARCH 10

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

Friday Morning Coffee Club
10 a.m.: The group watches "Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern" about a family struggling to keep their farm in the family. Stars Bob Blankenship, Dean Elft and Marge Harold. 88 minutes. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

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 in the family. Stars Bob Blankenship, Dean Elft and Marge Harold. 88 minutes. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

'Below Stairs' Luncheon and Program
Noon: A live performance portrayal of a prominent lawyer who shoots his unfaithful girlfriend during a quarrel and must establish an alibi. Stars Claude Raines, Margo and Whitney Bourne. 80 minutes. Patio Theatre, 6008 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago. Call 773-950-0414. $5.
**FILM CLIPS**

**OPENING FRIDAY**

**300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE**

Rated R for strong sustained sequences of stylized bloody violence throughout, a sex scene, nudity and some language
Stars: Eva Green, Rodrigo Santoro, Sullivan Stapleton

After the sacrifice of 300 Spartan warriors at Thermopylae, the Greeks face a massive attack by the Persian god-king Xerxes (Santoro) and Artemisia (Green), the vengeful commander of his navy. Noam Murrow (“Smart People”) directed this sequel to the 2006 action hit.

**THE LUNCHBOX**

Rated PG for thematic material and smoking
Stars: Irrfan Khan, Nimrat Kaur, Nawazuddin Siddiqui

In Mumbai, an older man (Khan) begins a note-writing relationship with a young housewife (Kaur) when a lunchbox intended for her husband goes to him instead. Ritesh Batra makes his writing/directing debut with the romantic drama.

**MR. PEABODY & SHERMAN**

Rated PG for some mild action
Stars: Ty Burrell, Max Charles, Stephen Colbert, Leslie Mann

After a mishap involving his WABAC time machine, the canine genius/inventor Mr. Peabody (Burrell) and his adopted son Sherman (Charles) travel back in time to restore order. Rob Minkoff (“Stuart Little,” “The Lion King”) directed the animated family adventure.

**KIDS FOR CASH**

Rated PG-13 for some thematic material and language
Stars: Mark Ciavarella, Amanda Lorah, Michael Canahan

After the school shootings at Columbine, a local judge’s zero-tolerance approach to imprisoning juvenile offenders leads to a scandal and tragedy. Producer Robert May (“The Fog of War”) makes his directorial debut with the documentary.

**NON-STOP**

★★

Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of action and violence, some language, sensuality and drug references
Stars: Liam Neeson, Julianne Moore, Scoot McNairy

This cheesy trans-Atlantic aero-thriller goes nowhere fast — 500 mph fast — but at least it’s reasonably good dumb fun for roughly two-thirds of the ride. Neeson, still making 60-something men look good as an action hero, plays an alcoholic, flight-phobic federal air marshal trying to prevent a politically motivated psycho from killing a passenger every 20 minutes or blowing up the plane or both. It’s strange to think of this one playing as an in-flight movie.

**OMAR**

Rated: No MPAA rating
Stars: Adam Bakri, Leem Lubany, Eyad Hoourani

A young Palestinian man involved in the conflict with Israel becomes an informant after the killing of an Israeli soldier. Hany Abu-Assad (“Paradise Now”) directed the Best Foreign Film nominee.

**SON OF GOD**

Rated PG-13 for intense and bloody depiction of the Crucifixion, and for some sequences of violence
Stars: Diogo Morgado, Greg Hicks, Roma Downey, Amber Rose Revah

The story of Jesus (Morgado) from his birth to the resurrection. Christopher Spencer (“The Bible”) directed the drama.

**3 DAYS TO KILL**

★★ 1/2

Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of action and violence, some sensuality and language
Stars: Kevin Costner, Amber Heard, Hailee Steinfeld

The problem with “3 Days to Kill” isn’t that it’s unbelievable. It’s that it takes the unbelievable to weirdly disturbing and sentimental extremes. Costner stars as a terminally-ill CIA super-agent trying to reconnect with his estranged teenage daughter (Steinfeld) while secretly wiping out a small army of bad guys. On the plus side, the spectacular action is expertly staged by director McG (“Charlie’s Angels”) and Costner is good at the weary, laconic macho thing. It’s more than a little weird, though, when he teaches his daughter to slow-dance by dimming the lights and putting on Bread’s “Make it with You.” Eww.
### SHOWTIMES

Liam Neeson stars in "Non-Stop."

Movie times are effective Friday, March 7, through Thursday, March 13. 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.

