Annual bike ride brings more than 1,000 toys. | PAGE 6
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CORRECTION

The village of Niles spent a total of $4,310.28 on postage to mail out fliers related to a referendum that eventually stripped the city’s mayor of the power to fill trustee vacancies, according to records. This was incorrectly reported in the Dec. 11 edition. The Niles Herald Spectator regrets the error.
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Annual Toys for Tots bike ride delivers more than 1,000 toys

NATALIE HAYES
Special for Pioneer Press

Santa's sleigh was no match for a pack of determined bikers on a mission from Niles early Friday morning to deliver thousands of toys to kids in need this holiday season.

A group of 140 bikers gathered at Amling's Cycle on the 8100 block of Milwaukee Avenue early Friday morning to continue a long-running tradition that was started by shop owner Joe Reichert more than a decade ago.

The annual Toys for Tots ride helps deliver thousands of toys for the Salvation Army-run program, which hopes to make sure every kid has a toy to open on Christmas.

The tradition resumes each year during the second week of December, when a group of volunteers bikes nearly 15 miles in the cold weather to the Mystic Celt bar on Southport Avenue in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

When the bikers arrive, a pair of Marines are standing in a big empty truck stationed in front of the bar, ready to load the toys.

Sgt. Clayton Gilbert helped pack the truck with the more than 1,200 toys delivered by the bikers.

The 28-year-old, who has spent Christmas in Iraq, said he'll never forget how loved he felt when he received packages from strangers during the holidays.

"I remember getting a pair of socks — which I still have — and it made me incredibly happy," Gilbert said. "Now I can be on the other side of it and help kids have a good Christmas."

While Gilbert and his Marine colleague stood by patiently waiting for the toys to arrive, the pack of bikers collected plenty of attention as they cruised through morning rush hour traffic.

With lime green-colored bike trailers towing behind them, many drivers cheered them on as they cruised down the main streets in Niles, Skokie, and finally Chicago, stopping traffic as they went.

When they arrived at Mystic Celt about an hour later, the riders helped load the trucks before they headed inside the bar to fill up on a celebratory brunch and take down a few morning Irish cocktails.

Steve Schermerhorn of Park Ridge joined Amlings Cycle's Toys for Tots ride during its second year in 2003, and said he hasn't missed a year since.

At 8:30 a.m. shortly after the bikers had arrived at Mystic Celt, the mood in the bar was jovial as the crowd caught up with old friends and chatted with the Marines.

Waitress Caroline Clark has worked at the Mystic Celt for more than a decade, and said she never misses the Toys for Tots ride.

"I come in at 7 (a.m.) every year to get ready for them, and everyone is very excited when they arrive," Clark said.

For Reichert, who started delivering toys on a tandem bike to the WGN studios 15 years ago with wife Julia, the Toys for Tots ride has ballooned into a bigger event than he could have ever imagined.

In 2002, about 35 riders joined the Reicherts on their first group bike trip to the city, and word of mouth has helped ridership grow to nearly 200 bikers during some years, he said.

Although the riders enjoy plenty of free brunch and a relaxing time catching up with friends when they finally reach the bar, it takes a thick skin to stick through a freezing-cold early-morning bike ride.

Lake Zurich resident Connor Schemansky, 13, found that out the hard way. Schemansky, who joined the ride for the first time this year with his dad, said his hands went numb for about 25 minutes.

"It was cold, but my favorite part was hearing the people cheering as we rode by," Grainger said. "The bacon was also really good."
ABOVE: Gayle Smith of Oak Park hauls a trailer for the Toys for Tots ride into Chicago from Am-lings Cycle in Nues Dec. 12. KEVIN TANAKA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE MEDIA GROUP

RIGHT: Fred Rodriguez of Niles, left, and Arnold Horm of Elgin, load toys into a trailer for the Toys for Tots ride into Chicago from Amling's Cycle in Niles Dec. 12. KEVIN TANAKA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE MEDIA GROUP

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Jilted Niles Public Library chooses staffing consultant

IGOR STUDENKOV
Special for Pioneer Press | @istudenkov

After five months of searching, the Niles Public Library finally contracted a staffing and operations consultant.

The library board of trustees began the search in July. It originally chose NextLevelNPO in September, but the Chicago-based consultant dropped out without explanation less than two weeks later, forcing the board to look at the remaining candidates.

After interviewing two of the remaining candidates in October and one remaining candidate in November, the board voted during its Nov. 19 meeting to select Matrix Consulting Group, based in Mountain View, Calif.

During the first half of 2014, library Financial Manager Greg Pritz, then-Director Linda Weiss, and then-Assistant Directors Susan Lempke and Barbara Kruser came up with a proposal to significantly change the library's organizational chart. The goal was to create a more modern and more efficient operation.

Some aspects of their proposal, such as merging the Pages Services Department into Patron Services Department — were implemented. But during the summer, other aspects — most notably the creation of the new Digital Services Department — stalled.

During the June meeting, Board President Morgan Dubiel said he felt that the proposed changes were too confusing and urged the board to hire a staffing consultant before approving further changes.

After NextLevelNPO dropped out, the board interviewed the remaining candidates. During the Oct. 17 meeting, the board interviewed representatives of the Dallas-based Godfrey's Associates and the Washington-based Kaizen Institute Consulting Group. During the Nov. 15 meeting, it interviewed Richard Brady, president of the Matrix Consulting Group.

According to the proposal submitted to the board, Matrix's staffing and operations study will be divided into five phases. During the first phase, the group will meet with Dubiel and now-Interim Director Lempke to discuss the scope of the study and how the study will be conducted.

During the second phase, Matrix will research library services, its administrative structure, what the staff does and how much money the library spends in those areas.

The third phase, Matrix will work to identify issues with the library's current services, gathering input from library and board staff and as well as patrons.

During the fourth phase, the consultants will develop objectives that will allow Matrix and the library to evaluate potential changes to the current library staffing and service practices.

During the fifth phase, Matrix will bring the objectives to the board and the library staff. Depending on their input, the objectives may be tweaked. The consultants will then use that information and their research to develop a plan for potential changes to the library's organizational structure, services, operations and the ways the library spends its money.

The last part includes potential changes to the way staff members are paid. Matrix estimates that the study will take a total of 12 weeks. It is charging $32,500 for its services, with $29,800 covering payments to Matrix staff and $2,700 covering expenses.

By comparison, Godfrey would have charged a minimum of $84,073 for its services, while Kaizen would have charged $36,000, plus a flexible amount for expenses, officials said. NextLevel would have charged $42,000 for its services, plus about $1,500 in expenses, they said.

Dubiel originally expressed preference for Kaizen. But Trustee Chris Ball argued that Kaizen was offering to focus on only one staffing practice at a time, which wouldn't be a good value for the cost of its services. Dubiel said he found Ball's argument convincing, and that he was learning toward Matrix.

"It's going to give us everything Godfrey would give us for the third of the cost," he said.

As the board set out to vote on whether to approve the contract with Matrix, some trustees expressed reservations about the entire vote.

During previous meetings, Trustee Karen Dimond argued that hiring a staffing consultant should wait until the library has a permanent director. She reiterated her position during the Nov. 15 meeting.

"I think we're putting the cart before the horse," she said. "I think that we should really be focusing on and turn our attention to finding a director, and then turn our attention to this." Trustee Linda Ryan agreed.

"I think it would be a better fit with a new director, hand in hand, working together," she said.

Ball argued that the fact the library doesn't have a permanent director yet isn't a problem.

"I feel comfortable with the motion [to approve the contract with Matrix]," he said. "And the fact that we don't have a director in place — we can work around that." The board wound up approving a contract with Matrix 4-3, with Dimond, Ryan and Trustee Barbara Nagamishi voting against.

Niles hires attorneys to handle gun shop lawsuit

IGOR STUDENKOV
Special for Pioneer Press | @istudenkov

The Niles Village Board has hired Nolan Law Group to handle the village's defense against a lawsuit filed by gun control activists People for a Safer Society.

On Oct. 17, the Skokie-based group filed a lawsuit arguing that the village should not have granted a special use permit to the Sportsman's Club gun shop and firing range. The board granted the permit on July 29 amid charges that the gun shop would make the area less safe.

People for a Safer Society were among the most prominent opponents of the decision, and has continued to argue that the village should rescind the permit since the decision was made.

The lawsuit contends that the special use permit should not have been approved because the business doesn't fit the area's land uses, adversely affects nearby property values and poses a danger to safety of area residents. The lawsuit seeks to not only revoke Sportsman's Club's permit, but to prohibit any other gun shop from getting a special use permit on the parcel on which it's located.

The board voted 5-0 on Dec. 9 to approve the contract with Nolan, with Trustee Rosemary Palicki abstaining. After the meeting, Palicki said she abstained in an effort to be neutral.

She opposes granting the special use permit to Sportsman's Club as a member of the board, and is one of the defendants in the lawsuit, Palicki said.

"I feel comfortable with the motion [to approve the contract with Nolan]," she said. "And the fact that we don't have a director in place — we can work around that.

The board wound up approving a contract with Nolan, with Trustee Barbara Nagamishi voting against.

Gun control advocates People For a Safer Society (left) tried to convince the Niles Village Board not only to put a moratorium on gun shops in their town, but also to retroactively ban a gun shop approved earlier this year. IGOR STUDENKOV FOR PIONEER PRESS
Niles library provides free remote access to video, audio with Hoopla

BY IGOR STUDENKOV
Special for Pioneer Press | Studenkov

Niles Public Library has teamed up with Hoopla online media delivery service, allowing patrons to stream or download movies, TV shows, audiobooks and music albums for free.

The library unveiled the new service on Dec. 1. To access Hoopla, patrons can either download an app or visit its website at hoopladigital.com. While streaming is unlimited, the downloads come with built-in time limits, and patrons can only download 10 titles per month.

Niles Public Library joins 42 libraries throughout Illinois that partnered up with Hoopla. Some of the other nearby libraries that partnered with the service include Skokie Public Library, Morton Grove Public Library and Park Ridge Public Library.

Only patrons that have valid library cards and partner libraries can use the service. Hoopla can be accessed through its website, and it offers apps for Apple and Android devices, as well as Kindle Fire. Patrons can access Hoopla 24/7.

When a patron downloads a title from Hoopla, the file comes with a built-in time limit. Once the limit expires, the file is automatically erased. The limits are set at seven days for music, three days for movies and TV shows, and three weeks for audiobooks.

While patrons can't renew items on Hoopla, they can re-download them after they expire. However, patrons are limited to 10 downloads a month, and every re-download counts toward that limit.

In a press release, Niles Library Interim Director Susan Lempke said that the partnership was established in response to patrons' needs. A growing number of Niles residents use mobile devices and movies, TV shows and music. The library wanted to figure out a way to meet those needs.

"We're always trying to find new ways to meet the needs and wants of our community members," said Lempke. "Our new partnership with Hoopla digital gives our patrons instant access to a broad collection of movies, TV shows, music and audiobooks in a format that they never had before."

Sue Wilsey, the library's marketing and publicity supervisor, said in an interview that the partnership with Hoopla is just one of the many online resources the library has available to its patrons.

"We also have Flipster, where patrons can download the latest issues of popular magazines," she said. "We have Rosetta Stone and Mango language learning resources. We have Ancestry.com library version for genealogy research, Consumer Reports, Tutor.com and much more."

While not all titles that are available at Niles Library are available on Hoopla, its selection is extensive.

As previously reported, the service offers over 10,000 titles overall. And Wilsey indicated that if there's something that's not available on Hoopla, patrons can request it.

"There is a contact link on the bottom of each Hoopla page a patron can send [a request] to Hoopla," she said.

In a press release, Hoopla founder and owner Jeff Jankowski said that the service is constantly working on expanding its selection of titles.

"We've worked for years to create a best-in-breed service that is fun, fast and reliable," he said. "And we continue to secure content deals to expand the offering of movies, TV shows, music and audiobooks."

Lempke emphasized that Hoopla has a number of advantages. The fact that it's accessible 24/7 means that patrons aren't limited by library hours. The built-in time limit means that patrons who download Hoopla titles would never have to pay late fees.

Because the titles are digital, there's no worry that a popular movie or a TV show won't be in stock because all available copies are already checked out.

When contacted last week, Wilsey said that it was too early to tell how patrons feel about Hoopla.

"We just launched it on Dec. 1, so we will see," she said. "Our staff is enthusiastic about offering it."
CRIME BRIEFS

BURGLARY
A construction site on the 5900 block of Howard Street was entered overnight between Dec. 5 and Dec. 6 and a window was broken on a construction trailer. Once inside the trailer, someone reportedly stole candy from a candy dish. Fire extinguishers inside another building were also used, police said.

BURGLARY TO VEHICLE
Tools valued at approximately $3,000 were stolen on the afternoon of Dec. 7 from a truck parked on the 8900 block of Greenwood Avenue.

THEFT
A satellite radio controller was stolen between Dec. 3 and Dec. 10 from a vehicle parked on the 8700 block of Park Lane.

THEFT
A 2000 Pontiac was stolen between Dec. 7 and Dec. 8 from the 8200 block of Oketo Avenue.

On Nov. 29, someone rented a van from a business on the 7600 block of Milwaukee Avenue using another person's identity and never returned the vehicle, police said.

A man told police on Dec. 9 that someone obtained a credit card in his name after he filled out a credit card application at a store on the 5700 block of Touhy Avenue back in August.

POLICE BLOTTER

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

NILES

RETAIL THEFT
John Strickland, 42, of I W. Acorn, Lake in the Hills, was charged with felony retail theft on Dec. 9 after he allegedly stole three plumbing ball valves valued at $95.71 from a store on the 8600 block of Dempster Street. Police said Strickland is currently on parole for an undisclosed offense. He has a Jan. 14 court date.

DUI
Andriy Vyksyuk, 23, of 2627 N. Sayre Ave., Chicago, was charged with driving under the influence on Dec. 7 after he was reportedly stopped for speeding on the 7000 block of Milwaukee Avenue at 3:45 a.m. He has a Dec. 31 court date.

James Lane, 21, of 8301 Mango Ave., Morton Grove, was charged with driving under the influence on Dec. 5 after he was stopped just after midnight for allegedly making a left turn on a red light at the intersection of Milwaukee Avenue and Oakton Street.

He has a Jan. 7 court date.

DRUG POSSESSION
Daniel C. Brown, 32, whose last known address was 9666 Golf Road, unincorporated Maine Township, was charged with possession of a controlled substance on Dec. 8. Police encountered Brown in the lobby of a condominium complex on the 9000 block of Terrace Drive after responding to a complaint that he had been repeatedly sleeping in the stairwells of the building. According to police, Brown had in his hand a plastic baggie containing .6 grams of suspected cocaine and identified himself as "a cokehead." Police also reportedly found a bottle of brandy inside Brown's sweatshirt. He has a Jan. 6 court date.

MORTON GROVE

DRUGS
James Gelderman, 34, of Glenview, was charged with possession of a controlled substance after he was arrested on Dec. 10. Police said Gelderman was charged with possession of cannabis after he was arrested on Golf Road and Washington Street on Dec. 10. Police said he was pulled over for an unknown traffic violation and officers allegedly found an undisclosed amount of marijuana in his vehicle. Gelderman is scheduled to appear in court on Jan. 8.

PROPERTY DAMAGE
Police said the rear window of a vehicle was shattered while it was parked on the 7800 block of Merriam Avenue on Dec. 4. The car's owner told police he thinks the damage might have been accidental, according to police reports.

SCAMS
Police said a Morton Grove resident was the victim of a scam on Dec. 4. A man received a check in the mail with instructions on how to be a mystery shopper, police said. He deposited a check enclosed in the envelope into his bank account, and purchased one Money Pak card for $500, police said. He emailed the security code on the Money Pak card to an email address provided in the instructions. The next day, his bank notified him that the check was fraudulent, according to police.

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Education

Three fine arts leaders among District 207's Best December students

Natalie Hayes
Special for Pioneer Press

A longtime tradition maintained for many years at Maine Township High School District 207 honors three high-achieving students each month in the 207's Best program, which spotlights teens for achieving outside of the classroom.

December's three honorees — Rhys Bakulinski of Maine West, Julia Koza of Maine South, and Rachel Stan of Maine East — were recognized during the December school board meeting for notoriety in their respective school's fine arts department.

Each month, teachers nominate students for a different rotating achievement category, including community service, improved performance, and this month's category, performing fine arts.

Then an executive committee at each of the three high schools selects the final winners, who are later commended by school board members, parents and friends at the monthly board meetings.

The three young women honored this month cover three major aspects of fine arts programming: drama, music, and television production.

Bakulinski, who was nominated by her fine arts teachers for being "intellectually inquisitive, witty and willing to help others grow in their artistic endeavors" (according to Maine West principal Audrey Hagan), is a leader in the school's drama and photography programs.

Maine South's Koza, who told the school board she plans to attend either DePaul University or North Park University and major in music education, has a passion for "everything music," according to school Principal Shawn Messmer.

In between fulfilling her role as the school's marching band drum major, Koza also stays active in the Italian and Polish clubs, and sings in the Maine South choir. She was recently selected for the Illinois Music Education Association District 7 Honor Choir.

Messmer said Koza is a "consistent leader in the Fine Arts Department who was nominated by her teachers for being hardworking, consistent, curious, friendly, relaxed, and respectful."

While Bakulinski and Koza prefer the spotlight of the stage, Stan shines behind the scenes as the manager of Maine East's TV station, a position she's held for the past two years.

Described by her broadcasting teacher Phil Ash as having a "natural gift for storytelling," Stan has received two awards at the Chicago Television Educators Council film festival and was honored with second place recognition in the "exceptional work" category at this year's Northbrook Youth Film Festival.

Maine East principal Michael Pressler commended Stan for being successful in using video "as a vehicle to communicate her insights and as a means to evoke thoughtful reflection from her viewers."

Stan plans to continue her TV broadcasting studies at Liberty University in Virginia after she graduates high school in the spring. She intends to major in cinematic arts, according to a press release from School District 207.
Creative use of space on Park Ridge library's 2015 agenda

JENNIFER JOHNSON
johnson@pioneerlocal.com | @jen_pioneer

Space has, for years, been a topic of discussion at the Park Ridge Public Library.

Now, fresh from a referendum that will bring more revenue to the library's coffers, finding new ways to use space is back on the agenda.

Library Executive Director Janet Van De Carr said 2015 will be a year of exploring how to meet some of the library's "serious needs" on the second floor — primarily making room for group study and seating for patrons who drop in to work on their own computers.

"We plan to install new carpet sometime in the next few years, so that's an ideal time to look at how we use our space," Van De Carr said.

Under review is adding more study rooms and "flexible space," the latter of which involves lightweight furniture on wheels that can be moved around.

"Unfortunately, because our building is about half the size it should be to serve a community this size, if we add something, something has to be taken away," Van De Carr said. "We don't have the luxury of extra space."

Areas to free up space might include the second floor reference desk, which Van De Carr admits may be larger than needed, or cutting down collections that are being replaced by digital streaming like CDs and DVDs.

The best way of adding more electrical outlets will also be a key component of the study.

"With all of the students in Park Ridge having electronic devices, even in the elementary schools, a lot of kids are coming here after school and they need a place to recharge their equipment," Van De Carr said.

"Libraries are becoming more and more community spaces for people to do work and have access to Wi-Fi, so we need a variety of different seating with power outlets."

The Park Ridge Public Library was built in 1968, with the southern addition added in 1977.

At the recently remodeled Niles Public Library, new public seating areas are among the additions.

Comfortable chairs and tables dot the library, including a series of eight chairs on the third floor that are each situated next to an outlet. Private work and study spaces were also added as part of the $5.5 million renovation project.

"When we remodeled our library, we had heard from our patrons that they wanted more study rooms, small spaces for working in," said Susan Lemcke, interim library director in Niles. "Work might be a student studying or someone signing real estate documents — it's all kinds of things."

The Niles library was constructed in 1998.

Last year, the Des Plaines Public Library, which was built in 2000, added more space for patrons to sit and plug in their computers on the fourth floor, and similar space is planned for the third floor as part of a $2.2 million renovation set to begin next year, said Library Director Holly Sorensen.

The renovation also includes a new teen center with expanded work, social and media areas; a youth computer learning center and adult digital learning center; and a "digital e-bar," offering patrons assistance with a variety of devices.

The 2014 State of America's Libraries Report, compiled by the American Library Association, identifies current trends in library renovation as building a flexible, open-space plan; adding more "semi-private space" for patrons; and creating space that is heavy in technology.

A quote from Les Watson, a consultant on learning spaces in libraries, is included in this section of the report.

"Furniture has emerged as a key factor in creating variety in the library experience," Watson says. "It can easily be rearranged to change the look and feel of a space."

The report also describes how the downtown branch of the Chattanooga, Tenn., library created a 14,000-square-foot "community collaboration space" last year on a floor that had once been used for storage.

New equipment, like 3D printers and video production software on computers, was added, as was a coffee shop.

Van De Carr said surveying Park Ridge Library patrons on their needs and wants will be a part of the coming year's planning. An online survey was conducted earlier this year, but it focused almost primarily on programming and charging participants for it.

The group the library especially wants to hear from is teens, Van De Carr said.

"We think we know [their needs], but we want to hear directly from them, to make sure the changes we make are thoughtfully done and anticipate the needs into the future," Van De Carr said.
Do-It-Yourself 'Messiah' concert draws 900

BY IGOR STUDENKOV
Special for Pioneer Press /@istudenkov

St. John Brebeuf Parish's second annual Do-It-Yourself performance of Handel's "Messiah" proved to be a huge success, according to organizers.

The concert was held on Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. at the parish church in Niles. The admission was free, and visitors were encouraged to sing along. According to parish spokesman Dick Barton, about 900 people attended.

"Messiah" is an oratorio, or opera that doesn't involve any acting, that was composed by the German-born composer George Frideric Handel. It follows the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and details the prophecies about his return. The parish has organized performances a way to introduce the community to Handel's work, showcase great performances and tell the story of Jesus Christ.

The oratorio was performed by Niles Metropolitan Chorus members, with the Musica Lumina Chamber Orchestra providing the musical accompaniment.

This year, the Do-It-Yourself concert doubled as a part of a tribute to the Rev. Stanley Rudcki, founder of the Niles Symphony Orchestra and the Niles Concert Choir. Throughout his life, he worked to bring classical music, including Handel's Messiah, to members of the community that would otherwise never be exposed to it.

To honor his legacy, St. John Brebeuf launched a series of eight free concerts that will run through March 2015. The Do-It-Yourself concert was the fifth in the series. The next concert, a performance by classical guitarist Jack Cimo,
The Niles Village Board unanimously approved a series of resolutions that will make the final phase of the Milwaukee Avenue Streetscape Improvement project a reality.

The resolutions authorized streetscape improvements for the segment of Milwaukee Avenue between Oakton and Monroe streets. The plan calls for more green spaces, repaved sidewalks, new decorative details and the removal of sidewalks between the driving lanes and the parking lots.

The improvements represent the last phase of the ongoing effort to improve the stretch of Milwaukee Avenue that runs through Niles. The project is expected to be completed within the next two years.

The first three phases covered the section between Albion Avenue and Oakton Street. While some aspects of each phase changed between planning and construction, the broad outlines remained the same. The segments got new sidewalks, new crosswalks, streetlight repairs and small piazzas near major intersections.

The section of Milwaukee Avenue between Oakton and Monroe is largely commercial, with local businesses and restaurants lining the street on both sides. Closer to Monroe, many parcels have two sidewalks, one alongside buildings and one between building parking lots and driving lanes.

On the west side of Milwaukee, phase four will include small, landscaped areas with planter boxes and decorative brick borders between parking lots and driving lanes, with several entryways to allow cars through. At Ceilidh's restaurant, there will be larger green spaces in what is now largely concrete.

Piazzas will be created on both sides of the site where Oriole Avenue merges with Milwaukee Avenue. Between Oriole and Monroe, the street will receive a landscape design similar to the section farther southeast. Both Oriole and Ottawa avenues will get new crosswalks.

On the east side of Milwaukee, phase four calls for new sidewalks with a few trees between Oakton and Keeney streets. There will be piazzas on both sides of the spot where Keeney merges into Milwaukee Avenue.

Between Kenney and Cleveland streets, there will be landscaping improvements similar to those on the other side, with a larger green space at the corner of Milwaukee and Cleveland. The section between Kenney and Monroe will follow a similar design, with larger green spaces at the corners and near Booby's restaurant.

During its Dec. 9 meeting, the board approved a series of resolutions that will allow for the construction to begin. Niles contracted HR Green, Inc. to handle the construction engineering services.

It also approved the way phase four will be funded. ITEP will provide $747,600 in funds, and Niles will pay the remaining $186,900. The village's portion will come from Motor Fuel Tax revenue. Because the project is expected to stretch over the next two years, the village will not have to pay the entire amount at once.

During the meeting, Trustee Joe LoVerde noted that the village contracted HR Green for previous phases of the project.

“Have we gone and and looked at other engineering firms?” he asked.

Village Manager Steve Vinezano said that Niles didn't want to switch contractors part of the way through the project.

“This is the last leg of those projects,” he said. “Following this, as we move up north, we'll re-evaluate.”

For Trustee John Jekot, the launch of the final phase of the project was an important milestone. As a chair of the Milwaukee Avenue Corridor Committee, Jekot oversaw the project from beginning to end.

He acknowledged that there have been a number of delays along the way - phase four, for example, was supposed to start in the fall of 2014.

“I'm just happy to see this project move forward,” Jekot told the board. “There have been delays, but it's been worth it.”
Niles creates 11-member Arts and Culture Advisory Council

BY IGOR STUDENIKOV
Special for Pioneer Press I @studenkovich

The Niles Village Board approved Dec. 9 the creation of the Arts and Culture Advisory Council, an advisory body that will work to encourage art, culture and public events in Niles.

The council will be made up of 11 members, five of whom will be appointed by the Niles mayor and six by cultural, commercial and civic organizations and institutions throughout the village. It will be responsible for advising the Village Board on issues related to the arts, culture and public events.

It will also help the board decide how to spend money created through the newly created Appearance and Art Fee. The fee will be charged for building permits for projects that cost more than $10,000.

The creation of the Arts and Culture Advisory Council was one of the recommendations included in Niles 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

The idea went through the Finance Committee because the new fee was a financial matter, according to Trustee Joe LoVerde, who chairs the committee. After some changes, it received final approval during the Finance Committee's Nov. 19 meeting.

The council was originally called the Arts and Culture Advisory Commission. But Alpogianis worked together to make it a reality.

Vinezeano said he isn't sure how long the idea was in the works, since it went through several iterations over the last three years. The resolution authorizing the creation of the council and the new fee went before the Finance Committee three months ago.

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The ordinance also created a new fee that will be used to help fund art projects, cultural amenities and special events. The fee will be levied when an owner of a non-residential building gets a permit for projects that cost more than $100,000. The fee is set at 1 percent of the cost.

The council will advise the Village Board on how the funds generated through the fee will be spent.

Alpogianis said that he sees the ordinance as a foundation that the council will build on over time.

"[The resolution] may seem a little simple at first look," he said. "We wanted to start simple and grow it."

While all trustees expressed support for the council, Trustees Chris Hanusiak and Rosemary Palicki also expressed concerns about the resolution's language regarding the appointment process.

"The way it's written, it seems that the mayor appoints [all commission members]," said Hanusiak.

He is concerned that there aren't enough opportunities for ordinary citizens to participate, he said.

"Residents should have an opportunity to be a part of it, if they're not part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the Niles Chamber of Commerce and Industry," Hanusiak said.

Palicki said that while she was "98 percent for" the resolution, she wanted to table it for a month to give the village time to clarify the language on the appointment process before voting. She made a motion to table, but it was defeated 4-2, with she and Hanusiak voting in favor.

Przybylo said that while he understood concerns about the language, he wanted to get the Arts and Culture Advisory Council created as soon as possible. The bugs could be worked out later, he said.

"Folks, what we have here is a good first step forward to start promoting culture and community in our village," he said. "I'd like to get a move on."

The board approved the resolution 4-1, with Hanusiak voting against and Palicki abstaining.
Letters

‘Holidays’ bring us together like no other time of year

S

omething unique, almost immortal, is about to happen over the next few weeks. Oh sure, it’s generally known as the “holidays,” but really there is much more at work than that. There is a subtle but persistent togetherness about to be imposed upon us, adult and child alike.

It comes from at least two annual realities: [1] the bunching together that comes from staying home during the brutal December days and [2] the gathering together that comes from returning families and students.

These social experiences are not only planned; they are inevitable. They are not only whole-some; they are necessary. Unlike the other 11 months of the year, this is that exotic time whose togetherness has been ordained by the gods — both the pagan gods and the Abrahamic God.

So compelling is this bunching and gathering, even stoic non-believers concede this magical time only with other names. And here is the ancient message that accompanies this year-end time: “It is not good for man to be alone.”

Jack Spatafora, Park Ridge

Judy Baar Topinka was one of a kind

I first met Judy Baar Topinka in the late summer of 1979. I was a rookie reporter who didn’t know anybody. Judy was a former reporter at my paper, The Life Newspapers in Berwyn, and seemed to know everybody.

She was beginning her career in government, deciding to take a run for the state legislature and against the power structure of a male-dominated Republican Party that ran Berwyn and Cicero.

She definitely wasn’t one of the fellows, and that summer and fall was busy lining up support among her many contacts for the March 1980 Republican Primary.

Back then a candidate needed to finish first or second in the primary to be on the November ballot, where three representatives would be elected per district from four candidates.

She won easily.

I saw her a lot those days as she would stop in the office and talk to her old friends from newspapering days.

She was loud, brash and spoke her mind. To my young mind, she was selling out by trading journalism for politics.

But I was wrong. She would never be accepted by the political class. She was blunt. She spoke her mind and talked fast and loud. She said what a lot of us reporters actually thought, like when she described her opponents for governor as morons. Who could argue with that?

Over the years I’d run into Judy every so often, here and in Springfield. I’d call and ask for an interview. She’d get right back to me and knew exactly what I was asking about it and tell it as she saw it. Between questions, she’d offer advice on where to shop for bargains in the western suburbs.

I’d be having dinner at a restaurant and Judy would come in leading an entourage, waving and saying “Hi” to friends already there, and suddenly the place was livelier, happier and a lot more fun.

Once when leaving our office after a campaign interview, she stopped at the water cooler to get a drink, and saw a pen on the floor. “Oh, look, a pen,” she said, picked it up and put it in her purse. I wanted to say, “But that’s the company pen,” as I stood there empty-handed. Instead I said, “Good luck, Judy.” She didn’t need it. She just worked hard.

I last saw her a couple of years ago in Westchester. I was coming out of a Bohemian restaurant and she was coming out of a pet store. She looked thinner and not in good health. We talked for a while the way old reporters and covered, and that includes the current president, she was the real deal. She loved people, always was herself and worked tirelessly to make life better for the people of her community and her state.

We need a lot more like her, but, alas, she was one of kind.

“Let Us Hear from You

Send your letters to the editor to News Editor Phil Rockrohr at prockrohr@pioneerlocal.com or mail to Niles Herald-Spectator, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago, IL 60654. Keep letters to 250 words or fewer. Niles Herald-Spectator reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity and content. All letters must be signed to be published.
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Chicago Marriott Northwest: Tuesday, January 13 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Midterm Registration: January 18

1-800-752-2338 www.sjnma.org/discover

Don't be so quick to blame older drivers

Uh oh. My driver's license expires in March. So, I was apprehensive when an envelope arrived from the secretary of state about renewing my license. I figured that since I have been driving for 60 years I would have to take a road test, an eye test and do 25 push-ups.

Because we all know that older drivers are unsafe drivers. Just ask anyone who is not an older driver. But to my surprise, the letter from Jesse White said I was a safe driver: "You pay attention to your driving, and so does the Secretary of State."

I haven't had a ticket or an accident this century, and darn few in the last century. So, because I am such an exemplary driver, I don't have to take any test at all. I can renew my driver's license by mail or online.

I must be a fluke, right? Wrong again, not-older driver! A recent study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that older drivers are safe drivers. The accident rate for drivers over age 65 is falling. And there are 81 percent fewer fatalities for older drivers than in 2012.

Older drivers are more careful and less distracted. They use seatbelts. They don't drive drunk. Older drivers don't use cell phones or computers while driving.

Thirty-four percent of older drivers in the survey said they had talked on a cell phone while driving, as opposed to 82 percent for drivers aged 25 to 39.

The result? Safe drivers. Ninety-nine percent of older drivers in the study said they hadn't had an accident or ticket in the last two years. Once again, perception is not reality.

A few weeks ago I wrote a column rebutting the common belief that older people are most often the victims of scammers and con artists. Police departments and others are always issuing warnings to senior citizens to be wary of scams.

Whereas, a new study shows that middle-aged people are much more likely to be scammed than older people. Scam warnings should cast a wider net than just seniors. They might be more effective.

The reason for these misconceptions is not hard to find. Except for being rich, youth is the national obsession, the only good. The opposite of youth is age. So age, aging and the elderly must be bad.

It follows then that older people must be bad drivers, bad workers, bad companions, bad at everything. It's not true, of course. Just one more area in which too many of us think and act out of our prejudices.
Let's talk about sex ... or lack of it

LOVE ESSENTIALLY
BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH

It is impossible to make a blanket statement (no pun intended) about married couples and sex. No two couples have the same sex life, and the spectrum of what goes on in a couple's bedroom can range from snoring and boring, to wild and crazy passion every night.

But with work, kids, chores, and the pure exhaustion life can cause, finding time and interest in sex, especially for women, can be challenging.

So, I reached out to Northbrook-based therapist, Dr. Sarah Allen, Psy.D., to ask for some tips to help couples who might want to improve their sex lives.

Allen told me that when couples come to see her, it is almost always the case that they haven't had good sex in a long time, often because other issues in the relationship, such as anger and resentment, prevent physical desire.

But let's say things are pretty peachy around your house with the exception of what's happening under the covers. Here are Allen's five tips that might help spice things up:

1. For women: make time to de-stress and unwind. Women need time to get into the sex frame of mind. "Men and women are very different in that women need an emotional connection to get interested in sex, whereas men are more visual," said Allen, who is also a licensed clinical professional counselor. "Women are constantly doing doing doing, especially during this time of year, and they aren't thinking about sex."

2. Plan dates that are exciting and outside your comfort zone. "Feelings of being scared are similar to feelings of excitement," said Allen. In other words, instead of dinner and a movie, try rock climbing or parasailing, something you wouldn't normally do with your partner. The charge and the high you get might carry over into the bedroom.

3. Do things together that bring you back to being the people you were when you first met. Before you were married, before you had kids, and during the times you were first getting to know each other, you probably did things together that you don't have time for anymore. Maybe you had picnics, maybe you listened to music together, or maybe you went to art galleries or museums. Doing those things might bring back memories and ignite a spark.

4. Treat yourself to things that make you feel sexy. "Sexy is all in the mind," Allen said. Buying a new dress or a new pair of shoes or a new bottle of cologne might help you feel more confident, and as a result, sexier. Even something as simple as a manicure or a yoga class helps boost self-image which again, can translate into feeling sexy.

5. Read. Allen recommended reading "The Sex-Starved Marriage: Boosting Your Marriage Libido: A Couple's Guide," by Michele Weiner-Davis, and "It's Not Him, It's You!: How to Take Charge of Your Life and Create the Love and Intimacy You Deserve," by Laura Berman. The two have very different philosophies, but both are among her favorites.

I have two tips I'd like to add:

9. After Nine Tonight. This is a website for men and women that offers helpful tips for a couple's lacking sex drive, as well as a series of short, romantic movies to help busy moms get in the mood. www.afternineontonight.com.

20. Kind gestures make a difference. When a woman receives flowers from her husband on no particular occasion, it causes her to fall in love, which then translates into physical desire. I'm not saying a dozen roses will solve all your issues, but, a kind gesture - a nice card, offering to do the dishes, a backrub, an inexpensive gift - makes a man or woman feel loved, appreciated, respected and cherished. And that is a huge turn-on. The flipside is, no one wants to have sex with a spouse who is rude, mean, dismissive, or disrespectful. Just sayin'...

Allen did mention that if a woman feels she has little or no sex drive, she should see her OB/GYN to rule out any medical conditions that might be the cause, such as hormonal changes during and post pregnancy, and perimenopause. There are also many psychological causes of low sex drive, including anxiety, depression, stress, poor body image and lack of self-esteem.
It's hard to imagine the story of Hanukkah being told more exuberantly or with more infectious zeal than what was rendered on the eve of the Jewish holiday in Skokie.

In the children's area at the rear of Barnes and Noble in Village Crossing, Zeesy Posner of Lubavitch Chabad of Skokie took her young guests through Hanukkah's history using storytelling, puppetry, acting and music.

She moved her way through the small crowd, interacting with children and bringing the story to vivid life.

"We're going to dance because we're happy that Hanukkah is coming tomorrow night," Posner said at the end of her Monday, Dec. 15 presentation.

Hanukkah music suddenly filled the room, and children twirled around to this zesty song.

It's Honeyky Hanukkah 'round and around, Honeycake Hanukkah, eat them down, Latkes and goody things all over town,

It's Honeyky Hanukkah, shaky my hand, My candles are burning all over this land, To light the dark road for the man passing by,

It's Honeyky Hanukkah time.

The Jewish holiday is celebrated for eight days and nights starting this year on Dec. 16.