**Mr. Peabody & Sherman (PG)**

Fri-Sun 1:30-6:8:15; Mon, Tue 4-6:8:15; Wed, Thu 4-6:8:15

**Son of God (PG-13)**

Fri-Sun 2-5-8; Mon, Tue 5-8; Wed, Thu 5-8;

**Starting Over Again (NR)**

Fri-Sun 2:45-5:30-8:30; Mon, Tue 5:30-8:30; Wed, Thu 8:30

**The Lego Movie (PG)**

Fri-Sun 1:30-4-6:30-8:45; Mon, Tue 4:30-6:30-8:45; Wed, Thu 4-6:15

**Civic Orchestra**

Wed 7:30

**Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (c. 1939)**

Thu 7:30

**ROSEMONT 18**

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

**ROSEMONT PREMIER**

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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
Contact theater for showtimes.

**AMC SHOWPLACE VILLAGE CROSSING 18**

7000 Carpenter Road
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- Newcity

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Memorial service was held on Thursday, February 27th from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. with a service at 8:00 p.m. at the Cooney Funeral Home 625 Busse Hwy Park Ridge.
In lieu of flowers donation to the following would be preferred; Heartland Animal Shelter, 2975 Milwaukee Ave Northbrook, IL 847-296-6400 or Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center, 1834 S Illinois Rt 2 PO Box 239 Oregon, IL 61061; 815-732-2220; or Valley of the Kings Sanctuary and Retreat W7593 Town Hall Road Sharon, WI 53585-9728; 262-735-9386.
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- 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.
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**Chicago Auto Show: Smart ForTwo**

By Mary Daly • mary.daly@wrapports.com

The two-seater Smart ForTwo uses a 51-kW electric motor with a lithium-ion battery. The vehicle contains about 12 cubic feet of cargo space. To protect it in crashes with larger vehicles, ForTwo uses a "tridion safety cell," eight airbags and electronic stability control. The exterior and interior come in several different colors for a customizable design.
I’LL BET YOU DIDN’T KNOW...
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Hockey seems to be the poor stepchild of American team sports – no major network TV contract, less attention paid by the major sports media, a more limited fan base. But all that changes every four years during the Winter Olympics since 1998, when professional players were made eligible. Nearly 30 million Americans watched the gold medal game between the U.S. and Canada in 2010. That's almost 75% more than watched Game 6 of the 2013 Stanley Cup finals between Chicago and Boston.

In his first year as head basketball coach at UCLA, Steve Alford had the team off to a strong start and a likely spot in the 2014 NCAA Tournament. But March Madness might be maddening for Bruins fans. In his previous coaching stints at Iowa and New Mexico, Alford became the only coach ever to lose twice to a No. 14 seed in the first round of the tournament. Alford is best known for leading Indiana to an NCAA title in 1987, but his connection to UCLA is pretty cool. His father was the coach at Indiana's Martinsville High, where legendary Bruins coach John Wooden played his high school ball.

In 2000, Welshman Peter Edwards bet 50 Pounds (a little more than $80) at 2,500-to-1 odds that his then 18-month-old grandson would some day play for the Wales national soccer team. Sure enough, in October of 2013, that grandson, Harry Wilson, became the youngest player ever to be named to the team. Edwards promptly collected on his bet, walking off with 125,000 Pounds – more than $201,800.

Auto sales fall 4 percent

Overall car sales in Niles decreased 4 percent in November on a month-over-month basis, as Niles residents bought nine fewer cars and trucks in November than in the previous month.

In the month of November, the top-selling make to Niles residents was Ford with a total of 37 sales. The breakdown of the 37 Ford sales in the month was 21 new and 16 used. Toyota and Nissan followed Ford in sales (both new and used) during the month with 28 and 19 sales, respectively.

One month prior, Toyota led the way in overall auto purchases by Niles residents with a total of 37 sales. The breakdown of the 37 Ford sales in the month was 21 new and 16 used. Toyota and Nissan followed Ford in sales (both new and used) during the month with 28 and 19 sales, respectively.

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NILES — Northridge coach Will Rey first saw Dylan Haig on a basketball court when the junior was in elementary school. Even then, he said Haig’s ability to handle the ball stood out.

Haig has grown taller, faster and quicker, but his skill at handling the basketball has remained one of the strengths of his game.

“As a kid, I was always really good at it and then I just continued to work on it every summer, every offseason, every year,” said Haig, a third-year varsity player. “I continue to work on it now to get better and better.”

Dribbling is Haig’s forte and it makes it very hard for opposing defenses to contain him, yet Rey continues to put the Morton Grove resident through ball-handling drills. He dribbles with a weighted ball — Haig estimated it weighs about 7 pounds — and the Knights do two-ball dribbling as well. Haig also works on more difficult skills such as crossovers, going behind the back and through his legs during practice.