In Hebrew, the word "hanukkah" means "dedication," a reminder of the re-dedication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem following the Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greeks in 165 B.C.E.

In an effort to purify the temple after it had been in foreign hands, Jewish troops burned oil in the temple's menorah. Even though there was oil for only one day of burning, the flames miraculously lasted a full eight days.

Posner, a popular preschool teacher at Lubavitch Chabad of Skokie, displayed her gift for connecting with young children while educating them at the same time.

Following her telling of the Jews' triumphant retaking of the temple, she had the children help make pretend-latkes.

By the end, the children had learned how to make latkes even if they only had miniature toy props as the result.

Still, they wouldn't have to wait long for the real deal. Hanukkah was just a night away.
PROPERTY TRANSFERS

NILES
737 W Crane St, Niles 60714-2105: Katherine M Peterson sold the property to Sang U Wood & Sang H Woo for $274,000 on December 2
7841 N Oconto Ave, Niles 60714: Sang H Woo for $274,000 on December 2

MORROW CROE
7317 W Cram St, Niles 60714: Katherine M Peterson sold the property to Amanoueel Koshy & Sabitha R Mathew for $146,500 on December 2
1846: Fannie Mae sold the property to Lukasz Grochal for $290,500 on December 2
60714-5707: Blue Onionz Lic sold the property to Amanoueel Koshy & Sabitha R Mathew for $146,500 on December 2

NORRIDGE
60714-1136: Seta G Hovsepian sold the property to Bina Kumari A Patel & Amit Kumar T Patel for $319,000 on December 3
7309 Palma Ln, Morton Grove 60053-1136: Seta G Hovsepian sold the property to Bina Kumari A Patel & Amit Kumar T Patel for $319,000 on December 3

HARWOOD HEIGHTS
7444 W Strong St, Harwood Heights 60726-3418: Tadeusz Wolniewicz sold the property to Victor Hugo Ayala & Gladys Genoveva Salazar for $145,000 on December 3
2150 Bouterse St 106, Park Ridge 60068-1980: Fannie Mae sold the property to Margaret W Mistak for $255,000 on December 3

PARK RIDGE
1015 Frances Pkwy, Park Ridge 60068-5187: Julia Zaborowski sold the property to Michael E Holden & Erin Holden for $321,000 on December 3
1620 S Crescent Ave, Park Ridge 60068-5374: Gary J Altolatti sold the property to Trisha Holub for $300,000 on December 3

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THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Toddler Time
10 a.m.: Stories, songs and rhymes for children ages 1-3 with a caregiver. Niles Public Library District, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles. Call 847-663-6625.

FRIDAY, DEC. 19

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

MONDAY, DEC. 22

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

TUESDAY, DEC. 23

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

HAPPENING NEARBY

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Story Time for 2s
9:30 a.m.: Stories and songs for 2-year-olds with an adult. A second session is held at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-823-9377.

Story Time for 3s

Humanities Discussion
10:15 a.m.: The group meets on the third Thursday of each month. All levels of photographic skill are welcome. Skokie Village Hall, 9270 Skokie Blvd., Skokie. Call 847-677-8324.

FRIDAY, DEC. 19

Duplicate Bridge
9 a.m.: The senior center offers a friendly bridge game every Friday morning. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127.

Share the Warmth
9 a.m.: Volunteers wanted. Join a group of warm, friendly, supportive women (men welcome) to prepare one-of-a-kind fleece blankets for chemotherapy patients. We add a crochet edge to save and send these free blankets to new adult chemotherapy patients. We can teach you a basic crochet stitch if needed. Bring lunch. We often gather until 2 or 3 p.m. Donations are welcome to this 501(c)3 non-profit organization. North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield. Call 847-784-6030.

Caregivers of Children with Mental Illness Support Group
9:30 a.m.: Sessions facilitated by a volunteer from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. For more information, call 847-716-2252 or visit www.nami.org. Wilmette Public Library, 1242 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette.

STEAM Starts
10 a.m.: A self-guided exploration of science, technology, engineering, art, math and reading for kids ages 2-6 with a caregiver. Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-825-3123.

Handicrafters
10 a.m.: Held every Friday at 10 a.m. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-663-1234.

TODDLEART
10 a.m.: Join in stories and hands-on activities to nourish the creative toddler within. Ages 2-4-years-old with caregiver. Franklin Park Public Library, 1031 Grand Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-455-6016.

Shabbat with a Twist
11 a.m.: Challah making, stories and song for families with children up to PreK. Congregation Beth Shalom, 3433 Walters Ave., Northbrook. Call 847-498-4100.

The Merry Widow at Light Opera Works
12:30 p.m.: Enjoy this final dress rehearsal performance of "The Merry Widow." Fee includes bus and general admission ticket. Depart from the Morton Grove location. Call 847-470-5223 to register. North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield. Call 847-470-5223. $45 for members; $59 for nonmembers.

Gamers
1 p.m.: The group meets every Friday. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127.

Write Your Socks Off Writers Group
2 p.m.: Aspiring authors in their 20s and 30s are invited to join this new writers group. Meet in Fannie Schnee's Bakery on the third Friday of each month, with writing to share. Eisenhower Public Library, 4616 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

Hot Chocolate for Charity
3 p.m.: Stop by the lobby to enjoy some Christmas carols and buy a cup of hot chocolate for $1. All proceeds go to Teen Living Program, a charity devoted to helping homeless teenagers get off the streets. This event is sponsored by the Library's Young Adult Council. Elmwood Park Public Library, 1 W. Court Parkwy, Elmwood Park. Call 708-453-7645.

"Congregational Dinner Celebrating Shabbat Hanukkah" 6 p.m.: Temple Beth Israel presents a "Congregational Dinner Celebrating Shabbat Hanukkah" for the whole congregation and their guests. The event is open to synagogue members and nonmembers who may be interested in learning about Temple Beth Israel. Shabbat Hanukkah Dinner, 6 p.m. and Shabbat Hanukkah Service, 7:30 p.m. For more information or reservations call Temple Beth Israel, 3601 W. Dempster St., Skokie. Call 847-675-0951. Dinner: $20 adult, $9.50, child. Register for dinner by Dec. 17.

Anime Club
6 p.m.: Watch one's favorite anime and draw one's own manga while feasting on Japanese snacks. Ages 12-17-years-old, Franklin Park Public Library, 10311 Grand Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-465-6016.

SATURDAY, DEC. 20

Shabbat Children's Program
9 a.m.: Children in Shabbat Kids Club can enjoy a program that includes davening, interactive games, a healthy snack and stories. Lubavitch Chabad of Skokie, 4059 Dempster St., Skokie. Call 847-677-1770.

Special Family Open Class
9 a.m.: Join us for stretching and opening of your body and mind with relaxation techniques and meditation. Members and non-members are welcome. It is an open class. Call to RSVP. Dahn Yoga, 1947 Cherry Lane, Northbrook. Call 847-662-9642.

Al-Anon
9:30 a.m.: Details at 708-867-5044. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 5650 N. Canfield Ave., Chicago.

Congregation Beth Judea Men's Club assists at Lieberman Center
9:30 a.m.: The Men's Club of Congregation Beth Judea assists one a month for Shabbat service. Volunteers needed to assist in taking the residents to and from service. This is a rewarding experience for individuals who feel they may want to participate in this wonderful mitzvah. Please arrive at the Lieberman Center by 9:30 a.m. Contact Jerry Sakol (jerry@al.org) or Ron Friedman (r.friedman@ibgroup.net) with questions or directly to the Synagogue office at 847-634-0777. Lieberman Center, 9700 Gross Point Road, Skokie.

Stories Wrapped in Strings
9:30 a.m.: Parents and caregivers of young children are invited to join once a month for a free new story time series, Stories Wrapped in String, at the Chicago showroom on Thursdays and at the Wilmette shop on Saturdays. William Harris Lee & Co. staff and special guest artists from local

SEE CALENDAR, NEXT PAGE »
strings studios and music schools will perform classical and improvised music accompanying stories read by actress, Deirdre Harrison. William Harris Lee & Co., 1130 Central Ave., Wilmette. Call 847-920-9445.

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 Greenwood St., Skokie. Call 847-673-4450. $20 per session; $12 for guild members.

Fundraiser Helps Youth to Develop Entrepreneurial Skills
10 a.m.: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the Evanston North Shore Alumnae Chapter (ENSA), hosts Santa's Gift Shoppe until 3 p.m., at Family Focus in Norwood Hall. In addition to fundraising efforts, Santa's Gift Shoppe allows children to purchase inexpensive gifts for their friends and families. Money raised for the event directly benefits the three youth initiative programs run by the local sorority: Delta Academy, Delta GEMS, and E.M.B.O.D.I. The children and teens are responsible for pricing, packaging, and selling merchandise. Items range in price from 10 cents to $15. Shoppers and visitors are able to take free pictures with Santa (from noon until close) and give him last minute gift requests. Parents can enjoy light music and refreshments in the waiting area while their children shop. Family Focus Evanston, 2010 Dewey Ave., Evanston. Call 847-475-7570.

Overeaters Anonymous
10:30 a.m.: Meeting held each Saturday. St. Giles Episcopal Church, 3025 Walters Ave., Northbrook. Call 847-272-6622.

Shabbat/Chanukah lunch & learn
Noon: Shabbat/Chanukah lunch & learn with Rabbi Leonard Kravitz — after Shabbat services on Dec. 20, 2014, join in for a delicious Shabbat Chanukah lunch. After lunch, member Rabbi Leonard Kravitz, will lead a discussion about Miracles of Eight: Differing Theories about Chanukah. Call or visit the website for reservations. Temple Beth Israel, 3601 W. Dempster St., Skokie. Call 847-675-0951. $5.

FUSE: Studio
Noon: Drop in with friends to wire LEDs, compose a ringtone, build an amp, mix chemicals to make gel beads, navigate a robot obstacle course and more. For grades six to 12. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-448-8630.

Gaming in the Loft
4 p.m.: Join a Wii and Xbox 360 (with Kinect) gaming session; first come first serve. For grades six to 12. Meet in the third floor lot. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-448-8630.

Franklin Park Lions Club
7 p.m.: Franklin Park Community Center, 9560 Franklin Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-289-1921.

North Shore Jewish Community Hanukkah Concert
7:30 p.m.: Join The North Shore, Skokie and Chicago Jewish communities for an unforgettable evening of song and story, schmooze and blues featuring Chicago’s newest Jewish folk rock band and YouTube sensation “Rogers Park.” The two lead singers - Yosef Pevskin and Mordy Kurtz have being performing together as “Rogers Park” since 2011. Doors open at 7 p.m. General Admission: VIP - $36, Adults - $18, Student/Child - $10; At the door: VIP - $40, Adults - $20, Student/Child - $12. Purchase tickets online at: www.orsimcha.com or call 847-999-9001. Sponsorships available. Reservations: 847-410-2066 or info@orsimcha.com. Wilmette Community Recreation Center, 3000 Glenealy Road, Wilmette.

SUNDAY, DEC. 21

“Gift of God’s Grace”
10:45 a.m.: As part of the morning worship service, the Adult Sanctuary Choir presents a Christmas choral music program entitled “Gift of God’s Grace.” A reception follows in the church narthex. Winnetka Covenant Church, 1200 Hibbard Road, Wilmette. Call 847-446-4300.

Author Michael Willian Presents “It’s A Wonderful Life” Talk-back
4 p.m.: Don’t miss this special talk-back with Michael Willian, author of “The Essential It’s A Wonderful Life: A Scene-By-Scene Guide to the Classic Film.” prior to showing. Willian’s breaks down this masterpiece and shares with audience-goers interesting facts, tidbits, film and cast anecdotes. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit: www.winnetkatheatre.com Wilmette Theatre, 1122 Central Ave., Wilmette. Call 847-251-7424. $7.50.

Mike Ditka “Da Coach”
7 p.m.: Join North Shore Senior Center for the 18th Annual Joan Golder Distinguished Senior Lecture Featuring Mike Ditka. Mike Ditka, also known as “Da Coach,” boasts an illustrious football career as a Pro Football Hall of Fame player, Super Bowl-winning coach and NFL analyst. Named “Coach of the Year” twice for the Chicago Bears, he is the second person to win the Super Bowl as a player, assistant coach and head coach. He will discuss his “Observations on Life.” North Shore Senior Center, 1610 Northfield Road, Northfield. Call 847-784-6000. $10 members; $12 nonmembers.

MONDAY, DEC. 22

MGPL Kids: Monday Morning Playgroup
10:30 a.m.: Drop-in play time for preschoolers with Heavy subjects are made lighter when authors, comedians, artists, musicians - such as Smashing Pumpkin’s Billy Corgan and others share personal stories and insights into life’s prodigious questions.

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Dear Help Squad,

I have the strangest situation. I keep getting this small business AT&T bill that I thought I cancelled years ago. When I try to call to inquire why it was not cancelled and why I am still being charged both from a business invoice and a personal invoice for the same number, they cannot locate my account. My account doesn't exist in their system, yet I continue to get this bill month after month that I cannot stop paying because of penalties. What in the world do I do now? I was literally on the phone with AT&T for three hours yesterday and nobody could tell me anything. No one could find any record of my account. With an account number that they say doesn't exist, I can't get past go. I'm so mad that I have let this go on for so long.

Libby, Glenview

The cause of this particular AT&T issue (and Help Squad has seen its fair share) was actually a confluence of unclear billing information combined with a phone tree the size of a sequoia.

Anyone who calls AT&T Small Business Customer Care must carefully press buttons and say the correct words in order to conquer its automated phone tree. For Libby to successfully reach a human, she first had to get through 10 different options. That's a lot of phone tree branches! And if an error was made in selecting any of those options — incorrect account number, incorrect phone number, unrecognized voice command — she was either sent back to a previous menu or disconnected. As far as either Libby or Help Squad was able to discern, it was not possible to request a customer service representative until you got to the phone tree's eighth option — at which point there were still two more selections to be made prior to achieving human contact.

Fortunately, Help Squad was able to press all buttons correctly and hang in there through the 10th option. For our steadfast focus, we were rewarded with the assistance of a very helpful AT&T Small Business Customer Service representative. What we learned upon reaching this CSR was that the number in question — a toll-free business line — was a "virtual line" that only accepted incoming calls via Libby's cell phone. This CSR took the time to look through Libby's account notes — all the way back to 2002, when the line was first activated — but was unable to find documentation of a termination request. She said it would be no problem for Libby to terminate service now, however, as the toll-free line was not on a contract.

What Help Squad learned when Libby attempted to duplicate our phone tree steps was that instead of plugging in the toll-free business number at step eight, she was keying in her cell phone number. Though this seems logical — after all, her AT&T business bill clearly states "Long Distance Service Billed Number: 773-XXX-XXXX," (her cell number) — the account was linked only to the virtual toll-free number. This was why Libby kept being disconnected or told her account couldn't be located!

And though her cell phone number appeared on both the AT&T small business statement and her family's AT&T wireless statement, she was not being double-billed after all. The small business statement contained only those charges resulting from calls to the virtual toll-free line, while the wireless statement contained charges associated directly with her cell phone number.

After getting all of the above straightened out, Libby was able to successfully cancel the long-overdue toll-free business account. The only outstanding question now is, will the friends and family who have been calling toll-free continue to call once free long distance is gone? Libby is now officially on her own!
Blockbuster or flop? The Movie Review section has the scoop.

Your guide to the weekend and beyond
Every Thursday
Niles periodontist leads patients to Love the Gums You’re With

JACKIE PILOSSOPH
For Pioneer Press

Sore, sensitive gums that would bleed when she brushed her teeth is what led Deb Gaffney to seek help a few years ago for what she said she knew was periodontal disease.

"I knew this wasn't a dental issue," said Gaffney of Park Ridge, who at the time had been a smoker for almost two decades. "I said to God, 'God, if you let me keep my teeth, I will never smoke again.'

Gaffney is hardly alone when it comes to those who suffer from periodontal disease (also known as gum disease.)

According to the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP), one in every two adults over the age of 30 suffers from the inflammatory condition, which if left untreated can lead not only to tooth loss, but to more serious chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer and Alzheimer's Disease.

These startling statistics are what led the AAP, an 8300-member organization to launch their new Love The Gums You’re With campaign to raise awareness about the disease. It's a campaign that Niles-based periodontist Dr. Dorothy Anasinski supports enthusiastically.

"The potential repercussions of periodontal disease upon an individual's oral and physical well-being is a very serious but often overlooked health issue," said Anasinski, D.D.S., who is the founder of Dental Specialists of Niles. "My practice both prevents and treats periodontal disease, but unfortunately all too often a new patient doesn't arrive until the condition has worsened."

Anasinski, who has been in practice for two decades and who is also the vice president of the North Suburban Branch of the Chicago Dental Society, said a large portion of people who suffer from periodontal disease don't feel pain until the teeth are about to be lost.

"When they start having symptoms and warning signs like bleeding or tender gums, bad breath, gums that have pulled away from the teeth or loose teeth, they don't do anything about it because they think it is occurring due to aging," said Anasinski, a Loyola University Dental School graduate who completed her residency in periodontics at Northwestern University.

She said the good news is, periodontal disease can be prevented.

"Quitting smoking, eliminating sugary drinks, and practicing good oral hygiene habits including brushing at least twice a day, flossing daily, and discussing gum health with a dental professional are all ways to prevent gum disease," Anasinski said.

"We discussed hygiene, diet, and of course, smoking," said Gaffney, who is a patient of Anasinski's. "She said, 'Do you want to quit smoking?' She prescribed Chantix and I never smoked again.

Gaffney also endured multiple cleaning treatments and antibiotics to get rid of the bacteria which had spread throughout her body, causing flu-like symptoms, she said.

"Just like personal relationships with people need care and attention, so do your gums," said Anasinski. "I've always enjoyed helping people improve their health, which also improves confidence and makes them happier, in general."
United Methodist Women host Cookie Walk and Bake Sale

To help everyone get a jump on the holiday crunch, the United Methodist Women held their Cookie Walk and Bake Sale Dec. 6 at the First United Methodist Church of Park Ridge.

Baggies filled with cookies of various kinds were thoughtfully arranged, including notations for those with allergies. Other home-baked goods and gift items were available.

The event, which ran 9 a.m.-noon, was a fundraiser. Proceeds will help support the church's programs.

More information at parkridgeumc.org.
The 2015 Nissan Versa is proof that even people of modest means can buy a brand-new, decent family sedan. It starts at just $12,800, less than the cost of many used cars — likely one reason it has been the best-selling entry-level car in the United States for the last four years.

Labeled the S, the $12,800 base model of the 2015 Versa four-door sedan arrives with a full complement of safety equipment, including tire pressure monitoring, as well as air conditioning, Bluetooth telephone connectivity, AM-FM-CD audio system and a five-speed manual gearbox.

If you want a four-speed conventional automatic transmission, add $1,500. If you can afford to spend or finance a bit more, then there are the SV and the tested SL trim levels, which come with Nissan's new and more efficient Xtronic automatic continuously variable transmission (CVT). Its fuel economy rating of 31/40/35 mpg on the EPA's city/highway/combined cycles is better than that of both the five-speed manual gearbox and the four-speed automatic transmission.

With a starting price of $17,700, the tested Versa SL arrives with the Xtronic transmission as well as alloy wheels, pushbutton starting, cruise control, a premium audio system with CD player, the Nissan Connect system with mobile apps and power outside mirrors with turn-signal indicators. Our test car also had an $800 technology package that included satellite radio and a navigation system. In short, it's about everything most customers look for in a modern automobile.

With 90 cubic feet of passenger space, the Versa SL is a roomy car. Although the front seats are a tad small, they provide decent support and comfort. In back, there's a surprising amount of knee and head room for 6-foot passengers. The center-rear position is almost habitable but is marred by intrusive front cupholders and a small floor hump.

The upholstery is a sturdy and comfortable cloth, and the instruments and controls are simply designed and intuitive to use. Most of the interior surfaces are made of hard plastic — remember, this is an economy car — and the hard plastic is nicely done and assembled to prevent obvious creaks or squeaks. Unfortunately, the steering wheel tilts but does not telescope, so some drivers might have trouble getting their feet and arm space correctly matched.

All Versa sedans are equipped with a 109-horsepower, 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine that is adequate for most driving situations. But don't expect to win many drag races or stoplight sprints.

On the other hand, the Versa's CVT delivers at least the impression of sprightly acceleration. It gets a good jump off the line, and the transmission shifts smartly for passing and freeway merging. Cruising, if not as serene as in a high-end luxury car, is pleasant. There's little mechanical or wind noise, and road noise is mostly muted, except where the surfaces are choppy and rough.

Nissan Versa works as entry-level sedan
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Our Price: $28,887

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Our Price: $19,887

NEW 2014 Stk# T24927
Chevrolet Equinox LS
MSRP: $25,450
Lease for only $254
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Tax, title, license and doc fees due at lease inception.
Our Price: $19,887

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Our Price: $15,114

NEW 2014 Stk# T24927
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Lease for only $254
per month for 39 months
NO DOWN PAYMENT
Tax, title, license and doc fees due at lease inception.
Our Price: $19,887

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NO DOWN PAYMENT
Tax, title, license and doc fees due at lease inception.
Our Price: $15,114

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- **$179** per month
- **1.49% APR**

### Imports & Domestic

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*Subaru will donate $250 for every new Subaru vehicle sold or leased from November 20, 2014, through January 2, 2015, to a choice of participating charities designated by the purchaser or lessee, up to $15,000,000 in total. Purchasers/lessees must make their charity designations by January 31, 2015. See your local Subaru retailer for details or visit subaru.com/share. A guaranteed minimum donation of $250,000 will be made to each of the four national charities. All donations made by Subaru of America, Inc. 1.49% APR financing to qualified buyers with approved credit on select models. Length of term limited. No down payment required. Dealer not responsible for errors in this advertisement. Offers end 12/31/14.
LYNCH CHEVROLET
KENOSHA'S CHEVY SUPERSTORE

YEAR END SAVINGS SPECTACULAR

0% APR Financing For 75 Mos Available On All New & Used Vehicle Purchases!

NO Payments Til March, 2015!

We Will NOT Be Undersold!

2015 CHEVROLET SONIC
STK # K15061 MSRP: $15,670
LYNCH PRICE $12,295*

2015 CHEVROLET EQUINOX
STK # K15025 MSRP: $26,530
LYNCH PRICE $19,415*

2015 CHEVROLET MALIBU
STK # K15040 MSRP: $23,755
LYNCH PRICE $16,595*

2015 CHEVROLET CRUZE
STK # K15083 MSRP: $18,795
LYNCH PRICE $13,565*

2015 CHEVROLET SILVERADO
STK # K14470 MSRP: $31,170
LYNCH PRICE $25,995*

*All manufacturer rebates and incentives applied, plus tax, title, lic and doc fee. +0% APR financing for 75 months is available to qualified buyers with approved credit. 0% for 75 is $13,33 per thousand borrowed. This is a dealer buy down rate and not a manufacturer program and may affect the final selling price. $10,000 maximum balance financed, plus tax, title, lic & doc fees. May not be combined with any other offers. #To qualified buyers with approved credit. All prices listed are plus tax, title, license and doc fee. Offers expire 1/3/15. Dealer will not honor errors in this advertisement.

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[Map of Kenosha]
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303.7 Cu. Ft. Cargo Space
- Automatic
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- Air Conditioning
- Electronic Stability Control
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- Hill Start Assist
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Now In Stock!

$23,999

We Will Drive to You - Demonstration Right at Your Door!

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237.8 Cu. Ft. Cargo Space
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It's done what no luxury car has done.
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Introducing the new Porsche Panamera. The first true sports car that's also a luxury sedan. Step on the accelerator and best in class performance and handling is undeniably present. But now, there's a new source of exhilaration: executive class comfort. Elegantly crafted leather seats, a remarkably spacious cabin and a sleek ascending center console. With an endless amount of customization options. In short, the world's most thrilling contradiction. Experience it for yourself, with a test drive.

The new Porsche Panamera.

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Highland Park, IL 60035
http://porsche-exchange.porschedealer.com
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New Car Buyers Guide

You're in the Driver's Seat at ToDrive.com
Visit ToDrive.com to find the make and model that fits your style, needs and budget.
You’re in the driver’s seat at ToDrive.com

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Muller Honda

HAPPY Honda Days
SALES EVENT

Yes! We Can...
Be Your #1 Choice In Chicagoland!

$500 MILITARY APPRECIATION OFFER!* See dealer for details

0.9% APR FINANCING AVAILABLE!* See dealer for details

$500 COLLEGE GRADUATE BONUS!* See dealer for details

2014 Honda CIVIC LX COUPE Automatic, Stk#H32283
LEASE FOR $139 for 36 mos. $1499 due at lease signing, plus 1st mo. payment, tax, title, lic. and doc. fee.

2015 Honda ACCORD LX 4DR
Automatic, Stk#H33654
LEASE FOR $169 for 36 mos. $1499 due at lease signing, plus 1st mo. payment, tax, title, lic. and doc. fee.

2014 Honda CR-V LX AWD Automatic, Stk#H33144
LEASE FOR $179 for 36 mos. $1499 due at lease signing, plus 1st mo. payment, tax, title, lic. and doc. fee.

2015 Honda PILOT EX 4WD Stk#H33796
LEASE FOR $299 for 36 mos. $1499 due at lease signing, plus 1st mo. payment, tax, title, lic. and doc. fee.

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* $500 For Military and College offers must go towards a down payment or cap cost reduction for the lease or purchase of a new 2014 or 2015 Honda vehicle. Must finance thru HFS. Military appreciation exp. 1-5-15. College grad bonus exp. 1-5-15. *Based on closed end leases for 36 months. For well qualified lessees with approved credit. All manufacturer's incentives applied. 12k allowable miles per year. $15 over on Accord, Civic and CR-V. $20 over on Pilot. Residuals: 14 Civic $10,483, 14 CR-V $14,616, Accord $13,980, 15 Pilot $19,348. Additional options extra. Lessee is responsible for excess wear/tear, maintenance and insurance. Subject to early termination penalty. 0.9% APR financing on select models to qualifyed buyers with approved credit. Not available with any previous offers. Dealer will not honor errors in this advertisement. Valid 3 days from publication.

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Take the Test: Is your Work Environment Healthy or Toxic?

By: Roberta Matuson

Those who are fortunate enough to work in businesses where morale is high generally feel good about their work. These employees are often referred to as highly engaged. This type of magnetism pays off substantially. These employees are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty on behalf of their employers.

According to Gallup, engaged employees are more productive and profitable than those with workforces that consist of people who are moderately engaged or disengaged. They also tend to provide high levels of customer service and are less likely to leave the company when tempted by generous offers from other firms.

An organization with engaged workforce is generally more profitable than those whose workforce consists of people who are moderately engaged or disengaged.

To see how your company fares on candidate attraction and employee retention, answer the 16 questions below -- or download the Workplace Assessment form.

Rate your answers on a 1-4 scale, with 4 being "great." Be honest in your assessment -- no sugar-coating! Consider asking your management team complete this assessment -- and then pool your results.

Any question that results in a score of 2 or less requires immediate attention!

Talent Magnetism Assessment:

1. We have a pool of well-qualified candidates waiting to come work for us. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
2. There are more qualified applicants than we can process. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
3. The people who apply are a good fit. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
4. When we invite candidates in for an interview, more often than not they say "yes." [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
5. Our top-choice candidates accept our job offers. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
6. When we have a job opening, employees don't hesitate to refer friends and colleagues to our company. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
7. People outside the company regularly recommend top people to our firm. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
8. We are able to fill job openings without the help of agencies or search firms. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
9. Our top employees choose to stay with our firm. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
10. Employees consider our company to be a great place to work. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
11. We know who our top performers are and we support their growth. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
12. Employees would rate their managers as being great to work for. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
13. Our managers are trained to select, identify, guide, coach, reward and retain their people. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
14. Employees know exactly what is expected of them and they have the tools and skills to perform their jobs satisfactorily. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
15. Employees feel they are compensated fairly for their contribution to our firm. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]
16. We regularly ask our employees what we can do to improve our workplace. [Rating: 1-2-3-4]

How did your company do? No matter your score, there's always room for improvement in this age of the talent poach.
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LEGAL

Project No. 21-0162-02 Advertisement to Bidders

The Board of Education of the Village of Morton Grove for the School District

The Owner reserves the right to change the above information at any time, to the extent allowed by law, in order to comply with the requirements of the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act, 232 ILCS 130/1 etc. (the "Act"). The Act requires contractors and subcontractors to pay laborers, workers, and mechanics performing services on public works projects no less than the"prevailing wage rate" at the time of contract award.

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If you would like to download a copy of the form, please visit www.tjac.com.

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Public Notices

AT&T Mobility, LLC is proposing to install 3,569 new wireless telecommunications facilities on a 20-mile radius from the center of the Village of Harwood Heights, 7060 W. Lawrence Ave., Harwood Heights, Illinois, 60706. These facilities will be removed and replaced, mounted on 125 feet above ground level on 110 structures.

The Village of Harwood Heights calls for public comment on the proposal and if any portion of the proposed facility impacts any 100-foot buffer zone.


Public Notice

Tuesday, December 16, 2014

847-999-3400

TO PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL

847-999-3400

OR VISIT

PONERLOCAL.COM/CLASSIFIEDS

Thursday, December 18, 2014

Pioneer Press (DC) 7

IILLINOIS CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING NETWORK

ADVERTISING SERVICES

Need to place your classified ad throughout Illinois? Call Illinois Press Advertising Service 217-241-1700 or visit online www.DRIVEJTC.com

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Class A CDL Truck Drivers

Dedicated & OTR Runs

Great Pay & Sign On Bonus

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AIRCAREER STARTS HERE... BECOME AN AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECH. FAA APPROVED TRAINING. FINANCIAL AID IF QUALIFIED. JOB PLACEMENT AVAILABLE.

CALL AIM

800-481-8312

The Illinois Classified Advertising Network (ICAN) provides Pioneer Press and the Doings with advertising of a national appeal.

To advertise in this section, please call ICAN directly at (217) 241-1700.

Both Pioneer Press and the Doings recommend discretion when responding. Please refer questions and comments directly to ICAN.
Section 1: Definitions

As used in this Ordinance, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- **Costs**: All expenses incurred by the District or by another authorized emergency response agency for any removal or remedial action.

Section 2: Prohibited Acts

No person shall cause, threaten or allow the release of hazardous materials into the environment unless such release is an accordance with an appropriate permit granted by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency or other State or Federal agency having primary jurisdiction over the release and such release is in such place and manner as will not create a substantial present or potential hazard to human health, property or the environment.

Section 3: Liability for Costs

- **Liability for Costs**: All expenses incurred by the District or by another authorized emergency response agency for any removal or remedial action.

Section 4: Response Authority

- **Response Authority**: The Fire District or any public agency pursuant to an intergovernmental agreement, including, but not limited to, agreements made asMutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) agreements.

Section 5: Cost and Penalties

- **Costs**: All expenses incurred by the District or by another authorized emergency response agency for any removal or remedial action.

Section 6: Defenses

- **Defenses**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 7: Personal Injury, Property Damage and Cost Recovery

- **Personal Injury, Property Damage and Cost Recovery**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 8: Financial Responsibility

- **Financial Responsibility**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 9: Additional Provisions

- **Additional Provisions**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 10: Enforcement

- **Enforcement**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 11: Severability

- **Severability**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 12: Effective Date

- **Effective Date**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 13: Adoption of Ordinance

- **Adoption of Ordinance**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.

Section 14: Signature

- **Signature**: A situation involving an actual, suspected or possible hazardous material for which the Fire District or other emergency response agency must respond in order to ensure the safety of persons or property.
PARTIES
CATHOLIC SOCIETIES’ SPIRIT OF SAINT NICHOLAS BALL
THE SERVICE CLUB OF CHICAGO’S HOLIDAY LUNCHEON
KASTEL JEWELRY COLLECTION’S LAUNCH PARTY
& MORE

WE’RE TALKING ABOUT... HOLIDAY SHOPPING

KENDALL & KYLIE
THE JENNER SISTERS SWING THROUGH CHICAGO TO PROMOTE THEIR HOLIDAY LINE FOR PACSUN
HIS WEEK

**THINGS WE LOVE**

This week, we're talking about chocolate and its weight in gold. These rare Ecuadorian chocolate bars – only 574 were made – were created by Winnetka native Jerry Toth with only two ingredients (cacao and cane sugar) and are the ultimate, luxurious sweet treat. $260, available at Lush Wine & Spirits locations citywide; Toakchocolate.com

**Meli Café**

Beat the winter woes with belly-warming, seasonally inspired dishes from the breakfast hot spot — we're obsessed with the varieties of French toast (pumpkin, sweet potato, nutmeg/gingerbread and carrot). They even have homemade marmalade in flavors like quince, grapefruit-kivi and bacon. French toast starting at $10, 301 S. Halsted; Melicafe.com

**MTailor**

This new men's clothing app uses your phone's camera to take your measurements — 20 percent more accurately than a professional tailor — and create a perfect custom shirt. Shirts start at $69, app free on the iTunes App Store; Mtailor.com

**Zadig-et-Voltaire pediatric cancer benefit**

The French clothier is giving back this holiday season with a Parisian-style shopping soirée to benefit the Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation. Guests can shop for a cure while sipping bubbles and snacking on light bites. Dec. 17, 6-8 p.m., 114 E. Oak; Us.zadig-et-voltaire.com

**AT THE SHOOT**

Kendall and Kylie Jenner rocked looks from their line for PacSun during a store appearance at Woodfield Mall (5 Woodfield Mall, Schaumburg). Before the doors opened to the thousands of fans who came out to see them, the sisters posed for our camera and talked candidly about growing up in the spotlight.

**CREDITS**

Photographer: Kirsten Miccoli
Shoot Producer: Katerina Bizios
0 11TH ANNUAL 'SWEET HOME CHICAGO'
Join co-chairs Anna Bliton and Meghan Norton, plus WINGS board chair Rita Canning and honorary chairs Greg and Anna Brown, for WINGS's (Women In Need Growing Stronger) holiday event. The festive afternoon includes a visit with Santa Claus, gingerbread house decorating, entertainment from Ralph's World, family portraits and the chance to visit with comfort dogs from Lutheran Church Charities. Proceeds help provide resources to families who experience domestic violence.

Time: 10 a.m.
Place: Four Seasons Hotel Chicago, 120 E. Delaware
Cost: Sponsorships start at $5,000. For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, call (847) 519-7820, or visit Wingsprogram.com/11th-annual-sweet-home-chicago.

This Holiday, earn a $15 Bonus Coupon for every $100 you spend on gift cards. (up to $45)
Offer ends January 3, 2015. Available online and in salon.

December 14
11TH ANNUAL 'SWEET HOME CHICAGO'
Join co-chairs Anna Bliton and Meghan Norton, plus WINGS board chair Rita Canning and honorary chairs Greg and Anna Brown, for WINGS's (Women In Need Growing Stronger) holiday event. The festive afternoon includes a visit with Santa Claus, gingerbread house decorating, entertainment from Ralph's World, family portraits and the chance to visit with comfort dogs from Lutheran Church Charities. Proceeds help provide resources to families who experience domestic violence.

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December 17-21
CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE
This touring Christmas spectacular features more than 20 acts — think aerial stunts, acrobatics, illusions and musical numbers — from 30 artists from across the globe decked as snowmen, angels, toy soldiers, gingerbread men and other seasonal characters. The show comes from the creators of Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy, and heads to New York after its Chicago debut.

Time: Wednesday-Saturday 7:30 p.m., Saturday-Sunday 2 p.m.
Place: Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State
Cost: $25-$75. For tickets, visit Cirqueproductions.com.
December 20

- **HANDEL'S 'MESSIAH'**
  The city's oldest musical organization, Apollo Chorus, keeps tradition alive by performing Handel’s “Messiah” for the 135th year. Led by conductor Stephen Ailtop, the organization’s signature performance features music from the 125-member chorus, plus soloists Elisabeth Marshall, Jalal Bridges, Samuel Levine and David Govertsen.

- **HANUKKAH CONCERT**
  Rabbi Joe Black and the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band perform two one-hour concerts in honor of the holiday in the Adler Auditorium at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Tickets to the concert include access to the Wonderland Express, the organization’s festive, train-centric holiday exhibit.
  **Time:** 11 am and 1 p.m.
  **Place:** Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook, Glencoe
  **Cost:** $15 in advance and $18 at the door for members, or $17 in advance and $20 at the door, children 2 and under free. For tickets, visit Chicagobotanic.org/wonderland/special.

December 21

- **HANUKKAH CONCERT**
  Rabbi Joe Black and the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band perform two one-hour concerts in honor of the holiday in the Adler Auditorium at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Tickets to the concert include access to the Wonderland Express, the organization’s festive, train-centric holiday exhibit.
  **Time:** 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.
  **Place:** Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook, Glencoe
  **Cost:** $15 in advance and $18 at the door for members, or $17 in advance and $20 at the door, children 2 and under free. For tickets, visit Chicagobotanic.org/wonderland/special.

- **FABIO VIVIANI WINE TASTING**
  "Top Chef" fan favorite and the chef behind Siena Tavern in River North swings through Mariano’s Westchester to debut his new wine brand, Fabio Viviani Wine Collection. Grab a bottle of the California-made wine — he’s kicking off the line with a 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon and a 2012 Chardonnay — greet the chef, and get the bottle signed.
  **Time:** 3-4 p.m.
  **Place:** Mariano’s Westchester, 3020 S. Wolf, Westchester
  **Cost:** Free to attend. For more information, visit Marianos.com.