All of those things have helped him maintain his handle.

“He’s got some ability, obviously — some natural ability — but I think he’s developed it,” said Rey, whose team was scheduled to play Providence-St. Mel in a Class 2A Guerin Sectional semifinal on Wednesday.

Watching Haig play, especially against an opponent like Chicago Math and Science Academy in the Class 2A Northridge Regional semifinal on Feb. 26, is like watching somebody competing at a slightly faster speed than the rest of the players on the court.

Haig is quick with the ball in his hands. He never seems to worry that he’s going to lose control of the ball when it’s at his fingertips. In the 65-54 victory over the Titans, he never did. He committed one turnover, and it was on a pass that sailed into the bleachers because a teammate wasn’t looking.

Chicago Math and Science tried to use a half-court trap against Haig several times, but he was able to split the team’s two guards with ease. He got into the paint several times and was able to either create open shots for himself or pass it to an open teammate. One was senior forward Steve Leazer, who led Northridge with 28 points.

“He’s a hard guy to trap because he’s such a good ball-handler, he’s such a good passer,” Rey said. “He’s able to avoid getting himself in a lot of trouble.”

The Titans also tried to guard Haig man-to-man, but he penetrated the defense at will and either got to the basket or found the open man. He was hampered by foul trouble for much of the contest, but he still finished with 13 points.

Speed, quickness and ball-handling are strengths in Haig’s game, but the Knights often have played deliberately this season. They played at a slower pace in their 31-25 victory over Rickover Naval in the regional championship game Friday.

That style doesn’t necessarily play to Haig’s greatest offensive strengths, but he is capable of playing it. Rey called him the quarterback of the team, a player whose role often is about leadership and organization — like getting the team’s defense set up and ensuring everybody keeps talking on the court.

“He’s everything for us,” said Leazer, when asked what Haig has meant to the Knights. “He gets us going. He talks to us on offense. He helps us on defense, [and] calls out our sets. He just gets us into the flow of the game.”
Guard stars at demanding school

Ashkanazy delivers strong performance in final prep game

BY GARY LARSEN
For Sun-Times Media, @GaryLarsen3

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS — Through two quarters of the Yeshiva boys basketball team's season-ending loss to Chicagoland Jewish, Yeshiva's Shlomo Ashkanazy was nailing every move. If he wasn't penetrating on the dribble and finding open teammates, the senior point guard was tossing full-length passes for layups to break the 'Tigers' full-court press and keeping the ball safe as the team's best ball-handler.

Fourth-seeded Yeshiva led 15-13 over top-seeded Chicagoland Jewish in the Class IA regional semifinal game on Feb. 26 at Christian Liberty. Yeshiva only trailed 28-23 at halftime before the 'Tigers' broke the game open in the third quarter, leading to a 57-45 victory.

The loss ended Ashkanazy's high school career, but he demonstrated throughout the game that a part-time player from a school of 145 students can spar with the best of them.

"Shlomo is a tough, tough kid," Yeshiva coach Ira Shyman said. "He can knife into the lane, he has a beautiful hesitation move and he finds people. Our guys can't really keep up with him. They can't cut to the basket as fast as he makes his moves."

Ashkanazy, a Chicago resident, didn't develop his skills by spending countless hours on a playground court or at daily practice. Yeshiva is an Orthodox Jewish high school in Skokie with an intensive study schedule for both education and religion, so practice time is limited to Sunday afternoons, Wednesday evenings and an occasional Saturday night.

"It's hard because without a lot of practice time our guys don't have that natural skill or IQ for the game," Ashkanazy said. "I just think it comes naturally to me. I love sports."

Despite the rigorous demands at Yeshiva and his family responsibilities as the oldest of six children, Ashkanazy somehow found time to hone his basketball skills. He had options to play AAU ball when he was younger and had garnered interest from other high schools, but there was never any doubt he'd attend Yeshiva.

"Religion, family and school come first," Ashkanazy said. "Basketball is the only sport at Yeshiva, and only juniors and seniors play at the varsity level. Ashkanazy thus spent two years on the junior varsity squad and as a sophomore averaged roughly 25 points and seven assists per game.

"It really was pretty easy for me, going one-on-one against freshmen and sophomores," Ashkanazy said. "I couldn't do those things at the varsity level and I had to learn to hesitate at the 3-point line, come through, zigzag across the court, keep my head up, knowing when to dish it if you drive and draw a second defender."

"It took about a half a year to really learn how to play the position." Like many Yeshiva students, upon graduating Ashkanazy will spend at least a year studying religion in Israel; he's also considering a stint in the army. After that, he may return to the game he loves.