December 24

- **FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES**
  Let someone else do the cooking this Christmas Eve and celebrate the Feast of the Seven Fishes, a centuries-old tradition in Southern Italy. At acclaimed restaurant Nico Osteria, Chef de cuisine Erling Wu-Bower’s seafood-centric, four-course meal includes dishes such as salt-crusted branzino, roasted razor clams and plenty of crudo and oysters. (Standard menu is also available.)
  **Time:** 4 p.m.
  **Place:** Nico Osteria, 1015 N. Rush
  **Cost:** $100. For reservations, call (312) 994-7100.

December 26-31

- **KWANZAA CANDLE LIGHTING CELEBRATION**
  Mark the seven-day festival of Kwanzaa at the DuSable Museum of African-American History. Each day celebrates one of the seven principles, known as Nguzo Saba, including Unity, Self-Determination and Purpose. Drop by to light a candle and commemorate the festival, celebrated throughout the African diaspora.
  **Time:** Noon-1 p.m.
  **Place:** DuSable Museum of African-American History, 740 E. 56th
  **Cost:** Free. For more information, visit DuSablemuseum.org/events/details/kwanzaa-candle-lighting-celebration.

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At the 84th Academy Awards in 2012, Angelina Jolie made a style splash when she showed off her lengthy leg with a thigh-high slit. Ripples of the trend still remain in the fashion world. Even two years later, provocative slits are still the gold standard for making a sexy statement (just look at the recent American Music Awards looks donned by stars like Fergie and Julianne Hough). Grab your own stem-showing gown from labels like Fendi, Burberry Prorsum or Nina Ricci, but heed this warning: While the lovely Mrs. Jolie-Pitt can go sky-high with her slits, we mere mortals would be wise to keep it demure to avoid risking any wardrobe malfunctions. In short: The thigh's the limit.
Countdown to Christmas

STORIES BY CHIARA MILIOULIS

Partygoers merrily sang “The Twelve Days of Christmas” while wrapping gifts for children in need at the Service Club of Chicago’s annual Holiday Luncheon Dec. 4. Chairs Diane Freeman and Bonnie Rickard and an animated toy soldier welcomed attendees to The University Club of Chicago (76 E. Monroe) for a “sip and shop,” featuring holiday items from vendors including Elements Chicago, Alioto Gift Shop, Jo Malone and Lulu’s on the Avenue. Each guest wrapped gifts for the boys and girls served by charity partner Hephzibah Children’s Association — which assists at-risk youth by providing them a safe environment and promising future — while listening to festive tunes from Chicago Hope Academy’s choir.

Splash was the media sponsor of this event.
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Dazzling gems

Chicago-based jewelry designer Maria Ress added some sparkle to The Ritz-Carlton Chicago's deca Restaurant + Bar (160 E. Pearson) with the launch of her jewelry line Kastel Jewelry Collection. Hosted by Eleni Bousis, the Dec. 3 Splash-sponsored event brought guests to the restaurant's festive lobby, where they sipped wine and sampled new modern brasserie-inspired menu items by Chef Martin Knaubert while browsing the collection, as well as fashions by Barbara Bates Designs.
'ODD' JOBS

Oak Park native THOMAS LENNON talks 'The Odd Couple,' 'Night at the Museum' and always being 'that guy'

BY ZAK STEMER

Tom is that guy in the general reaction people have when they see Thomas Lennon — and he's totally fine with that. The actor/comedian, an Oak Park native, has 100 acting credits under his belt. "Meryl Streep has part 2, "I love this thing. It was never my goal to be her," Lennon laughs. "The joy of being 'Oh, that guy', which I am, is that you can work forever."

Lennon, 44, has been in showbiz for more than two decades, starting in role shows like 'The Late Show' and 'Reno 911!' and filling bit parts in movies like 'I Love You, Man,' 'The Dark Knight Rises' and 'Bad Teacher.' But now he's hitting a career high. Next year he'll opposite Matthew Perry in the highly anticipated reboot of 'The Odd Couple,' and he's one of the writers of the 'Night at the Museum' franchise, which premieres its third installment Dec. 19.

The film series follows Ken Stiller (often referred to as Lennon's since he appeared on the very first episode of 'Late Show') as a security guard in a museum where each night, all the exhibits come to life. In this month's sequel, the magic that animates the exhibits starts to run out. Stiller — along with luminaries like Jerry Seinfeld, John Cusack and Martin Short — must hurry to save it.

An upcoming project of Lennon's is a book that he will release soon, which he describes as 'The Odd Couple' with a 'Fisheye Lens.' He says he is currently working on it and that it is a book for kids. "It's about the importance of family and friendship," he explains. "It's a fun book that kids can relate to."

From failure to franchise

"We wrote a movie called 'Taxi' that starred Queen Latifah and Jimmy Fallon. Everyone in the entire world seemed to agree that it was the worst movie ever made — at least by human beings," laughs Lennon. "But the test screenings had been so good that we had already signed a deal to write 'Taxi 2.' The Monday morning after 'Taxi' came out, we got called into the principal's office at 20th Century Fox. They said, 'OK, you're in big trouble. You wrote the worst movie made by humans. So now, to fulfill your contract, you have to pick one of these three children's books to make into a movie. They put a couple of things in front of us, one of them was Night at the Museum."
The Woodfield Mall isn't open yet, but a single unlocked door on the east side has been open since 5 a.m., allowing thousands of teenage fans in to line up outside the gated stores, winding through the mall. The line culminates at PacSun, where Kendall and Kylie Jenner — the teenaged younger sisters of the Kardashian clan — pose for our cover shoot alongside their latest collaborative collection for the beachy brand.

At only 19 and 17 years old respectively, Kendall and Kylie are seasoned media pros: While the crowd outside chants their names ("KEN-DALL, KY-LIE"), the sisters pose perfectly, barely batting an eyelash. "It's something that we've grown up with," says Kylie. "It's kind of normal for us — as normal as it can be."
She's not exaggerating. Since the ages of 11 and 9, the sisters have been reality-TV regulars on E! Network's "Keeping Up with the Kardashians" and its spinoff series "Kourtney & Kim Take Miami," "Kloe and Lamar" and, most recently, "Kourtney and Khloe Take the Hamptons." The show has followed them through their most transformative years, documenting everything from hitting puberty to learning to drive to butting heads with their parents.

Of course, it hasn't always been all fun and games. "We love doing these meet-and-greets," says Kylie; but, like any celeb, they're approached by their share of fanatics. "You got chased in Miami, didn't you?" remembers Kendall. "We were really young, and [Kylie] had to run and escape them. She came to me and was like, 'Kendall, that wasn't normal.' They're bashed on social media as much as they're praised (they each have more than 15 million Instagram followers), but they take it in stride: Earlier this month, the elder Jenner posted a "Mean Girls"-inspired video poking fun at all the nasty things people have said about her from behind their computer screens, while Kylie tweeted, "Let's talk about something new at least. I'm bored," showing a coolheaded indifference to the plastic-surgery rumors swirling about her. "We have an amazing family surrounding us," Kylie explains. "They taught us so much about growing up in [the spotlight]."

Though they learned a lot from their older siblings, Kendall and Kylie have recently found plenty of success in their own right. Kendall is the new face of cosmetics brand Estée Lauder and has a modeling career that would make even the most veteran catwalker envious — during New York Fashion Week, she strutted for labels like Diane von Furstenberg, Givenchy, Chanel and Marc Jacobs — and Kylie has a just-launched line of hair extensions with Bellami Hair dubbed Kylie Hair Couture. Together, they've penned a sci-fi young adult novel, Rebels: City of Indra, started a commercial for Beats by Dre headphones and created a line of shoes for Steve Madden. Their 2014 holiday line for PacSun is the duo's 12th collection for the brand.

"We were definitely admiring what Kendall and Kylie were becoming," says PacSun CEO Gary Schoenfeld of the collaboration. "We thought it would be really interesting to take these two girls from California and create a [line] around their unique fashions and sensibilities. ... We talk about the 'Golden State of Mind.' It's not just girls and guys at the beach; we're inspired by beaches, by mountains, by social causes, by technology, by the entertainment industry. Part of our mission is to capture that in different ways, and Kendall and Kylie bring a great dimension to that."

For their part in the design process, the duo brainstorm inspirations for each collection based on their own fashion influences — namely, their stylish sibs. "My family has a lot to do with my style," Kylie says, calling out older sister Kim and her husband, rapper Kanye West, especially. "I also look on Tumblr a lot [for inspiration]." The girls then work with the design teams on everything from choosing fabrics to sharing ideas for the campaign creative. The second wave of their holiday collection is in stores now, comprising more than 50 pieces, from embellished vests and babydoll dresses to cardigans and denim (prices start at $22.50).

As they wrap the collection launch, the Jenners will head back to Los Angeles, where they'll briefly escape the media to celebrate the holidays like the rest of us — only with a little more glitz and glam. "My mom is the holiday queen," says Kylie of momager Kris. Adds Kendall: "She decorates the house for every single holiday, but at this time of year [the décor] is obviously bigger. It's really fun. [The holidays] are the time we spend with family."

Until then, though, they're on the job. As we wrap our interview, the gates to the store open and Kendall and Kylie get comfortable in their seats — they've got a staggering number of autographs to sign.

SISTER, SISTER
We asked the Jenner sibs to answer questions about each other in a "Newlywed Game"-style quiz.

| S: What songs are on everybody's playlist? | Kendall: Playing Drake but that's just listening to | Kyle: Spooky Black. |
| Kendall: No, you have SO many. Like if I tell her I don't like something she's wearing or her hair color or whatever, she's like [mimicking voice], "I don't care." | Kendall: I need everything clean. My house is clean and I'm still cleaning. | Kendall: That's not true! |
| Kylie: She has so many. |
| Kendall: I'm not negative, I'm your sister. |
| S: What's on Kendall's? | Kylie: (Kendall is) cool, edgy, stylish, different. |
| Kylie: Really? I can't think of any. | Kendall: What were we just listening to? You were playing Drake but that's just listening to everybody's playlist. |
| S: (Kendall is) cool, edgy, stylish, different. | Kendall: That's not true! I have, like, everything. |
| Kylie: Spooky Black. | S: How would you describe your sister's style? | Kendall: (Kylie is) model-y, sophisticated, simple.
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The 12 deals of Christmas

Savor the rest of the season with these festive local finds

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

DEC. 14: Find a unique craft fair
Still need gifts to wow the more discernable folks on your list? These unique holiday bazaars are your best bet. Randolph Street Holiday Market (below, $10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Plumbers Hall, 1340 W. Washington; randolphstreetmarket.com) is a modern-day block sale with a huge assortment of antique keepsakes and vintage and indie jewelry and art (plus free furniture delivery in downtown Chicago if you're going big). You'll also want to leave time today for The Chicago Art Girls holiday pop-up shop (11 a.m.-5 p.m., Bell Elementary School, 3730 N. Oakley; chicagogramgirls.com) and the Bucktown Holiday Art Show (free admission pass online, noon-5 p.m., Holstein Park Fieldhouse, 2200 N. Oakley; bucktownpromotions.com), where you can find goods from a variety of local artisans - think humorous snow globes from Red-Belly and Jason Thomas' carved treasures.

DEC. 15: Get a taste of Chicago at Christmas
Shop and eat simultaneously with a new promotion called "Unwrap Lincoln Square and Ravenswood." The first 150 shoppers who spend $300 on goods, services and gift certificates at a minimum of three neighborhood businesses before Dec. 24 will receive a $50 gift certificate to try an area restaurant in the new year. Save your receipts and mail copies - along with your contact info - to the Chamber of Commerce (2611 W. Lawrence) before the cutoff date. The applicable area is Foster to the north, Ashland to the east, Montrose to the south and the Chicago River to the west - meaning shops like Merz Apothecary (pictured), Architectural Artifacts Inc. and Enjoy, An Urban General Store are all up for grabs (visit lincolnsquare.org/pages/unwrapcampaign for more info).

DEC. 16: Snap a winning photo with Santa
Today's the last day to enter the #SantaSnapshot contest at the 900 North Michigan Shops (900 N. Michigan; Shop900.com/holiday). Get your candid with Kris Kringle on level 3, then tweet or Instagram the photo using the official hashtag #SantaSnapshot for your chance to win up to a $1,000 shopping spree. While you're there, take advantage of the Wrap & Recharge Holiday Lounge, which boasts a complimentary coat check, charging stations and wrapping services. And be sure to enter the "Posh Giveaway" raffle at the concierge desk - you get one ticket for every $50 you spend at the Shops - and win items for your family and friends from Azeeza, L'Occitane en Provence, Lulu's on the Avenue and others.

Lords-a-leaping and maids-a-milking are so 18th century. These days, the 12 days of Christmas are filled with last-minute shopping, eating, drinking, entertaining - did we mention last-minute shopping? To help you catch a quick breath before the big day arrives, we've created a day-by-day breakdown of the best upcoming local deals and services.
**DEC. 17: Tap into Christmas brews**

Now that we’re finally over pumpkin beers, gift your palette with hints of ginger, cinnamon and chestnuts — and learn how to know the difference between them all with a special holiday-themed beer Academy at Goose Island Brewpub ($25, 6:30 p.m., 1800 N. Clybourn; Gooseislandbrewpubs.com). Tonight’s tasting will offer a lineup of presents from various craft breweries (although none have been officially named yet, possibilities include Great Lakes Christmas Ale, Berghoff Germanic and Goose Island’s own Christmas Ale) along with instructions on how to impress your family by pairing the beers with your holiday dishes at home.

**DEC. 18: Check off Christmas cards**

If you’re dreading the annual assembly line of Christmas cards, there’s an easier option to get them in the mail. Two friends from Highland Park developed the free Cardento app (Cardento.com), which lets you design, print and pick up your cards all in the same day using your iPhone. Choose a template from 20 designs, take or select a picture from your phone’s photo library and send your order to your local Walgreens for same-day pick-up. Each order includes 20 cards and envelopes, and the app offers convenient reordering options. Get it today and you still have one week to get cards delivered on time.

**DEC. 19: Stay up late**

Andersonville’s popular Later-er Night gets going tonight — boutiques along Clark like Moda Boutique, The Wooden Spoon and Landmark Century Centre Cinema are open past their bedtimes (visit Andersonville.org for more participating shops). Shop from 6-10 p.m. then get your items wrapped for free with recycled paper goods at George’s Ice Cream and Sweets (pictured). There’s also the chance for Santa photo ops, sweet treats and drinks and even a kid drop-off at the First Free Church.

**DEC. 20: Start your Holiday cookie-thon**

Holiday cookies are as good a gift as any — and the preparation can be a party in itself, if you know what you’re doing. If not, sign up for today’s “Fun ‘n’ Fancy Holiday Cookie” class at The Chopping Block, open to all skill levels ($75, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 4747 N. Lincoln; thechoppingblock.net). On the day’s agenda are ginger molasses spice cookies with festive sprinkles, buckeyes, cranberry-pistachio bars with apricot glaze, red-and-green holiday elephant ears and chocolate peppermint sandwich cookies. In groups of three to five, you’ll learn how to make the cookie dough and work with fresh ingredients, then take the treats (and recipes) home with you to start your cookie exchange.

**DEC. 21: Pop into pop-ups**

Only four days left to wrap up Christmas shopping! Look outside the big box for some one-of-a-kind collections at a selection of off-holiday pop-up shops. For him: The Tie Bar ($18 N. State) has its first-ever retail destination with neckties, skinny ties, bow ties and pocket squares starting at $10 — some even designed by former Splash cover stars Jesse Ferguson and NBA star Dwyane Wade. For her: Andersonville boutique Milk Handmade (pictured) won Block 37’s inaugural pop-up contest, giving the store downtown exposure for its independent handmade goods, including cocktail dresses, jewelry and other accessories from 50 designers starting at $20 (108 N. State).

**DEC. 22: Treat family to holiday tea and a movie**

Want a way to wow the out-of-town guests starting to trickle in this week? Take them to The Drake ($20 for children, $42 for adults, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., 140 E. Walton; thedrakehotel.com). The hotel’s Palm Court offers special afternoon tea service with holiday pastries, beautiful winter wonderland décor and entertainment, including a harpist and Christmas carollers. Stick around for free Movie Mondays at 7 p.m. — tonight’s feature is a showing of “It’s A Wonderful Life” (pictured). Grab a themed cocktail like the Drake Eggnog or Caramel Appletini and enjoy complimentary popcorn while you snuggle up to your loved ones.

**DEC. 23: Find the perfect ugly Christmas sweater**

With reindeers clashing, snowmen drinking and trees blinking with colored bulbs, there’s no limit to what you can wear — or force your loved ones to wear — on Christmas Day. Turn it into a family or office contest and get a step up on the competition by visiting one of two Christmas Sweater Depot locations (4268 W. Irving Park, 5644 W. Dempster; mortongrove.christmassweaterdepot.com). Each island of mistletoe apparel is stocked with 3-D sweaters, bedazzled T-shirts, holiday leggings, vests and more.

**DEC. 24: Take a quick trip to Europe**

One of the best imports Chicago gets all year is the annual Christkindlmarket (free, 11 a.m.-8 p.m., Daley Plaza, 50 W. Washington; Christkindlmarket.com), which brings in authentic vendors from Bavaria, Germany to set up red-and-white striped huts. The festival is inspired by a centuries-old tradition in Nuremberg — revelers sip on hot mulled wine (glühwein), nosh on bratwurst, potato pancakes, hot pretzels and crepes, shop for handcrafted ornaments, steins and cuckoo clocks and take their kids to see Santa and admire the city’s official Christmas tree.

**DEC. 25: Celebrate at Sixteen**

Sometimes the best holiday meals are far far away from the family kitchen, and the Trump Hotel’s Sixteen restaurant has an idyllic menu for Christmas Day (brunch is $45 for kids and $15 for adults and dinner is $125 for prix fixe or $185 for the tasting menu, 401 N. Wabash; Trumphotellecollection.com/chicago). Start with a wholesome spread for brunch or make reservations for dinner with prix fixe and tasting menus prepared by executive chef Thomas Lents. The festivities begin with a ride up to the restaurant in the Gingerbread Express, a special elevator decorated with more than 1,000 gingerbread bricks (and other candied decor) crafted by the pastry team. If you want a place to crash for the night, consider the hotel’s “Home for the Holidays” suite, decorated with a Christmas tree, stockings hung by the fireplace, holiday DVDs to rent and special milk-and-cookies turndown service ($185).
The Joffrey Ballet makes holiday magic with 'The Nutcracker'

BY THOMAS CONNORS

There are as many ways of getting into the spirit of the season as there are needles on a 6-foot Fraser fir. For some, it’s shopping on North Michigan. For others, it’s stringing lights outside the house, or perhaps strapping on skates and cutting a figure eight. For plenty of people, the Yuletide wouldn’t be complete without taking in a performance of 'The Nutcracker.' And The Joffrey Ballet’s production — now in full swing at the Auditorium Theatre — hits the spot like a hot chocolate garnished with a candy cane.

While the ballet is as much a tradition as 'Messiah' and 'A Christmas Carol,' it’s a relative newcomer as holiday entertainment in the U.S. First performed at St. Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre in 1892, it didn’t hit these shores until 1940, in an abbreviated production by the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. Robert Joffrey, who’d been an extra in that production, first offered his own version in 1987.

Joffrey, whose vision of American dancing converted many to what had previously been seen as effete European art form, set his ballet in a 19th century American home. The original decor, by Oliver Smith, took its cues from Joffrey’s personal collection of Americana. “Robert Joffrey loved the Christmas holiday, and poured his heart into this production,” notes the company’s artistic director Ashley Wheater. “I have seen many ‘Nutcrackers’ through the years, but Joffrey’s first-act party scene is the best of them all. The staging and choreography is incredibly complicated, but feels like a real holiday party in the home of a family you or I might know.”

Assisting Joffrey in this effort was his partner and colleague, the late Gerald Arpino, who choreographed various passages, including the “Waltz of the Snowflakes.” Arpino wasn’t keen on the project, but, as he remarked some years back, Joffrey insisted, saying, “You must do it, but do it your way.” His way, Arpino related, combined neoclassicism with a distinctly ‘American aspect of rhythm and form.’

Naturally, most audience members won’t be parsing the choreographic nuances of the ballet. Instead, they’ll be lost in the Christmas Eve-set story of a little girl and her dreams. As Wheater observes, “We share a desire for families to gather at the holidays. And Clara may represent the classic American child: curious, independent, adventurous and open to a world of possibilities.”
Simon Doonan is something of a caricature, with his loud patterned shirts (paired with a sleek suit, of course), wild hair and goatee and charming British accent. He's been with Barneys New York for three decades — his current post is as creative ambassador — written seven books, decorated the White House for the holidays and earned endless fashion accolades.

Last month, while in town for a shopping event to benefit Children's Research Foundation, the lovably eccentric Doonan gave Splash a slice of his stylish life.

Personal style
"I'm not a hit-or-miss person. I've never been that way. I was on 'Fashion Police' once and I was just hopeless! They wanted me to say 'this was good' or 'that was bad.' I think people should wear things that bring them pleasure, just wear them with conviction. Because at the end of the day it's all subjective — like, I think I look great, but I'm well aware of the fact that a lot of people think I look stupid. I don't care. People are entitled to their opinions."

Best gift ever
"The best gifts are always the ones I give myself, because I really know what I want. Like I once gave myself a Goyard bag with my initials oversized on it, because I really want myself a Goyard bag with my initials oversized on it, and I liked that. You can really knock it out of the park [when] giving a gift to yourself."

Star-struck
"I saw the David Bowie exhibit [when it was] in London; it's so amazing. I think he's the most creative performer, because with him it wasn't just strange costumes, it was strange music, too. It was innovative music; it was a total way of thinking. It makes you realize a lot of performers today that are very dressed up, their music isn't [aligned with that], whereas with him it was all innovation. I would have gone to the exhibit [in Chicago], but I thought, 'If I go around it again, it's almost like I'm a stalker.'"

Travel time
"My husband Jonathan Adler and I just celebrated our 20th anniversary. We went to Aman in Utah. It's an incredible resort in the middle of the Utah landscape. It's off-the-chizzies — I highly recommend it for an anniversary getaway. We went rock climbing and did all these [manly] things."
My entire upbringing is based in Italian-American food," says chef Tony Quartaro. "My grandma is a major inspiration for me, and there are pictures of me when I was 8 years old making gnocchi with my dad." Quartaro is poised to bring that traditional Italian family cooking — with a few twists — to Chicago's dining scene when Formento's opens in January.

From the team behind The Bristol and Balena, Formento's is inspired by Italian red-sauce joints of the 1950s and 1960s — think saltimbocca ($33), chicken Vesuvio ($58, serves two) and a killer classic relish tray made using modern techniques and the highest quality ingredients ($14). The West Loop spot is almost finished, and a series of preview tastings have been hot tickets. Clearly, Chicago is still in love with Italian.

Here's what else to expect at Formento's:

**Chef stats:** Quartaro never went to culinary school (except, perhaps, at his father's knee), but he started his culinary career after college at Nopa in San Francisco. He moved on to A16 before returning to Chicago to start work at the Bristol. As the team opened Balena, he was "holding down the fort" at Bristol; now that he's been with the group for a year and a half, it's time for Quartaro to get his own kitchen.

**Upscale Italian:** The dishes at Formento's may be familiar, but don't expect huge plates and carb comas. "The plating will be modern — no giant plates brimming with sauce," laughs Quartaro. "We're going to make the food modern only in the sense that we're applying the best techniques we know how. What's staying? The flavors and the robust quality of the food — nothing delicate." Consider a staple of every Chicago-Italian pantry: giardiniera. Formento's will be making it in-house with cauliflower, carrots, Serrano chilies, oregano, garlic and vinegar and frying it up tempura style. It'll be served with Meyer lemon crème fraîche and basil — not exactly a plastic cup of spicy mush in a diner.

**Family favorites:** Canestri with Sunday gravy, an old recipe from Quartaro's grandma, is sure to be a hit ($15). "It's an homage to traditional Chicago neckbone gravy," he explains. It includes braised pork neck, Italian sausage, meatballs and salt-and-pepper whipped ricotta ($15). And don't miss the Timpano, a version of a macaroni pie: Sausage, meatballs, mozzarella, ricotta and sauce all go into a huge drum made of pasta, baked for an hour and fifteen minutes ($19). "You end up with these wonderful slices — it's almost like a quiche," says Quartaro.

**Breaking bread:** One awesome addition to Formento's will be Nonna's (another tribute to Grandma), a separate sandwich shop run out of the restaurant. "It's a passion project for us," says Quartaro. "We'll be doing things like chicken Parmesan, eggplant Parmesan, meatballs." He'll also be revising some old recipes, like the Florentine Street sandwich made with tripe, hard-boiled eggs and red peppers ($9).
On my radio show last week, we talked about the different ways to say "I love you." It's one of the most important things in a relationship — anyone can simply say the words "I love you," but it's when someone goes out of the way to actually make you feel loved that you get that warm-and-fuzzy feeling. For example, I brought up how whenever I take a nap, I can feel Donnie putting a blanket over me — it instantly brings a smile to my face and gives me a sense of peace. It doesn't matter how simple something might seem to be, it's guaranteed to make you feel loved when the thought and effort are there.

Here are a couple ways to show your love:
- Flirt with your partner. Flirting is fun and used to give us those exciting butterflies, so why not do it on a regular basis, no matter how long you've been together?
- Cut your partner some slack. We all have bad days and we all make mistakes. Being understanding and compassionate can go a long way.
- Always show up when it counts. When someone is upset or needs to vent, giving him or her your full, undivided attention shows that you really do care and want to help.
- Send a midday text or email just letting them know you're thinking about them.
- Compromise, compromise, compromise — it's your best friend. Everyone wins when you compromise.
- Know when to give someone space. If your partner is in a mood where nothing you say can help, just give him a little "me time" and let him know you're there when he feels like talking.

I'd love to hear your unique ways of showing your love!

Read Jenny's blog at ChicagoSplash.com.
Woodfield Mall's style setter shares this season's shopping must-haves

Shake it like a Polaroid picture – and satisfy your need for instant gratification.

Fujifilm: Instax Mini 8 instant camera, $100, Urban Outfitters locations citywide; Urbanoutfitters.com

ZHAKA SANDBERG

AGE: 33. TITLE: Style setter for Woodfield Mall and owner of style blog Love Zahra. LIVES IN: Streamwood. DAY-TO-DAY: My role with Woodfield Mall focuses on blogging about fashion for the Style Setter blog, and creating fashion segments that have aired on [TV news shows]. I really enjoy coming up with the concepts and doing everything from working with retailers to styling the looks and from pulling the merchandise to sometimes even finding the models. I also help organize mall events and host new store openings. IN HER WORDS: I was in a job I wasn’t passionate about, I was married, I just had a baby and I felt like my life revolved around everyone but me. I started doing outfit photo collages on my blog — then one day I was watching a fashion segment on TV and I told my husband I could do a way better job. Just a few months later, Woodfield Mall (asked me) to do a New Year’s Eve fashion show that aired on [TV]. I had no idea when I started that the blog would grow into an actual business. FESTIVE TREND: I’m really into faux fur. It just elevates the entire outfit. I just bought a gorgeous oxblood faux-fur stole from Anthropologie and I can’t stop wearing it ($98; Anthropologie.com). GIFT IDEA: There’s a book by Malene Birger called Move and Work. It’s a beautiful coffee table book curated with gorgeous images of rooms she lived in and decorated herself with items she acquired through her lifetime of travels ($59.85; Barnesandnoble.com). HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: I’m Muslim but my husband’s family is Christian. My parents are from Pakistan but I grew up here and I love Christmas — the music, the decorations. We spend Christmas with my husband’s family and we do a special dinner at my mother-in-law’s for Christmas Eve.

To see Sandberg’s favorite holiday shopping ideas, visit Splash suntimes.com. For more information on Sandberg, visit Stylesetter.simon.com and Lovezahra.com.

The prettiy pink-and-purple palette in this jacket, along with the ruffles, makes this classic tweed style super feminine.

Diane von Furstenberg: ruffle trim tweed crop jacket, $498, Bloomingdale’s, 900 N. Michigan; Bloomingdales.com

Bella Colletta: crystal bib. (Champagne), $198; Bellacolletta.com

The hexagonal pattern on this dress is reminiscent of the mesmerizing magic-eye posters of the 90s.

Diane von Furstenberg: print silk blend A-line dress, $448, Nordstrom, 6 Woodfield Shopping Center, Schaumburg; Nordstrom.com
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Tea and music with Rachel Barton Pine

BY KARIE ANGELL LUC
For Pioneer Press

The Park Ridge Civic Orchestra welcomed Rachel Barton Pine to tea at the Park Ridge Country Club on Nov. 15.

Guests watched Barton Pine, a master violinist, tune up a tableful of instruments. "This is really fun," she noted. One violin was made in 1742 and has a spruce top, maple body and boxwood pegs. The security detail nearby said the violin is worth "10 figures."

The company also enjoyed music by Barton Pine at the fundraiser. A particular delight was her duet with her daughter Sylvia, 3. Sylvia had brought her own instrument and plucked along with her mother in a dual rendition of "Three Blind Mice."


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Chicago chefs give us the dish: ‘The Best Meal I Ate This Year’

BY VERONICA HINKE  
Food Writer

Want to get a chef talking? That’s easy: Ask them about the best meal they ate out this year. That’s what we did — and we ended up with this roadmap that digs deep into the Chicago area food scene. Part II of our series, with more picks, will run in the paper Dec. 24.

Dominic Zumpano — PM Prime in Highwood
Best meal: Sweet Breads, Taro Root, Banana
Restaurant: Next, 953 W. Fulton Market, Chicago; NextRestaurant.com

The skinny: “I will never look at beef and broccoli the same way again. It was by far the best meal I have had all year and it didn’t hurt that when I went it was for my birthday. The experience was unreal; it was such a brilliant take on Chinese food.”

Takashi Yagihashi — Slurping Turtle in Chicago
Best meal: Japanese-style Barbecued; Pork Cheeks
Restaurant: Chicago Kalbi, 3752 W. Lawrence Ave., Chicago; ChicagoKalbi.com

The skinny: “They offer the highest quality Japanese-style barbecue in Chicago. It’s a very interactive meal that you can enjoy as a family and share a variety of dishes. The flavor profile offered at Chicago Kalbi is more of a Japanese and Korean fusion, but the experience is still very authentic to Japan. My favorite thing to grill there is pork cheeks. The marinade keeps the pork moist and it’s a very light texture.”

Laura Frankel — Spertus Kosher Catering in Chicago

Best meal: Raw Tuna, Rocoto Cream
Restaurant: Tanta, 118 W. Grand Ave., Chicago; TantaChicago.com

The skinny: “I have had my share of raw tuna, but this version was not only beautiful but also had rocoto cream, which is fruity and spicy all at once. Awesome food!”

Art Smith — Table 52 in Chicago

Best Meal: Kimchee Fries, Yusho Sticky Fried Chicken Wings; Tofu Doughnuts and Cinnamon Ice Cream
Restaurant: Yusho — Hyde Park, 1301 E. 53rd St., Chicago; Yusho-Chicago.com

The skinny: “Love the new Hyde Park Yusho by Chef John Vermiglio. I am about promoting small local hard working folks and it’s delicious and affordable hipster. Hyde Park is finally a dining destination — feeding the Nobel laureates and activists.”

Bill Curtis — Tallgrass Beef and Barbecue in Chicago

Best Meal: Lemon-Ricotta Pancakes with a side of Sugared Bacon
Restaurant: Beatrix, 519 N. Clark St. Chicago; BeatrixChicago.com

The skinny: “It’s a new discovery that keeps calling me back — lemon ricotta pancakes. They whip up egg whites and fold them into the lemon-ricotta batter for a mix with lemon syrup. They peel the lemon rinds, boil them with water and then boil them in sugar water and cook them down to a syrup and pull the lemon zest to garnish the pancakes. I also order a side of sugared bacon. The combination is exquisite.”

Chef Mark Hellyar’s Momotaro in Chicago was the site of several Chicago chefs’ favorite meal this year.

Bill Kurtis — Tallgrass Beef
Best meal: Fried chicken
Restaurant: Yusho — Hyde Park, 1301 E. 53rd St., Chicago; Yusho-Chicago.com

The skinny: “You actually feel like you’re in the backstreets of Tokyo. The Izakaya is located just under the restaurant, and you can enter either through the restaurant, or its own side door entrance.”

Alison Parker — Radical Root Farm in Libertyville
Best meal: Potato Kale Soup
Restaurant: Sauce and Bread Kitchen, 6338 N. Clark St., Chicago; SauceAndBread.com

The skinny: “Honestly, we barely eat out, mostly because we are so busy and also because we grow so much food here, so we just end up cooking and eating at home. A farmer’s life, I guess! Our favorite meal was cooked by Mike and Anne for one of their [The Farm Supper Club] events. They used their sauces and breads that they make in their restaurant. A co-op sauce, Oaxaca Chilhuacle Sauce, gave a new twist to the standard potato and kale soup. It had just the right amount of heat and flavor, which really complemented the vegetables and the rich, meaty broth. Anne and Mike really put their heart and soul into their cooking, and are devoted to using a lot of local and organic produce and using old world methods to make their food.”

Fabio Viviani — Siena Tavern in Chicago
Best meal: Fried chicken
Restaurant: Bavette’s, 218 W. Kinzie St., Chicago; Bavette’sChicago.com

The skinny: “The food is consistently good and comforting and the service is always spectacular. I had an amazing meal, but I think the stand-out was the fried chicken. Very unexpected for
The team at TETE Charcuterie got raves from several Chicago chefs.

a steak house, but it was amazing and the homemade hot sauce was insane."

Nathan Sears — The Radler in Chicago
Best meal: Prosciutto Fritto with Butternut Squash, Whipped Mortadella, Beet Bruschetta, Rabbit Casoncelli, Meatballs and Spaghetti, Budino
Restaurant: Charlatan, 1329 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago; CharlatanChicago.com
The skinny: "I am a simple man with simple tastes. At the end of the day I just want food that tastes good and fills my soul. If I had an Italian nonna I wish it could be Matt Troost. Everything was simple, executed perfectly and had a great little something thrown in to every dish for a personal stamp, but it didn't distract from the base of what it was supposed to be."

Timothy Benedict — Old Town Pour House in Oak Brook
Best meal: Dewey Burger — burger, bacon, fried egg, and Merkts cheddar with a fist full of fries.
Restaurant: Dewey's, 667 Vernon Ave., Glencoe; Deweys-Glencoe.com
The skinny: "I go for simple, uncomplicated comfort food. Recently, I stopped in to Dewey's in Glencoe when I was up there to see a performance at Writers Theatre. Perfect little burger joint for quiet little Glencoe. Burgers and fries done proper, how can you go wrong? Wasn't anything fancy, but exactly what was needed; paired with a rare evening with family, can't be beat."

Zoë Schor — Ada Street in Chicago
Best Meal: Millers Farm Roasted half chicken, dill spaetzle, crunchy salad
Restaurant: The Bristol, 2152 N. Damen Ave. Chicago; TheBristolChicago.com
The skinny: "I'm a huge sucker for spaetzle, and theirs was absolutely delicious. But the chicken itself was so incredibly moist and well-seasoned, with a perfectly crispy skin — I have probably never had better roast chicken, besides my father's. I had a hard time choosing between this, and the fried chicken leg at TWO. I have to give it to the roasted chicken at The Bristol, though."

Mark Hellyar — Momotaro in Chicago
Best meal: Prawn tartare, marrow with abalone, clam with foie gras and salade gourmand
Restaurant: L20, 2300 N. Lincoln Park West, Chicago; Loco.com/places/l2o-chicago-us
The skinny: "Chef [Matthew] Kirkley is at a level all his own that rivals any and all meals I have ever had. There were sincere moments of genius blended with a sense of humor, but mostly raw skill in restraint and strong quality. My girlfriend and I had the full out tasting menu with beverage pairing and it was worth every cent. We rarely dine this way as it is truly meant for a special occasion, but we felt at ease and left inspired and proud for what their kitchen could produce. All the dishes were standouts, but the prawn tartare, marrow with abalone, clam with foie gras and salade gourmand were mind-blowing to say the least. It is sad to say that they are closing so get there while you can!"

Giuseppe Tentori — GT Fish & Oyster in Chicago
Best meal: Fried avocado
Restaurant: mfk, 432 W. Diversey Pkwy.; MFKRestaurant.com
The skinny: "The hot, crunchy tempura mixed with the creamy, custardy avocado made for a perfect texture contrast."

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**CHEFS**

Matt Troost — Three Aces in Chicago
Restaurant: The Brixton, 5420 N. Clark St., Chicago; TheBrixtonChicago.com
Best meal: "That chicken dish..."
The skinny: "That chicken dish... I don't remember the name! Biscuits and chicken sausage and old bay gravy sausage crispy skin something ... because Kevin [McMullen] is great. The whole meal was awesome but this dish hit every note and honestly it feels weird to list a chicken dish as my favorite from this year but it was outstanding."

Michael Richie — Deka in Wheeling
Best meal: Arctic char with mushrooms, forbidden rice and yellow tomato lemongrass sauce
Restaurant: Les Nomades, 222 E. Ontario St., Chicago; LesNomades.net
The skinny: "We had high expectations, and they were completely met. The food was imaginative and well thought out. The staff was very friendly and knowledgeable. My toque's off to Les Nomades."