"I don't plan on playing ball in college unless I come back here and go to Yeshiva University, which is a D-III school," Ashkanazy said. "But I love coaching; I follow the college game and my dream is to coach in college, in the NBA, or be an executive. I know the game pretty well and I just love it."
BOYS SWIMMING STATE NOTEBOOK

Kits' record-setting relay was a team effort

After near miss in 200 free, Glenbrook North's Qiao reaches state finals in 100 free

BY MATT HARNESS
mharness@pioneerlocal.com, @hamesspreps

EVANSTON — In the final race of the boys swimming state meet, Evanston's 400-yard freestyle relay swam into the program's record books.

Senior Chris Russo, senior Joseph Seguine-Hall, junior Ryan Knohl and sophomore Adrian Lafont-Mueller clocked a time of 3 minutes, 6.65 seconds to place second Saturday at Evanston. It was the Wildkits' best relay finish since 2005, and the time broke the school record of 3:06.93 from 2001.

“We knew all four would have to do their parts,” Evanston coach Kevin Auger said. “We didn't have that one superstar, so everybody had to go out and swim fast.”

Auger said he believed the 400 free relay team could be something special as far back as Dec. 6, 2013. That's the day the Wildkits swam a 3:16.59 to defeat Naperville Central.

The only difference was that junior Christian Stankovic swam on the team against the Redhawks instead of Knohl.

“That was one of the best teams in the state, and we went really fast to beat them,” Auger said.

Normal University won the 400 free relay at Saturday's state final in 3:09.37.

Evanston took 10th as a team with 38 points. It was the program's first top-10 finish since the Wildkits won the state title in 2005.

Auger said the relay team provided a storybook ending to the state meet, especially for Russo and Seguine-Hall, who anchored the relay.

“That was awesome,” Auger said. “Everybody was ecstatic. To be able to finish up like that was incredible.”

Evanston's Joseph Seguine-Hall swims the anchor leg of the 400-yard freestyle relay during Friday's state prelims. The Wildkits' 400 free relay team set a school record the next day.

Glenbrook North

Not long after missing out on qualifying for the state finals in the 200 free by five one-hundredths of a second, Glenbrook North senior Victor Qiao bounced back to reach the state finals in the 100 free. It was the first time in three trips to the state meet that he advanced to the second day as an individual.

“A year ago, he might have shut down,” Glenbrook North coach Josh Runkle said. “But he's grown up a lot. He handled it great.”

In the 200 free Friday, Qiao finished 13th in 1:43.27. Lake Park senior Sean Gregor grabbed the 12th and final spot with his 1:43.22. Several events later, Qiao qualified in the 100 free with a 46.84 to place eighth in the prelims. He then closed out his prep career Saturday by taking 10th in the finals with a time of 46.92.

“His older brother, Michael Nash, who anchored the relay. "That was cool to see," Runkle said. "He's come a long way with everything. He told me on the way [to Evanston] he was sad this would be his last meet. Right now, he's not swimming in college, but I hope he reconsiders it.”

Qiao also competed on two relays Friday. The 200 free — which included senior Jack Brierton, senior Patrick Goscininski and sophomore Mark Schneider — finished 20th in 1:27.50, and the 400 free was disqualified.

Loyola

Christopher Canning admitted the 1-meter diving event isn't his favorite.

The Loyola freshman said he prefers either the 3-meter springboard or the 5-meter platform. He also travels to Brown Deer, Wis., a Milwaukee suburb, to train on a 10-meter platform.

Nevertheless, Canning finished fourth on the 1-meter springboard at the state meet Saturday with 430.05 points. Marian Catholic junior Joey Cifelli won the state title with 474.05 points.

“My expectations were not that high,” Canning said. “If I would have won state, it would have been a surprise. I was hoping to get inside the top five.”

Canning, who competes out of the Chicago Dive Club at Northwestern, said he likes the higher boards and platforms because of the variety they afford.

“I like to have more flips and twists,” he said. “The 1-meter divers are all so similar.”

Ramblers junior Ryan Nash finished 11th with 370.30 points. His older brother, Michael Nash, was the state's runner-up in 2012 as a senior.

Sophomore Christopher Kearney was Loyola's only swimmer in the state finals. He placed eighth in the 100 free in 46.57.

Maine South

Senior Marco Padron became the first Maine South individual to score points at the state meet since Jared DeGrazia in 2010.

Padron took 12th Saturday in the 50 free in 21.73, which was slightly slower than Friday's career-best time of 21.61.

As a senior, DeGrazia finished seventh in the 100 backstroke and 11th in the 50 free.

“I wouldn't say it was expected of him, but I also wouldn't say I'm completely surprised by it,” Maine South coach Don Kura said of Padron's trip to the state finals.