Cleetus Friedman — Fountainhead, The Bar on Buena, The Northman in Chicago
Best Meal: Tasting menu
Restaurant: Katsu, 2651 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago
The skinny: "Chef does some remarkable things with what seems to be the best quality fish - all gorgeously and thoughtfully presented. The sake list is great, too, and is always a knockout."

Thai Dang — Embeya in Chicago
Best meal: Grand Charcuterie Board
Restaurant: TÊTE Charcuterie, 1114 W. Randolph St., Chicago; TETEChef.com
The skinny: "I cook and eat Asian food most of my time, so when I have a chance to take my wife out for date night, we like to go and try other cuisine. And when we had dinner at TÊTE Charcuterie, it was amazing. The board is a tasting of some of the cured meats, terrines, and sausages they make in house. Along with house-made pickles and well-toasted bread, warm to the touch. It's charcuterie done with finesse — taking meat on a board to a new level of refinement."

Chris Pandel — Balena, The Bristol in Chicago
Best meal: Anything at Momotaro
Restaurant: Momotaro, 820 W. Lake St., Chicago; MomotaroChicago.com
The skinny: "After eating at Momotaro last month I can honestly say that it was the best meal of the year. The presentation, flavors and quality are unmatched in Chicago for Japanese cuisine."

Chef Rick Bayless named Acadia as the site of his favorite meal this year.

Jeff Shapiro — Real Urban Barbecue in Highland Park, Vernon Hills and Oak Brook
Best meal: Special truffle egg toast, fontina cheese, shaved asparagus; over easy eggs, truffle oil, melted cheese; perfect toasted bread, fresh eggs, mild nutty cheese, garlic toast, shaved fresh asparagus prosciutto-veal meatballs, braised greens, shaved pecorino focaccia di Recco: Ligurian-style baked focaccia, fresh soft cow cheese, local honeycomb
Restaurant: Davanti Enoteca, 1359 W. Taylor St., Chicago and 800 Hillgrove Ave., Western Springs; DavantiEnoteca.com
The skinny: "Like nothing you have ever eaten in your life! Creamy, warm, sweet, crispy all in one. Served on its own cutting board. OMG. Perfect, blended veal, prosciutto, sweet and tender. Topped with fresh pecorino: a little salt, a little sharp. Yum."

Rick Bayless — Frontera Grill, Topolobampo, XOCO in Chicago
Best meal: Tasting menu
Restaurant: Acadia, 1639 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago; AcadiaChicago.com
The skinny: "I love that Ryan McManus's restaurant is so elegant but not at all stuffy. The room is modern, and so is the food: Every plate was subtle and sophisticated yet bold enough to make me sit up and pay attention. It was a meal that surprised me in all the right ways."
'Seasoned' cabaret singer gives her first holiday show

BY MYRNA PETLICKI
For Pioneer Press

She has opened for Tony Bennett, her cabaret shows have garnered acclaim across the country, and she has written and performed numerous customized cabaret shows for private parties and corporate events. Now Charlene Brooks is about to do something she has never done before — perform a holiday show.

"I have sung at holiday parties with bands and done a lot of Christmas music over the years but I've never done a holiday show," Brooks said. The talented performer will be sharing the joys of Hanukkah, Christmas and winter in "Highly Seasoned," Saturday, Dec. 20 at the Skokie Theatre.

Of course, Brooks will be doing this show in her unique style — songs in a variety of musical styles, including some surprising selections, and true stories that are both touching and funny.

The multitalented singer, lyricist and actress shared one of those tales over coffee at Starbucks. We don't want to give too much away but what would you think if you discovered on Christmas morning that everybody else had their name embroidered on a Christmas stocking but your new mother-in-law attached a piece of paper with your name printed on it to your stocking?

Brooks, who is Jewish, reminisced about her earliest performance of a holiday tune. "When I was a little girl, one of the first songs I ever sang on stage was 'Hanukkah,'" she said. "I grew up in Andersonville. There were two Jewish girls in the entire seventh grade."

That was a rare experience for Brooks who admitted, "I loved to go caroling. I sang all the Christmas songs. Sometimes when I got to some of the more religious ones and I felt a little awkward, I'd be singing, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da." There will be no "da-da-da-da-ing" at the Skokie Theatre, though. Just beautiful renditions of such numbers as "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "My Grown Up Christmas List," "White Christmas," "Chanukah Prayer," "Dreidl" and the playful tune, "I'm Spending Hanukkah in Santa Monica."

In terms of the song selection, "Everything is brand spanking new," Brooks said, noting that audiences will have never heard her sing any of these songs before.

To create the show, Brooks gathered her favorite holiday tunes. "Every single song is something I love," she declared, and Brooks hopes that her choices are audience favorites, too. "People love to hear songs that they know," she said. "And we'll have a couple of sing-alongs."

Brooks has several gifts for the audience. She will be performing with a seven-piece band and there will be a holiday reception with complimentary food and beverages before the performance.

Her personal stories are another gift. "I love sharing honest things with people," she said. "There is nothing funnier and nothing more heart-rending than the truth."
No babysitter? No problem: New Year’s Eve fun with the kids!

Edible Hats
This is a sweet, creative craft that turns an ordinary ice cream cone into a work of art.
**You need:**
- Ice cream cones
- White chocolate or candy melts
- Assorted candy and cake decorations, such as jimmies, colored sugar, nonpareils, and chocolate chips
- Gel writer (Black seems to work best.)
- Apples, pears and/or oranges

**Directions:**
Melt chocolate in the microwave at 30-second intervals. Use a spatula to cover cone with chocolate. Be careful, the chocolate will be hot.
Invite kids to decorate the hats with sprinkles, jimmies, candies, etc.
Place hats on waxed paper until the chocolate hardens (about 1-2 hours).
To serve, place hat on your favorite fruit, use a black gel writer to add a face, and enjoy.

Clock Cookies
This simple recipe is a crowd-pleaser that celebrates an important New Year’s Eve icon.
**You need:**
- Sugar cookies - homemade or store-bought work equally well
- Icing (any color)
- Gel writer (black)
- Sprinkles (optional)

**Directions:**
Cover cookie with icing and allow it to set for at least an hour.
Use gel writer to make the clock face. If desired, add sprinkles and candies.
Be sure to eat before midnight!

New Year’s Eve Party Poppers
Party poppers have been a tradition in my family for many years. My mother, whom I often refer to as the original Mommy on a Shoestring, used to make them back when Ronald Reagan was president. These days, it’s nice to know that even though many things have changed, DIY party poppers remain as “pop”ular as ever.
**You need:**
- Toilet paper roll
- Wrapping paper
- Scissors and tape
- Ribbon
- Small goodies (such as candies, erasers or finger puppets)

**Directions:**
Use scissors to cut a diagonal line through the toilet paper roll (note: you want to be sure the roll maintains its shape). Cover the roll with wrapping paper, leaving 4-5 extra inches of paper on each side. Use ribbon to tie one side of the popper. Be sure to leave the other side open. Use the open side to fill the popper with goodies. Then tie up this side with ribbon.
Trim ends if necessary and decorate as desired.

Noise Maker
What’s New Year’s Eve without a little noise? In my house, kids can make as many noisemakers as they please as long as they “retire” them after the clock strikes twelve.
**You need:**
- Small empty box
- Wrapping paper

**Directions:**
Make a popsicle stick handle by sliding the stick through the bottom hole.
To use: Hold noisemaker by the handle and twist wrist quickly so that the buttons and beads hit the box.
Happy New Year!
Storytime with Santa!
6 p.m.: Get one’s wish lists ready! Santa is coming to the Library! Join in a special holiday storytime, milk and cookies, and photo opportunities with Santa. All Ages. Limit 75. Franklin Park Public Library, 10311 Grand Ave., Franklin Park, Call 847-665-8016.

Christmas at the White House
8 p.m.: It’s that magical time of year when the world’s most famous address, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, is aglow with decorations, celebrations and music. How did the First Families through the years bring their own unique style to the White House at Christmas time? And how were their celebrations and stories influenced by what was going on in the country and in the world? Join dynamic singing and acting duo, JENNY RIDDELL and ELIZABETH DOYLE, as they bring to life the public and private lives of the First Families in “Christmas at the White House.” Call 847-677-7761 or order online at SkokieTheatre.org Skokie Theatre, 7924 Lincoln Ave., Skokie. $20.

Holiday Brass and Choral Concert
8 p.m.: Celebrate the season in sounds joyful and profound. From solemn choral to ancient carols to brilliant works for brass, these glorious concerts offer up a pageant of musical colors, moods, and traditions. Call to order tickets Grace Lutheran Church, 7900 Division St., River Forest. Call 087-514-1421, 308-356-3962 (Call for $30 Senior tickets).

SUBMIT YOUR EVENT
To submit an event for consideration in print, visit www.pioneerlocal.com/submit-content and click the “Events” tab on the left side of the screen. Please submit the event no later than 10 days before the desired publication date.

GO CALENDAR

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Classic Film Series: Gone With the Wind
1 p.m.: Celebrate the 75th anniversary of the classic film. Vivian Leigh and Clark Gable, directed by Victor Fleming and George Cukor. Film historian Ralph Amato leads a discussion after the film. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

Experience Holidays at the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio
9 a.m.: Youth volunteers lead tours and guide visitors through the home. See the home, decorated as it was when the Wright family lived there during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Hear stories of the Wright children pulling taffy in the kitchen and spying on their father as he readied gifts around the tree. A 12-foot tree decorated with Victorian-style ornaments is a highlight of the 30-minute tour. "A Most Wanted Man" (122 min. rated R, from 2014) A half-Czech, half-Russian, brutally tortured immigrant turns up in Hamburg’s Islamic community. Is he a victim or a destruction-bent extremist? What is this most wanted man’s true identity? A tension-filled journey, based on a John le Carré novel. A casual audience-led discussion follows the screening. Just drop in. Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview. Call 847-729-7500.

Christmas carols and buy a cup of hot cocoa with candies to create a special family experience! Bring a camera. Event also includes: Hot Cocoa table, Special Holiday mug for children. Visit with Santa in person and have a photo taken with the big guy. Santa is coming to Leyden Credit Union, 2714 Atlantic Street, Franklin Park, IL. Call 847-451-9818.

Friday, Dec. 19

Musikgarten
3:30 a.m.: Kids can sing and dance along to Wendy Morgan at her exciting Musikgarten classes. Wendy Morgan loves to get kids singing, wiggling, jumping, dancing and just having a great time. Her original songs encourage children to use their imaginations, teach musical basics like melody and rhythm and show kids how to have fun with words. Wendy Morgan is the founder of The Vocal Gymnasium, where they serve the community through music education, live and recorded performances and vocal presentations, inspiring and enriching lives with a focus on the human voice. Wendy Morgan is also the host of KIDZSTATION on Evanston’s ETV6, a new TV show that introduces children to people in their community through original music. Catch KIDZSTATION on ETV6 on Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. and Wednesdays at 6 a.m. Wilmette Public Library, 1424 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette. Call 847-256-5025.

Submit a story to the “Events” tab on the left side of the screen. Please submit the event no later than 10 days before the desired publication date.
The Second City’s Incomplete Guide to Everything
4 p.m.: Performers guide the audience through comedic reenactments and explanations of historical events. UP Comedy Club, 230 W. North Ave., Chicago. Call 312-337-3992. $24-$29.

North Shore Jewish Community Hanukkah Concert
7:30 p.m.: Join The North Shore, Skokie and Chicago Jewish communities for an unforgettable evening of song and story, schmooze and blues featuring Chicago’s newest Jewish folk rock band and YouTube sensation “Rogers Park.” The two lead singers - Yosef Peysin and Mordy Kurtz have been performing together as “Rogers Park” since 2011. Doors open at 7 p.m. General Admission: VIP - $36, Adults - $18, Student/Child - $10; At the door: VIP - $40, Adults - $20, Student/Child - $12. Purchase tickets online at: www.orsimcha.com or call 847-989-9001. Sponsorships available. Reservations: 847-410-2066 or info@orsimcha.com. Wilmette Community Recreation Center, 3000 Glenview Road, Wilmette.

Third Annual Do-It-Yourself Messiah
7:30 p.m.: Join others in singing Handel’s Messiah (Christmas portion). With the 45 voice Glenview Community Church Chancel Choir, soloists, Waukegan Symphony Orchestra, and organist Gary Wendt. Conducted by Michael Blackwelder. Visit www.gccmusic.org or call (847) 724-2210. Glenview Community Church, 1000 Elm St., Glenview.

Naughty and Nice! A Christmas-themed Ballroom Dance
7:30 p.m.: Admission includes a Waltz group class taught by experienced, professional instructor Vito Magrone at 7:30 p.m. and Holiday-themed ballroom dance from 8-11 p.m. with host Vito and DJ Sandia. Christmas goodies served and lots of festivities. Dancers of every skill level, beginner to advanced, and newcomers are all welcome. There will be popular dance music for Waltz, Tango, Cha Cha, Swing, Hustle, Salsa, Rumba, Fox Trot and more. Free lot parking. No dance partner needed. Ballroom City, 207 S. Villa Ave., Suite 250, Villa Park. Call 630-542-7644. Free.

Charlene Brooks: Highly Seasoned
8 p.m.: Charlene Brooks returns to Skokie Theatre in an all-new show celebrating the holidays… whichever ones you celebrate. Combining stories of her life with Chanukah, Christmas and winter songs, Charlene delivers all from well-known favorites to rare gems in a variety of original arrangements: Latin, swing, blues, rock, traditional and more, all in her own unique way. Selections include “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve?”, “Cool Yule”, “Winter Wonderland! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!” with other seasonal favorites. Charlene’s band features Dennis Ludlum, piano, Jim Cox, bass; Jeff Thomas, drums and Jeff Jacobs, guitar. Tickets: $25. Skokie Theatre, 7924 Lincoln Ave., Skokie. Call 847-677-7761. $25.
Amazing juggling show that's educational too

BY MYRNA PETLICKI
For Pioneer Press

There's more to juggler Laura Ernst's act than tossing balls in the air. There will be an educational element when Ernst performs at the Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., 2-3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 27.

"I start out in a human-size hamster ball," Ernst revealed. "I make a little world inside there. We've got all the continents and the kids help me put the globe together. I show them a little bit of juggling and Chinese yo-yo, and explain where the different tops came from, and how to say hello in different languages."

One fact that Ernst shares with audiences is that juggling clubs used to be called Indian clubs. "In India, they used them to workout. They didn't actually toss them," she said.

Ernst began juggling as a child but it didn't become a serious pursuit until she was in college. After graduation, she won an international juggling competition. It has been her full-time career since 2008.

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

DIFFERENT STROKES

Mr. Claus will pause for a pre-Christmas rest at Swim with Santa, 6-8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19 at the Park Ridge Community Center Pool, 1515 W. Touhy Ave. Everyone ages 3 and older is invited to swim, sing holiday songs and join in reindeer games. Cost is $6 for residents, $9 for nonresidents.

For details, call (847) 692-5129 or go to www.prparks.org.

RESOLUTION SOLUTION

You and your kids can Make Your Mantra for the New Year, 3-6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 26 at Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St. Drop in and create a stone bearing your personal mantra for 2015.

For details, call (847) 324-3149 or go to www.skokielibrary.info.
Don't forget to order your Holiday desserts early.

We're Your Headquarters For All Your Holiday Desserts
German Stollen, Fruit Cakes, Pies, Christmas Cookies, Struffoli, Pizzas.

$200 OFF Any Purchase of $10 or more
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Edison Park Lutheran Church
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Carole Edwards, Associate in Ministry
(Across park from Edison Park Metra)

Local Worship Guide
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Rev. Dr. Michael D. Sparby, Sr. Pastor
TOUCHING LIVES EVERYWHERE
Michael Lyda, Children/Youth/Family

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Chicago, IL (773) 631-0715
Sunday, 9:15 am - Spirit Bridge
Saturday Worship 6PM
Norwood Park
Community Church
5917 N. Nina Ave Chicago, IL
Pastor Elizabeth Jones

St. Peter's United Church of Christ
Oakton Street & Laramie Avenue
847-673-8166
www.stpeterusuccskokie.org
Sunday Worship 10AM
Sunday School 9AM
(Sept. thru May)
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YOUR Local Worship Guide

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3601 W. Dempster St.
Skokie, IL 60076
847-675-0951
www.tbiskokie.org

SKOKIE CENTRAL TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION
Traditional Service – Mixed Seating
Services led by:
Rabbi Dr. Michael Gottesman
Minyons: Mon. & Thurs. 8:00 AM
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candle lighting time
Saturday 9:00 AM Followed by Kiddush
Sunday 8:30 AM Followed by breakfast
Sanctuary handicapped accessible!
4040 Main Street, Skokie, Illinois
847-674-4117
www.wix.com/skokiecentral/shul

KEHILLAT SHALOM
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Lay Led Shabbat Service, 9:45AM
8610 Niles Center Rd, Skokie
847-679-6513
www.kehillatshalom.org

SKOKIE

Ezra-Habonim,
the Niles Township
Jewish Congregation
4500 Dempster St., Skokie, IL 60076
847-675-4141,
http://www.ehnt.org/
Shabbat: Fri 8PM & Sat 9:30AM
Minyan Mon - Thurs 7PM
Sat & Sun 6PM
Religious School Tues & Sat
Rabbi Jeffrey Weill
Cantor Benjamin Warschawski
Rabbi Neil Brief, Emeritus

W.M. Temple Church
of God in Christ, Inc.
5151 Church St., Skokie, IL
(847) 966-1095
www.wmtcogic.org
Pastor cranford@gmail.com
Sunday Service: 11:30 AM
Sunday School: 10 AM
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7 PM
Intercessory Prayer:
Tuesday & Friday, 12 PM
De Clarence Cranford, Jr., Pastor
Elizabeth W. Cranford, 1st Lady

SKOKIE

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www.bhbcbe.org
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Shabbat Service – Saturdays 9:30 AM
Jr. Congregation, Tot Shabbat,
Torah Time 10:30 AM
Followed by Kiddush
Daily Minyan 7 AM and 7:30 PM
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the weekend
and beyond

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Mon 12/22
Tue 12/23
Wed 12/24
6 PM
4 & 6 PM
2 & 4 PM

A children's program for Infants - age 5 will be offered during all services.

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847-441-5599 • WillowNorthShore.org

CHRISTMAS SERVICE
Christmas is NOT happy for everyone.
Lonely? Grieving? Sad?
Missing that special someone?
Join together in a refuge from holiday "jollity" and festivities.