“I knew he had the ability to go fast, but you never really know in the 50.

“He was super psyched to make it to Saturday, and it was a good experience for him.”

Padron also swam on two state-qualifying relays, the 400 free and 200 free. The 400 free relay took 26th in 3:35.81, while the 200 free relay was disqualified during the preliminaries.

Niles North

Maxim Royzen was satisfied with his two-day performance at the state meet at Evanston, but the Niles North freshman diver said there is a lot left for him to accomplish.

One of two freshmen and three underclassmen in the finals, Royzen took 10th with 376.25 points. Marian Catholic junior Joey Cifelli finished first with 474.05 points.

“It was all right, and my last dive was kind of shaky,” Royzen said. “It was a good learning experience for the next three years. I learned how to not crack under pressure.

“I want to keep coming back and win it as a senior.”
The Sun-Times Media, @VanDrulSports

Boys Gymnastics Season Preview Notebook

Jamiyankhuu’s return gives Niles West a boost

BY ERIC VAN DRUL
For Sun-Times Media, @VanDrulSports

Dalai Jamiyankhuu finished fourth on pommel horse and ninth on parallel bars in the state finals a year ago. He became the first Niles West boys gymnast to earn all-state honors since 1993, but after the meet, Jamiyankhuu said he didn’t know if he’d compete for the Wolves as a sophomore.

He is back, however, and he figures to be one of the state’s best gymnasts this year. Creating a memorable legacy at Niles West was one of the things Wolves coach Adrian Batista mentioned when the pair spoke in the offseason.

“I said, ‘You’ve got a great opportunity to do some stuff at Niles West,’ ” Batista recalled. “ ‘You can be one of the best gymnasts to come out of our school... You can get your name up on some of the banners that will be up here forever.’ ”

That wasn’t the only reason for Jamiyankhuu’s return. Niles West’s gymnasts have a good time, such as last year when members of Maine East, Maine South and Niles West’s gymnastics teams formed an oval after a meet. Members of the teams took turns breakdancing in the middle of the circle to the delight of most people in the room.

“Beyond his quality gymnastics, he’s a fun kid, and I think he enjoys the team aspect,” Batista said. “He doesn’t get that in club.”

Glenbrook South

Titans senior Riley Theriault and junior Jeremy Fine are expected to be two of the team’s highest-scoring gymnasts this year, but the 2013 state qualifiers are currently coming back from injuries.

Theriault broke his ankle during last season’s state preliminaries, and Fine broke his wrist a few months ago, according to Glenbrook South coach Brandon Tucker. Both have been practicing during the opening weeks of the season, but Tucker said he expects to have them both come along slowly. The goal is to work them back into their high-level routines by the end of the season.

“Health-wise, they’re almost back to where they were,” Tucker said. “But conditioning-wise, they’re not there yet. We’re trying to get them back in shape and back in gymnastics shape.”

Glenbrook North

Nate Elfant was the Central Suburban League’s all-around champion a year ago as one of Glenbrook North’s co-captains, and he ended his high school career by winning the Suburban League’s all-arounder last year, and that looks to be the case this year as well. In fact, Niles North hasn’t had a gymnast compete in all six events since Joe Zajcew graduated in 2009.

The Vikings didn’t have any all-arounders last year, and that looks to be the case this year as well. In fact, Glenbrook North hasn’t had a gymnast compete in all six events since Joe Zajcew graduated in 2009.

Niles North

The Wildkits’ two-best gymnasts were Don Pham and Gabe Noriega, who is pictured on the rings at the Stevenson Sectional on May 2, 2013, returned for his sophomore season with the Wolves and could be one of the state’s top gymnasts.

A year ago, and the teams continued to practice together at Maine East. There were rules they had to follow, however. The IHSA doesn’t allow gymnasts from different teams to practice on the same piece of equipment at the same time. The Blue Demons and Hawks would work on separate pieces of equipment to avoid breaking that rule, and Noriega’s staff would split up.

Last year’s setup will remain the same this season, Maine South athletic director Steve Adams confirmed. There are still two teams, one coaching staff and one practice space.

Evanston

The Wildkits’ two-best gymnasts were Dom Pham and Gabe Cohen last season. Cohen was the squad’s lone all-conference selection.

The all-arounders have both graduated, leaving coach Chester Jones with two big holes to fill in his lineup.
Ending on a high note

Local swimmers, divers turn in noteworthy performances at boys state meet

PAGE 52

Niles North's Maxim Royzen finished 10th in the diving competition at Saturday's state meet in Evanston. BRIAN DYMA/HO/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA
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