7:00 pm, Monday, December 22, 2014
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Fully handicapped accessible

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CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE
Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve
3:00 p.m. - Church and McDonnell Hall
5:00 p.m. - Church and McDonnell Hall
8:00 p.m. - Church
Midnight - Church

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day
7:30, 9:30, 11:00 am and 12:30 pm - Church
9:30 a.m. - McDonnell Hall

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Invites You to Join Us for a CHRISTMAS CAROLS SERVICE
SUNDAY, DEC. 21, 4:00 PM
Fellowship with Pie & Coffee immediately after service

You are also invited to join us for DEC. 24 - CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 11:00 PM
DEC. 25 - CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE 10:00 AM

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Glenview, IL 60025
47.724.??
Pastor Chris Neptun

Christmas Eve
4:00 & 10:00 pm Candelight Worship with Holy Communion

Zion Lutheran Church
600 W Lawrence Avenue
Niles, IL 60068
(708) 453-3514
Rev. Luther John Bajes, Pastor

Christmas Eve 7:00 pm Holy Communion
Christmas Day 10:00 am
New Year's Day 10:00 am
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CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

Sermon "The Perfect Gift"
with beloved, traditional scripture readings

DECEMBER 24
5:00 p.m. Family Service With Candelight & Carols
11:00 p.m. Traditional Service With Candelight & Carols

All are Welcome!
www.parkridgecommunitychurch.org

CHRISTMAS EVE:
Wednesday, December 24
4:00 * 4:10 * 4:20 * 6:10 * 7:30 pm Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY:
Thursday, December 25
7:30 * 9:30 * 11:00 am Mass

COME CELEBRATE OUR SAVIOR'S BIRTH WITH US!
Morrison, William "Bill"
89, of Northbrook, formerly of Park Ridge, beloved husband of Dolores and loving father of Melody and Carol, died November 18, 2014. A graduate of Northwestern University, he served as a Gunnery Officer in the U.S. Navy. At retirement, he was an electrical engineer at Western Electric, a patent holder and a hibiscus hybridizer.
In lieu of flowers, donations to the Leukemia Research Foundation of Wilmette or donations to your local blood bank. Memorial visitation 2:00 until 4:00 p.m. on January 18 at Glueckert Funeral Home Ltd., 1520 N. Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, with a service at 3:30 p.m.
Info: www.GlueckertFH.com or (847)253-0168.
Springtime interment at Acacia Park Cemetery.
Morrison, William "Bill"
89, of Northbrook, formerly of Park Ridge, beloved husband of Dolores and loving father of Melody and Carol, died November 18, 2014. A graduate of Northwestern University, he served as a Gunnery Officer in the U.S. Navy. At retirement, he was an electrical engineer at Western Electric, a patent holder and a hibiscus hybridizer.
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Info: www.GlueckertFH.com or (847)253-0168.
Springtime interment at Acacia Park Cemetery.

Schackter, June G.
(née Glickauf) Age 82, of Lincolnwood. Beloved wife of the late Paul; dear partner of Russell Mosny; cherished mother of Taryl "Tari" (Kevin) Spitalny, devoted grandmother of Jeremy and Cedes Sifuentes and Jake Spitalny; only sister of the late Florence (Maurice "Moss") Reck, the late Harry (Marion) Glickauf. Special thanks to devoted caregiver, Monica Gentile.
Principal of Decatur Classical Magnet School in Chicago, which was the #1 school in the State of IL for over 18 years.
Funeral services Wednesday 11:00 a.m. at Ezra Habonim the Niles Township Jewish Congregation, 4500 Dempster Street, Skokie. Entombment Memorial Park Cemetery-Skokie. Contributions in June’s name to the Skokie Holocaust Museum would be appreciated. Info Mitzvah Memorial Funerals 630-MITZVAH (630-48-9824), or www.mitzvahfunerals.com.

General Information Concerning The Death Notice Page
- A paid death notice may be ordered to appear in the Pioneer Press when funeral arrangements are made, and must be submitted in writing. Information about charges for death notices may be obtained from area funeral directors or by calling (847) 998-3400. A 24-hour fax service is offered at (847) 486-6836 or death notices may be e-mailed to deathnotices@pioneerlocal.com.
- An in memoriam or card of thanks may be placed using the same information above.
- The deadline for placing a death notice, in memoriam or card of thanks, is Monday at 5:00 pm. Photos must be submitted by Monday at 2:00pm.
- The death notice department is staffed from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Saturday and 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Sunday.
- Family and friends may visit our website and sign a guest book at Pioneerlocal.com.

Tell your loved one's story.
Include a personal biography.
deathnotices@pioneerlocal.com
847-998-3400
Do you feel **IGNORED, RIPPED OFF** or taken advantage of?

Have you been **BURNED** by poor customer service?

Caught in red tape and **LOST** in a phone tree?

**THE HELP SQUAD** IS STANDING BY.

This weekly column is geared up to provide consumer tips and stories that help readers solve issues with businesses.

To submit a complaint for consideration, email **HelpSquad@PioneerLocal.com** with as much detail about your complaint as possible.
Niles North’s Hirsh scores big for Grinnell

BY NICK BULLOCK
Special to the Tribune, @Pioneer_Press

Niles North graduate Alissa Hirsh was recently named the Midwest Conference Women’s Basketball Performer of the Week. The Skokie native is a junior guard on the Grinnell women’s basketball team.

Hirsh scored 33 points to go with 10 rebounds and six assists in an 89-80 victory over Monmouth on Nov. 25 in Grinnell, Iowa. She followed that with 24 points, six rebounds and five assists in a 64-62 win against visiting Lake Forest on Nov. 29 in Grinnell, and 19 points, seven rebounds and three assists in a 68-59 loss to Presentation College the next night in Grinnell.

Two other area athletes play for the Grinnell women’s basketball team. Kayla Morrissey is a freshman forward from Lyons and Haley El Mahassani is a freshman guard from Hinsdale South.

Taylor Coleman, a junior linebacker for the Drake football team, was named one of two Pioneer Football League Scholar-Athletes of the Year on Dec. 3. The Lake Zurich graduate also was named to the Capital One Academic All-District Team and is a two-time Academic All-PFL team member.

Coleman helped the Bulldogs to a 7-4 record. He finished with 95 tackles, 8.5 tackles for loss and 1.5 sacks. He was an honorable mention All-PFL selection this season.

Other local athletes on the team include Andrew Clifford, a sophomore quarterback from Lake Forest; Jeremy Kahn, a sophomore offensive lineman from Glenbrook North; Sean Lynch, a freshman defensive back from Lake Zurich; A.J. Spitz, a freshman quarterback from Glenbrook North; and Rocco Stefanini, a sophomore offensive lineman from Fenwick.

Two area athletes recently concluded their senior seasons for the Yale women's soccer team, which finished 8-4-4.

Midfielder Muriel Battaglia, who hails from Hinsdale Central, was invited to play in the New England Women’s Intercollegiate Soccer Association’s annual Senior Bowl. She was named a first-team
37TH WHEELING HARDWOOD CLASSIC PREVIEW

5 PLAYERS TO WATCH

AMMAR BECAR
F., Notre Dame

JOE CORCIA
C., Libertyville

JIMMY MARTINEW
F., Glenbrook South

JOE MOONEY
PG, Notre Dame

ROBYNARDINI
SG, Vernon Hills

SCHEDULE ON MONDAY

Lake Park vs. Maine West, 9 a.m.
Vernon Hills vs. Libertyville, 10:30 a.m.
Glenbrook South vs. Niles North, 12:15 p.m.
Fremd vs. Dundee-Crown, 2 p.m.
Notre Dame vs. Buffalo Grove, 3:45 p.m.
Prospect vs. Streamwood, 5:30 p.m.
Wheeling vs. Naperville Central, 7:15 p.m.
Deerfield vs. Waukegan, 8:45 p.m.
Championship: 10:45 p.m. Dec. 27

3 STORYLINES

How will Notre Dame handle expectations?
Notre Dame is the Wheeling Hardwood Classic's pretournament favorite.
The Dons are led by senior guard Joe Mooney, a Division I prospect who made the Hardwood Classic's all-tournament team a year ago, and junior forward Ammar Becar. The pair guided Notre Dame to a 6-1 start to its season, including a victory over Evanston in the Lane Tech/DePaul Prep Thanksgiving Tournament's championship game.

"Seeding doesn't really matter," Becar said. "It's all about coming in with the right frame of mind and just playing hard — and winning."

Can Vernon Hills make a deep run with an exhilarating style?
Few teams are more exciting to watch than Vernon Hills when everything is clicking for the Cougars.
Vernon Hills is anchored by 6-5 jumping jack Lem Turner — the Ball State volleyball signee is averaging 3.1 blocks this year, as of Dec. 11 — and the Cougars feature senior guard Robby Nardini and senior wing Bo Manso, who can both light up the scoreboard when they're hitting shots.

Vernon Hills has a good chance of beating anybody in the tournament if Turner stays out of foul trouble and the Cougars are knocking down their shots from deep.

Can anybody nullify Libertyville's size?
Libertyville's biggest strength this year is its size. The Wildcats are anchored by 6-10 senior center Joe Borcia. Junior Ben Kimpler, who's 6-6, and 6-7 senior Peter Feely also play in the post.

"I think our offense really feeds off those guys," Libertyville coach Scott Bogumil said. "Connor Peterson, our small forward, is our leading scorer. But he gets so many looks because we throw it into the big guys and they do a nice job of finding him cutting to the basket or spotting up for 3s."

Like most teams, "we want to maximize our strength," Bogumil added.

One of Bogumil's favorite aspects of the Hardwood Classic is that it's a great coaching tournament, he said. It's full of teams who play different styles — for example, Naperville Central typically plays zone defense and Niles North usually pressures all over the court — which provides a lot of teaching opportunities.

— Eric Van Dril

32ND ANNUAL ST. VIATOR SNOWFLAKE PREVIEW

5 PLAYERS TO WATCH

JANELLE ALBACARNER
PG, Maine East

ALONDRA CHAVARRIA
SG, Leyden

MAEVE DEGNAN
SG, Regina

ARIA LEY
PG, Elmwood Park

MIRANDA WEBER
C., Glenbrook North

SCHEDULE ON MONDAY

Glenbrook North vs. Maine East, 5 p.m.
Elmwood Park vs. Loyola JV, 5 p.m.
Regina vs. Fenton, 6:30 p.m.
St. Viator vs. Leyden, 6:30 p.m.
Championship: 1:30 p.m. Dec. 27

3 STORYLINES

Regina hoping for another title run
The Panthers (5-4) made it to the championship game last year and with four returning starters there's no reason to think they can't reach the final again this year.

Leading the way for Regina are two seniors averaging double digits in scoring: Maeve Degnan (14.8) and Maggie Palmer (13.8).

"We don't just have that one go-to kid," coach Kerry Durham said. "We have more options and that's great for our program."

Who will take on an increased role for Maine East?
The Blue Demons (2-7) are back at the St. Viator Tournament after a year off.

Maine East lost a lot from last year's team, which won the Central Suburban North, and it took a big hit when junior forward Kelli Lindberg tore her right Achilles tendon on Dec. 9 against Niles North.

"It's a really big setback, not just with what she was giving us offensively — six to 10 points a night — but what she did for us on defense," Blue Demons coach Karol Hanusiak said.

Lindberg's younger sister, sophomore Holly Lindberg, will try to step up and senior guard Janelle Alba Garner may be asked to do even more.

Leyden coach comes back to her roots
First-year Eagles coach Stephanie Kuzmanic, who played at Wheeling, grew up right down the road from St. Viator. She has Leyden (4-4) pointed in the right direction and can show friends and family just what she's building in Franklin Park.

— Rob Valentin
Loss reveals room for improvement

Dons had trouble getting stops on defense against Hinsdale Central

BY ERIC VAN DRIL
Special to the Tribune, @VanDrilSports

NILES — Notre Dame climbed into the Chicago Tribune's top-20 boys basketball rankings with six straight wins to start its season, but coach Tom Les continued to remind the Dons that there is another step for them to take.

The difference between where Notre Dame is currently and where its wants to be was evident to junior forward Ammar Becar after a 74-70 loss to Hinsdale Central on Saturday night.

"They're a great team, and we're a good team," Becar said. "Coach has been telling us that if we want to be on the next level, we have to play together. We have to execute."

The term execution was used by both Becar and Hinsdale Central coach Nick Latorre after the game.

The Red Devils rarely settled for bad shots. Senior forward Matt Rafferty — who was spectacular, finishing with 39 points on 15-of-18 shooting — was the source of much of Hinsdale Central's offense, yet the senior-laden squad's experience running its sets showed.

"I just thought our kids really executed," Latorre said. "We did a really good job of getting the ball inside. That's really our bread and butter, and our kids made a concerted effort to get the ball inside. It seems like when it goes inside, with the personnel we have, good things seem to happen."

The loss to Hinsdale Central highlighted an area where the Dons, who only have two seniors in their rotation, have room to improve.

"You've got to talk on defense," senior point guard Joe Mooney said. "We had miscommunications and they were getting wide-open layups. It's just little things like that."

The inability to get stops was a point of frustration for Notre Dame, especially given that Mooney played so well throughout the second half. The Division I prospect — he has offers from Air Force and UC Davis — finished with 37 points on 20 shots, including seven made 3-pointers. Several of those 3s were difficult attempts Mooney created for himself off the dribble.

Mooney did his best to keep Notre Dame in the game after Hinsdale Central took a 48-37 lead with 8:44 remaining in the third quarter. He scored 18 points, and knocked down four 3-pointers, after that. Becar said that instilled both him and his teammates with energy, but the defense couldn't get the stops it needed to rally against a team of Hinsdale Central's experience and caliber.

"We couldn't recover from [the third-quarter deficit]," Mooney said. "We kept cutting it down from like 11 to six and 10 to four, but we could never really crack it."

LEFT: Notre Dame's Joe Mooney goes up for a layup in front of Hinsdale Central's Matt Rafferty (32) during Saturday's game in Niles. Mooney finished with 37 points in the loss. MC SUMMERS FOR CHICAGO TRIBUNE MEDIA GROUP

Notre Dame's Ammar Becar guards Hinsdale Central's Matt Rafferty during Saturday's game in Niles. Rafferty finished with 39 points. MC SUMMERS FOR CHICAGO TRIBUNE MEDIA GROUP
NILES NORTH

George helps Vikings win emotional game

Guard transferred from Maine East to Niles North before his senior season

BY ERIC VAN DRU.
For Sun-Times Media, @VanOrilSports

SKOKIE — Abby George wasn’t sure how he should begin the Niles North boys basketball team’s game against Maine East.

The Central Suburban North opener for both teams on Dec. 9, which the Vikings won 57-31, was the first time he played against his former team after transferring this summer.

“There were a lot of emotions going into the game because I’ve been playing [on varsity at Maine East] for three years,” said George, a senior. “All my [former] teammates, they looked mad. I didn’t know how I should come out — too aggressive, too passive. I just came out, played my game.”

George didn’t score in the first quarter, but he drained an open 3-pointer with about 5:00 left in the second quarter for his first points.

The majority of Niles North’s bench stood and cheered when George sank his shot. They continued to cheer on the 5-8 guard as he prepared to play a high-pressure defense that forced Maine East to commit 28 turnovers.

“A second went by. Then George looked over to the bench and clapped enthusiastically to acknowledge the Vikings and their support of him.

“My team, they said they’ve got my back,” George said. “It felt like a family. It felt like I had older brothers in there. I felt like I never had that before. I had a lot of confidence.”

The reaction to George’s transfer to Niles North has been emotional. He said on Dec. 9 that he did it for family reasons, but many in the Maine East program remain resentful.

George estimated that all but two of his former teammates have stopped talking to him since he transferred because the assumption is he switched schools in order to play for Niles North.

Tuesday night also was emotional for Maine East. Blue Demons coach Dave Genis addressed that before the game.

“I told them, ‘This game is not about Maine East versus Abby George,’ ” Genis said of his pregame message.

George has adjusted very well to a new role and a new team. He was a point guard for Maine East, but he’s been more of a shooting guard with the Vikings — a more natural position, he said — and he’s fit in seamlessly, despite not playing with Niles North at all during the summer.

He scored 11 points and had three steals against the Blue Demons on Dec. 9. George was the MVP of the Buffalo Grove Thanksgiving Tournament, and he contributed 14 points in a 74-71 loss to Niles West on Dec. 6.

George and Niles North coach Glenn Olson agreed that they were surprised by how quickly he’s fit in, but it’s been a welcome surprise.

“He’s just buying in and he’s not trying to do too much,” Olson said. “He’s just playing very well within our system. I think that’s the biggest tribute I can say about him: He’s not trying to be somebody he’s not.”
Blue Demons strive to be mentally tougher

Maine East struggled to handle Niles North's defensive pressure

BY ERIC VAN DRIL
Special to the Tribune, @VanDnlSports

SKOKIE — In preparation for its game against Niles North, the Maine East boys basketball team used part of its practice time to work on handling the Vikings' intense ball pressure.

Blue Demons coach Dave Genis said he tried to make the defensive pressure more difficult in practice than it would be in the game. Success against Niles North's defense requires confident guard play. If a team is lacking it even for a minute, the Vikings' defense can turn a game's momentum by overwhelming a backcourt and causing turnovers.

That's what happened to Maine East against the Vikings.

"We can't be weak with the ball. We were weak with the ball," Genis said after his team's 57-31 loss to the Vikings on Dec. 9.

The Blue Demons had just four field-goal attempts in the first quarter. They committed 10 turnovers during that time, including seven before Genis called a timeout with 3:18 remaining in the first.

Maine East managed to cut its 13-6 deficit to 22-19 in the second quarter, but senior forward Ezeka Omeke picked up his third foul with 1:59 remaining in the first half. Niles North then went on an 8-0 run before Maine East senior guard Nick Kanjou knocked down a 3-pointer right before the end of the second quarter.

The Vikings held the Blue Demons to nine points in the second half.

"I think we played scared. We weren't ready," Kanjou said. "No one knew what to do."

Junior point guard Milan Grover — who's one of the team's primary ball handlers, along with junior guard Franklin Orange — shouldered some of the responsibility for the struggles.

"Every team has a momentum change" during a game, Grover said. "As a captain, I don't think I did a good job of regrouping everybody. You're going to take a couple blows, but you're going to have to get back up."

Following the contest, Genis talked about the squad — especially the Blue Demons' juniors — and its need to grow up.

He and Grover were hopeful that the bad game against Niles North was an isolated event — one that would serve as a tool Maine East would use to get stronger.

"They were shell-shocked," Genis said. "Hopefully it's a learning experience for them and we're able to move forward. We've got some talented kids, but they're not mentally tough like that yet."

Maine East fell to 0-2 in the Central Suburban North three nights later, but it played much better in a 55-52 loss to Glenbrook North. That was a good sign for the Blue Demons as they prepare for their next conference game — at home against Highland Park on Friday — and then the Luther North Holiday Tournament.
Notre Dame's Ammar Becar puts up a shot during Saturday's home game against Hinsdale Central in Niles.
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